

# Higher Education Review of Richmond upon Thames College

February 2014

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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 Richmond upon Thames College. The review took place from 4 to 6 February 2014 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Ms Barbara Howell
- Mr Nick Gorse
- Mr Anthony Bagshaw (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Richmond upon Thames 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](#) (Quality Code)<sup>1</sup> 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 threshold academic standards
  - the quality of learning opportunities
  - the information provided about learning opportunities
  - the enhancement of learning opportunities
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 6.

In reviewing Richmond upon Thames 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 2013-14 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement, and Student Employability,<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> A dedicated page of the website explains the method for [Higher Education Review](#) of higher education providers in England and Northern Ireland<sup>4</sup> and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents.

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/qualitycode](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/qualitycode).

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes: [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/higher-education-review-themes.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/higher-education-review-themes.aspx).

<sup>3</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus).

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review web pages: [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/higher-education-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/higher-education-review).

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Richmond upon Thames College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Richmond upon Thames College.

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

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Richmond upon Thames College.

- The clear and robust recruitment and admission processes and the responsiveness of staff (Expectation B2).
- Extensive employer engagement in curriculum development, the professional practice of staff, and students' progression (Expectations B4, B1 and B3).
- The planning of learning resources in consultation with industrial partners to maintain the currency of equipment (Expectation B4).
- The support offered by teaching staff and their responsiveness to students throughout their course (Expectations B4 and B3).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Richmond upon Thames College.

That before the start of the 2014-15 academic year the College should:

- ensure that it has oversight of, and manages the implications arising from, curriculum change over time (Expectation B8)
- ensure all handbooks consistently contain relevant policies and procedures, including complaints and appeals (Expectation C)
- provide programme information consistent with *Part C: Information about higher education provision* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Expectation C).

That by the beginning of the Spring Term 2015 the College should:

- ensure the consistent implementation of the annual monitoring process (Expectation B8)
- develop and initiate a periodic review process for higher national programmes (Expectation B8)
- put in place mechanisms that enable the systematic recording, monitoring and evaluation of complaints and appeals (Expectation B9).

## **Affirmation of action being taken**

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

- The College's continued development of deliberative structures to include the HE Forum and Employability Skills Task and Finish Group for the oversight and dissemination of enhancement activities (Enhancement).

## **Theme: Student Employability**

Since 2011-12, as part of its strategic direction, the College has focused its higher education provision on part-time, work-based learners, the majority of whom are in employment and completing a qualification as part of the skills development demanded by their employers. The College employs a variety of mechanisms to support and promote employability including: employers' forums, which are used to review the validity and relevance of programmes; input from industry experts who are integral to the teaching and learning; well qualified staff who are engaged in their professional practice; entering into partnership with local employers; and the proposed development of an alumni association to support employer initiatives.

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

## About Richmond upon Thames College

Richmond upon Thames College (the College) occupies a single site in Twickenham, in the London Borough of Richmond. The College provides programmes for students of all ages, but predominantly serves full-time students aged 16-19. The College has a very wide catchment area attracting students from 28 of the 33 London boroughs, creating an ethnically diverse student body.

The College has been delivering higher education programmes for over 30 years. One third of the 16-19 higher education applicants are the first generation in their families to experience higher education. While adult higher education is not a large part of the College's provision, it does provide an important opportunity for student progression within the institution and for adult students to return to study. The College's mission as regards higher education is to offer a niche and responsive high quality curriculum within the College and in a wider setting of partnerships.

For the academic year 2013-14 the College has approximately 4,000 learners enrolled. Of these, 115 are higher education students: 101 who attend part-time and 14 who attend on a full-time basis.

The nature and shape of the College's higher education offer changed in 2011-12 with St Mary's University, Twickenham and Kingston University withdrawing the franchise arrangements in place for some programmes. Overall, the impact of these changes had led to a drop in higher education activity across the College in terms of student numbers and in recent years, the College has noticed a significant change in the mode of attendance. The higher education provision since 2011-12 now centres largely on part-time, work-based learners and the development of strong links with local employers.

The College now works with two validating bodies, Kingston University and Pearson, offering programmes at levels 4 and 5. At the time of the review, the College had students on the following programmes:

### **Kingston University**

- Graphic Communication Foundation Degree
- Early Years Foundation Degree
- IT for E-Business Foundation Degree

### **Pearson**

- BTEC HNC Construction and the Built Environment (Construction and Civil Engineering pathways)
- BTEC HNC Mechanical Engineering
- BTEC HNC Electrical and Electronic Engineering
- BTEC HNC/D Graphic Design

The College underwent Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) in 2009 which determined that confidence could be placed in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership or centre recognition and approval agreements, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies, and for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. It also found that reliance could be placed on the accuracy and completeness of public information.

At the time, the College produced an action plan in response to the six features of good practice, and one advisable and 11 desirable recommendations. Initially the Adult and HE

Manager, through the Higher Education Review Board, drove completion of the action plan. Staff changes resulted in this activity passing to Department Managers. Although a large number of the recommendations have been addressed, the College has acknowledged that there are some areas that require further action. Under the direction of a recently appointed Adult FE and HE Manager, a more focused cross-College HE Forum has been introduced with a key remit of sharing good practice and maintaining and enhancing quality and standards.

## Explanation of the findings about Richmond upon Thames 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: Maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards

**Expectation (A1): Each qualification (including those awarded through arrangements with other delivery organisations or support providers) is allocated to the appropriate level in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A1: The national level**

### Findings

1.1 It is the responsibility of the College's degree-awarding body and awarding organisation, Kingston University and Pearson, to allocate the qualifications they award to the appropriate level of the FHEQ and to ensure there is sufficient volume of study to demonstrate that learning outcomes can be achieved.

1.2 The team confirmed these arrangements through an examination of the Institutional Agreement with Kingston University, the Pearson BTEC Centre Guide to Managing Quality, and the College's Higher Education Responsibilities Overview which sets out the responsibilities of the College, Pearson and Kingston University against each of the Quality Code expectations.

1.3 Through meetings with staff and a review of their respective handbooks (the BTEC HNC/HND and Foundation Degree handbooks) and programme specifications, the team further confirmed responsibility rests with the awarding bodies.

1.4 The team also examined a number of external examiner reports, as set by the degree-awarding body, and in all cases the external viewed the awards as appropriate for the qualification level.

1.5 Overall, the College effectively discharges its responsibilities, within the context of its agreements with its awarding bodies, for allocating qualifications to the appropriate level of the FHEQ and therefore meets Expectation A1. The associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A2): All higher education programmes of study take account of relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A2: The subject and qualification level**

**Findings**

1.6 The use of subject benchmark statements to inform standards is the ultimate responsibility of the College's degree-awarding body and awarding organisation. The team confirmed engagement with subject benchmark statements through a review of programme specifications, and meetings with staff where they heard that subject benchmark statements point staff to intended learning outcomes and help students understand their progression. The team also heard that, for the Pearson provision, subject benchmark statements feed into the unit statements. Modules and programmes are checked and moderated internally, and the external examiner checks that standards are appropriate.

1.7 The self-evaluation document notes that robust use is made of external examiners and their assessment of subject benchmark statements. The team noted that the awarding body is responsible for setting the content of external examiner reports and although specific reference is not made to subject benchmark statements the reports confirm the standards set for the awards are appropriate for the particular subject.

1.8 Employers confirmed that they had some engagement with benchmark statements in relation to professional body involvement including the Institute of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) and the Chartered Institute of Building. The team saw evidence that the successful completion of the College's accredited HNC Civil Engineering programme would provide eligibility for Engineering Technician (Eng Tech) professional body status.

1.9 Overall the team considers that the College discharges its responsibilities effectively to ensure that programme design takes account of relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements. There is robust use of external examiners and some engagement of employers in assessing subject benchmark statements. The team therefore concludes that Expectation A2 is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3): Higher education providers make available definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements for a programme of study.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: The programme level**

**Findings**

1.10 The self-evaluation document states that programme teams are responsible for providing students with a programme specification (as set out in the course handbook) during induction and at interview if required. Handbooks are reviewed at the end of the year during planning and development weeks.

1.11 The team confirmed that programme specifications were available for the foundation degree programmes. No programme specifications are available for the Pearson programmes. However, information in the Pearson Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Higher National Diploma (HND) handbooks included definitive information on the aims and learning outcomes for the programme of study. The Pearson BTEC HNC/HND handbooks also refer to a programme specification through the Pearson BTEC Centre Guide for Management Quality. However, the Guide only sets out the requirement for a programme specification. The team noted that Pearson requires centres to 'develop, for each programme they offer, a "programme specification" which identifies potential stopping-off points and gives the intended outcomes of the programme'.

1.12 The team concludes that Expectation A3 has been met and that the associated level of risk is low. However, the team would encourage the College to make more explicit programme information for its Pearson provision in line with this expectation. This is reflected in the recommendation made under Section 3: Information about higher education provision, where the team recommends that the College provide programme information consistent with *Part C: Information about higher education provision* of the Quality Code.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A4): Higher education providers have in place effective processes to approve and periodically review the validity and relevance of programmes.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A4: Approval and review**

**Findings**

1.13 At the time of the review, the College ran three Kingston University programmes, although two of these were in their final presentation following the University's decision to end the franchise arrangement for these awards. The active programme is a Foundation Degree in Early Years. The College had five active Pearson HNC and HNDs. One of these, in Graphic Design, was initiated to replace a Kingston programme and the others were in Construction and Engineering.

1.14 The College's approval, monitoring and review policies and procedures relate to the quality of the awards offered, while responsibility for the academic standards of the College's programmes lies with its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation.

1.15 The team heard that all higher education programmes are subject to the College's self-evaluation and annual monitoring process and that the relevance of its higher education provision is reviewed as part of the College's curriculum planning process.

1.16 The review team concludes that, with regard to standards, the College fulfils its obligations in this area and therefore meets Expectation A4 and that the level of risk is low. However, the team has made some recommendations relating to monitoring and review with regards to quality (see Expectation B8).

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A5): Higher education providers ensure independent and external participation in the management of threshold academic standards.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A5: Externality**

**Findings**

1.17 In line with its delegated responsibilities, the College fulfils its obligations and makes use of appropriate externality in its higher education programmes (see also Expectation B1). External examiners are appointed for the College's programmes by Kingston University and Pearson. The evidence shows that robust use is made of external examiner visits and reports to assure delivery, curriculum content and assessment.

The team heard that external examiner reports are discussed at student/staff consultatives. Additionally actions arising from external examiner reports, which are received by the Quality Team and programme leaders, feed into the course Quality Improvement Plans. Completion of the actions is overseen by the Curriculum Managers as part of the College's Curriculum Review Process.

1.18 The College is actively engaged with employers and industry partners in the design, content and delivery of its higher education programmes. For Pearson programmes the units and structure are decided by Pearson. However, the team heard that the College, in consultation with employers and, as appropriate, professional bodies, decides the most appropriate combinations of units. The team heard from employers that they are offered a choice of units to tailor a programme more to their requirements.

1.19 The team also saw evidence that the College works collaboratively with local colleges to share practice and review quality assurance processes as part of a Peer Review and Development Group.

1.20 Overall, the team found evidence that confirmed that the procedures work effectively and it is evident that there is externality within programme development and approval processes as well as assessment. The team therefore concludes that Expectation A5 has been met and that the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A6): Higher education providers ensure the assessment of students is robust, valid and reliable and that the award of qualifications and credit are based on the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A6: Assessment of achievement of learning outcomes**

### **Findings**

1.21 For the Kingston University programmes, assessments are designed by the University for implementation in the College as part of the franchise arrangement. Programme and Module Assessment Boards are run by the University.

1.22 The College has an Assessment Policy, which although further education based, sets out the rationale for assessment and the need to adhere to awarding body and awarding organisation regulations. This has been developed with reference to the Pearson BTEC Centre Guide to Managing Quality. Handbooks also contain an outline of the Assessment Policy and relevant assessment information for students, and programme specifications detail the various assessment strategies employed.

1.23 For Pearson programmes the College has responsibility for the design of assessment, its marking and internal verification. The College is also responsible for the operation of Assessment Boards. The team saw evidence of their operation, and that the College is developing its approach in this area as a result of external examiner feedback. The College is using the recently introduced HE Forum to develop and disseminate this policy revision.

1.24 The review team concludes that the College meets Expectation A6 and that the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## Maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards: Summary of findings

1.25 In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified. All of the expectations for this judgement area have been met with a low level of risk and there is evidence that, although the College's degree-awarding body and awarding organisation have ultimate responsibility for the setting the academic standards, the College is aware of its responsibilities for maintaining standards. The College is taking appropriate action in areas where it recognises that further work would enhance practice and contribute positively to the student experience, for example, the further development of assessment board operation as a result of external examiner feedback.

1.26 The team therefore concludes that the maintenance of threshold academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the awarding body and awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: Quality of learning opportunities

**Expectation (B1): Higher education providers have effective processes for the design and approval of programmes.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme design and approval**

### Findings

2.1 The College's programme approval policy and procedure are clearly described and communicated to those involved. Final approval for the introduction of new programmes is the responsibility of the College's degree-awarding body and awarding organisation, as stated in the College's approval process, and in the College's Higher Education Responsibilities Overview. The approval policy and procedure considers the financial and market viability of a programme and the appropriate provision of resources.

2.2 The College introduced its approval policy in early 2013. The policy consists of two stages prior to seeking degree-awarding body approval. In line with its approach of situating responsibility for quality and curriculum development at programme level, design of new programmes is the responsibility of programme teams. The decision whether to implement a new programme is, however, a College responsibility and taken by a panel chaired by the Deputy Principal.

2.3 No higher education programmes have been subject to this new policy, but the team saw evidence of the effective operation of the former policy with regard to the provision of appropriate learning resources for the HNC/D Graphic Design. The review team confirmed during meetings with staff that the resources requested in the approval documentation had been provided.

2.4 Where the team saw evidence that the College is developing new higher education provision, in the Higher Education Strategy and in meetings the team held staff, the College stated that this would be in collaboration with industry partners, demonstrating the College's commitment to externality in programme approval.

2.5 The team concludes that the College meets Expectation B1 and that the associated level of risk is low. Furthermore, the College's use of external industry participation (for example the Rugby Football Union and Harlequins for planned programmes in sports) at key stages of the approval process contributes to the team's conclusion that extensive employer engagement in curriculum development contributes to the features of good practice in Expectations B3 and B4.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B2): Policies and procedures used to admit students are clear, fair, explicit and consistently applied.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B2: Admissions**

**Findings**

2.6 The College's Higher Education Admissions Policy is detailed, with a clear procedure. The Policy sets out the stages of application, giving details about information events, entry requirements and accreditation of prior learning and costs. For students applying or studying for programmes validated by Kingston University the Policy directs students to the relevant University's procedures. Although the Policy does not contain an appeals process it does clearly state what applicants should do should they wish to raise a concern or complaint.

2.7 The College has a standard admissions process, which is broadly in line with that used by Kingston University, that it uses to admit students on Pearson BTEC HNC/HND programmes. Specifically for the Pearson programmes, programme specifications outline the criteria for admission. The College process of application to enrolment is consistent, with parity between the Pearson and Kingston University provision.

2.8 Entry requirements are detailed in the College's prospectus. The Policy also describes a Single Equality Policy and specific arrangements for students with learning difficulties. The application form has a section for disclosure of a disability or learning difficulty. Staff also commented that adjustments were made for students with disabilities through the admissions procedure. All students are interviewed by staff from the College in line with degree-awarding body requirements.

2.9 The College website has clear information about the application process, with additional sections such as enquiry requests. Students commented favourably on the speed of response to electronic enquiry forms and telephone enquiries. Applications forms are downloadable and the website clearly states that for some courses, successful candidates will be required to apply directly through UCAS. On some programme web pages, there are related links to information on student finance and subject specific blogs.

2.10 The team noted that there were differences in how programme details are given to the students, once enrolled. Students met by the team gave very positive feedback on the induction process and identified the constructive steps taken by the College, including tours of the campus and specific resources and inductions demonstrating how to access course related materials, such as handbooks, briefing documents and programme specifications on the virtual learning environment (see Expectation B4).

2.11 The review team saw a number of examples of good practice, which included a fast response time, from enquiry, application to interview and strong links with employers. The team considers the College's clear and robust recruitment and admission processes and the responsiveness of staff to be a feature of **good practice**.

2.12 The team therefore concludes that Expectation B2 has been met and that 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**

2.13 The College has appropriate procedures for assuring the quality of teaching and learning. The College operates a Teaching Observation Policy, although it acknowledges that there are inconsistencies in its application across all courses. The teaching and learning staff acknowledged that they teach across higher and further education and that the 'Open Door' observation scheme worked well, supported by the Learning and Teaching Advocates.

2.14 The College has produced guidelines for continuing professional development for staff and there is evidence that staff development activities are linked to curriculum development and learning, teaching and assessment. The College has also demonstrated how scholarly and professional activity informed and supported curriculum delivery. Discussions with staff indicated that there are opportunities for subject-related staff development. During meetings with the team students praised the professional development of staff, library services and careers advice.

2.15 The College has appointed staff with appropriate qualifications and experience. The majority of staff are qualified to at least master's level and have extensive industry experience. The College has a clear and well structured Teaching and Learning Handbook, which offers guidance to staff and sets out the support to be provided to students.

2.16 Within the College's Higher Education Strategy, a process of programme planning that links to staff development is identified. The College has recently taken part in a Peer Review and Development Group with neighbouring colleges to share best practice. This includes organising continuing professional development sessions. Links exist with the College's degree-awarding body for staff development for those who teach on higher education programmes, such as the higher education teaching qualification or development opportunities offered, as part of the franchise contract arrangements. The College's degree-awarding body is currently reviewing its staff development policy, to clarify the staff development activity to which a partner college is entitled.

2.17 The College has a number of mechanisms that collect and analyse information to ensure the continued effectiveness of their strategic approach to, and the enhancement of, learning opportunities and teaching practices. These include peer observation and student feedback tools. The College also evidenced processes that examined the quality of the taught experience through Curriculum Performance Reviews.

2.18 Evidence was also provided of how students are able to monitor their progress and further their academic development through the provision of regular opportunities to reflect on feedback and engage in dialogue with staff through regular tutorials and through assessment feedback. Tutorials are timetabled for all higher education programmes and cover both academic and pastoral issues. Staff are given scope to adapt tutorials to fit the needs of the groups and individuals, especially part-time (day release) learners. In addition to timetabled tutorials, students are able to make appointments with tutors and to access support by email and telephone. Students reported that tutors are responsive and willing to provide support at all times. The course team identified that the flexible and accessible

tutorials (across all the higher education provision) ensures parity of support for full and part-time (day release) programmes. Students were aware of the methods and processes of assessment, with strong and supportive feedback tools. The support by teaching staff for the various group contributes to the feature of good practice noted in Expectation B4.

2.19 Reviewers heard that employers are involved in the design, development and delivery of programmes where possible. Employers also deliver masterclasses and guest lectures, set projects and review and critique work on the HNC/D in Graphic Design. On the Early Years programmes, employers provide mentors for the students, and advise on, and provide support for, the work-based assignments. The team considers the extensive employer engagement in curriculum development, the professional practice of staff, and students' progression to be a feature of **good practice**.

2.20 The team noted the recently developed staff-student consultative meetings. It also noted that students were involved in module and programme evaluations and that there were examples of student voice activities. Both students and staff acknowledged how supportive the induction process and programme handbooks were.

2.21 The team concludes, therefore, that Expectation B3 has been met and that the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B4): Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling student development and achievement**

**Findings**

2.22 The College demonstrated a strategic response to the changing nature of the higher education sector, local demand and the differing needs of its diverse student body to reshape its higher education offer. The nature and shape of the College's higher education provision began to change significantly from 2011-12 in response to external factors including the changing strategies of its degree-awarding bodies and government funding policy. In response to the differing needs of students and employers a flexible mixed mode of delivery has been developed. For example, the foundation degrees and HNC/Ds are more related to work patterns and are offered as day release or part-day and part-evening provision to suit employers' and student requirements.

2.23 The College undertook a review of its higher education provision led by the College Leadership Team, which resulted in changes being made to the programmes offered. Overall, the impact of these changes has led to a drop in higher education activity across the College in terms of student numbers, and a shift in student profile to better meet the needs of students and the College's employability agenda.

2.24 The majority of the higher education students are employed and completing a qualification as part of the skills development demanded by their employer. The College acknowledged that systems and approaches to teaching, learning and support have needed to adapt to this new cohort and it noted that the new HE Forum seeks to ensure that learning opportunities are enhanced for these groups and that the employability skills and insights into the world of work of this cohort are shared.

2.25 To enable further student development and achievement, the College actively engages with employers and has developed an Employment Engagement Strategy. The strategy focuses on three strands: the development of apprenticeships, provision of statutory programmes, and bespoke packages for employers within the strategy. The development of progression routes and HNC/Ds are an essential element. Progression pathways are mapped from advanced apprenticeships in IT, Engineering Construction and Customer Service to appropriate level 4 and 5 qualifications.

2.26 The team heard that within the College there is strong engagement with external organisations, with some programmes having long-term established relationships with employers especially in Early Years Foundation Degree and the HNCs in Engineering and Construction. There was also evidence of employers in consultation with the College, examining how learning resources maintained their currency. The team considers the planning of learning resources in consultation with industrial partners to maintain the currency of equipment to be a feature of **good practice**.

2.27 The Review team also noted that the College has introduced an Employability Skills Task and Finish Group, whose remit is to implement and monitor employability skills across the provision.

2.28 There is a well established College system for the purchasing of learning resources with evidence of annual capital expenditure bids, coordinated by senior management. Both staff and students reported satisfaction with the level of resources available in the College.

2.29 The College has evidenced that they make students aware of their responsibilities to engage with the opportunities offered to enable their development and achievement through programme handbooks, induction and handout materials. Due to the size and nature of the provision (day release on some programmes), student representation from across the College has been difficult to achieve, given that students on some work-based foundation degree/HNC programmes are either not available during the day, or only attend for one day a week. Various ways of achieving effective representation are being explored by the College including the appointment of a Student Liaison Officer. From meetings with the students, it is evident that the College has a 'student-centred' approach, which enables student development and achievement.

2.30 The College and programmes have processes in place to communicate with students throughout their period of study in a structured, clear, concise and timely way. Students remarked on the effectiveness of the programme team to inform them of the opportunities available and provided comprehensive information about the commitment required of students.

2.31 The College produced evidence of systems - course self-evaluation documentation audit and Course Performance Reviews - which enabled student academic progression review. HNC/D programmes implemented this through student, staff and employer partnership. The programmes focused particular attention upon student entry into the learning environment from the work place and delivery modes, including day release and pastoral support to fully support student progression and achievement. The team considers the support offered by teaching staff and their responsiveness to students throughout their course to be a feature of **good practice**.

2.32 The team concludes that based on its investigations around the changing nature of the higher education offer to better meet the needs of students and employers, employer engagement, resource management, the level of pastoral care, and level of student support, the College meets Expectation B4 and that 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**

2.33 The College has acknowledged its need to do more in gathering and responding to students' feedback in relation to their courses. The College is in the process of developing a consistent approach to incorporating higher education students into the College-wide annual learner survey activity. A recent higher education survey investigated student satisfaction levels regarding information, teaching, assessment and feedback, academic and pastoral support, organisation, resources and personal development.

2.34 Some programmes operate a tutorial system to engage students and facilitate the election of a student representative for each year. Student representatives are elected for some programmes, although on the part-time programmes, representation poses some difficulties. Student representatives are given a booklet that offers guidance on their role. Student representatives consult with students and devise an agenda for the bi-annual staff-student consultative meetings.

2.35 There was evidence that, at course level, there were a number of formal and informal mechanisms utilised by the course teams to engage students as partners in assurance and enhancement. Students are able to engage during tutorials and the small student cohort on programmes enable informal, meaningful interactions between students and teaching staff.

2.36 Evidence provided also identifies that the College wishes to extend its range of methods to gather student opinion, including formal committee structures, community meetings and College-wide events. The College's recent appointment of a Student Liaison Officer and their work with the Quality Office, the student population and the Students' Union, demonstrates a holistic approach in engaging with learners.

2.37 The team concludes that Expectation B5 has been met and that the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B6): Higher education providers ensure that students have appropriate opportunities to show they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the award of a qualification or credit.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning**

**Findings**

2.38 The College has greater responsibility for the design and delivery of assessment with the Pearson programmes it offers, than for the Kingston University awards (see Expectation A6). The Institutional Agreement between the College and Kingston University clearly states that the design of assessment is the University's responsibility and the College is responsible for the implementation of assessment. The University's Assessment Boards include representation from the associate colleges delivering the programmes. The Pearson BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment Levels 4 to 7 gives the College responsibility for the design and implementation of assessment, internal verification and examination boards. The external verifier (examiner) system is the awarding body's check that assessment practices are in line with its expectations.

2.39 The College has a detailed Assessment Policy, which covers the principles of assessment and the respective roles of assessor and internal verifiers, although this is focused on its further education provision. The assessment of HNC/D programmes is subject to the Pearson guidelines. The team saw evidence of staff engagement in professional development with regard to Pearson policies. The internal verification process is familiar to teaching staff across the higher education and further education provision. Teaching staff whom the team met confirmed that the internal verification process operates as stated in the policies with independence and appropriate sampling. The team saw examples of an assessment schedule, assignment brief, internal verification plan and feedback to students. Example external examiner reports confirmed the appropriate application of the Assessment Policy. Where improvements to assessment were recommended by external examiners, the College used its annual monitoring process to respond appropriately. Kingston University programmes have detailed assessment schemes contained within programme specifications.

2.40 Students who met with the team confirmed that expectations for assessment including timings, format and marking schemes had been clear in advance through the programme teams and handbooks, and that feedback received through written comments and in the face-to-face tutorials on assessment performance had been useful for their personal academic development. They further confirmed that they were aware of the internal verification process. On one programme, however, the team was made aware of a concern relating to the clarity of assessment. The students concerned reported that they had been invited to comment on the ambiguity of the assessment criteria through the module review process.

2.41 The team concludes that the College meets Expectation B6 has been met and that the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B7: External examining**

**Findings**

2.42 External examiners are appointed by the College's degree-awarding body and awarding organisation, as stated in the Institutional Agreement with Kingston University and Pearson BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment Levels 4 to 7 (see Expectation A5). External examiner reports, which for both Kingston University and Pearson programmes are specific to the College, are considered at programme level. The team saw evidence of engagement with external examiner reports and the integration of comments within the College's quality assurance processes of Curriculum Performance Review, Self-Evaluation and Quality Improvement Plans, and in Kingston University's Module Review and Development Plans. From both the documentation, which the team saw, and the meetings held with teaching staff and curriculum managers, the team concludes that there is detailed consideration of external examiner reports at programme level, in line with the College's approach of situating responsibility for quality with programme teams.

2.43 The College acknowledged that its cross-College oversight of external examiners' comments required improvement to better facilitate the identification of themes affecting programmes across the College's provision, and has charged the HE Forum with overall consideration of this area. Reviewers heard that the HE Forum will consider all reports in full and identify cross-College theme .

2.44 The team heard from students that external examiner reports had been made available to them through the virtual learning environment, although there was no evidence of discussion of reports with students.

2.45 The team concludes that the College meets Expectation B7 and that the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B8): Higher education providers have effective procedures in place to routinely monitor and periodically review programmes.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review**

**Findings**

2.46 The College's Kingston University programmes are subject to the University's annual monitoring and periodic review processes. The Kingston University annual programme monitoring process involves the production of Module Review and Development Plans which are coordinated by the respective module leaders. These then feed into a programme monitoring meeting of the respective Board of Study from which a programme monitoring report is produced by the Course Director. College staff contribute to module reviews and are represented by programme leaders at the programme monitoring Boards of Study meetings. The review team saw evidence of the College's engagement with this process, including Module Review and Development Plans, Staff-Student Consultative Committee and Executive Committee. The Institutional Agreement between the University and College clearly states the University's responsibility for periodic review of the programmes.

2.47 The College has its own annual monitoring processes: Quality Improvement Plans are produced annually following the production of self-evaluation documents. Progress against the Quality Improvement Plans is monitored through the Curriculum Review Process, which takes place each term. This in turn feeds into the next year's self-evaluation document. The Curriculum Review Process requires programme managers to comment on performance, including the progress of individual students, and key performance indicators. This self-evaluation is then reviewed by the manager for the curriculum area. This closed loop system is one which encourages continuous reflection and improvement at programme and departmental level, which was confirmed by programme leaders and managers whom the team met. There was evidence of appropriate external engagement in this process through external examiner reports, and employer engagement demonstrated in comments made in the self-reflection documentation.

2.48 In addition to the programme and department level monitoring, the College has a Higher Education Self-Evaluation Document and cross-College Quality Improvement Plan. The team heard that the revised self-evaluation documentation, which differentiates it from the further education provision, is designed to foster engagement with the Quality Code. The evidence presented to the team demonstrated inconsistent and selective engagement with the Quality Code at both programme level and in the Higher Education Self-Evaluation Document.

2.49 The College situates responsibility for standards, quality and information at programme level. In order for the College to fully assure itself that the annual monitoring process does embed the Quality Code's expectations, the review team **recommends** that by the beginning of the Spring Term 2015, the College ensure the consistent implementation of the annual monitoring process.

2.50 All curriculum changes are considered minor: this is stated in the College's approval policy and confirmed by staff in meetings the team held. Programmes are not subject to reapproval where they have varied from the originally approved programme unless changes are deemed 'substantial'. The review team saw evidence that, in the case of one programme, significant curriculum changes, initiated by the degree-awarding body, had resulted in mid-programme changes about which students felt that they had had no input. With responsibility for quality situated at programme level, the review team concludes that the College has insufficient oversight of curriculum changes. In order to meet the

expectations of the Quality Code, the College should seek further assurance that the cumulative impact of small and incremental changes is consistent with its obligation to safeguard the quality of learning opportunities. Therefore, the team **recommends** that before the start of the 2014-15 academic year the College ensure that it has oversight of, and manages the implications arising from, curriculum change over time.

2.51 The College has conducted exercises, including Building a Sustainable Future and the development of the Higher Education Strategy, to evaluate the relevance of its portfolio of programmes. Furthermore, it has two periodic processes by which it reviews quality: Internal and External Quality Reviews, which comment on the operation of academic units across the full breadth of their higher and further education provision, although the policies relating to these processes do not specify their frequency. However, none of these processes addresses the expectation that the College routinely periodically reviews the validity and relevance of individual programmes, involving the relevant external expertise such as academic and employer representatives.

2.52 While the College is not fully responsible for the validity and relevance of its programmes as it is not the degree-awarding body, it should devise a mechanism by which it periodically reviews its programmes with regard to its specific responsibilities. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that by the beginning of the Spring Term in 2015, the College develop and initiate a periodic review process for higher national programmes.

2.53 The College's Quality Improvement Manager is responsible for quality management policies, and the operation and review of quality processes is the responsibility of the Quality Manager. Quality policies are reviewed annually. The team saw evidence that the HE Forum had begun to exercise its role in supporting policy development in this area through the papers and minutes of the inaugural meeting at which relevant policies were considered.

2.54 The team concludes that the College does not meet Expectation B8 and that the associated level of risk is moderate. This is because the annual monitoring process is not applied consistently. In addition, there is no process or mechanism for monitoring the cumulative impact of small/incremental curriculum changes and while it undertakes internal and external quality reviews, the College does not have a mechanism by which it periodically reviews its programmes.

**Expectation: Not met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**

**Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have fair, effective and timely procedures for handling students' complaints and academic appeals.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B9: Complaints and student appeals**

**Findings**

2.55 The self-evaluation document claims that students are made aware during the induction period and through their student handbooks of where they can access the procedures and processes for complaints and appeals. Following a review of the student handbooks the team found reference to an appeals process, and in some cases the students were provided with the template appeal forms. The College has a clear Assessment Policy which also includes the process for appeals and the template form and the policy is accessible to students via the College website. The students met were generally clear about the process for appeals.

2.56 Although the complaints process was not contained within student handbooks, the complaints policy, template form for a complaint, and feedback on a complaint can be found on the College website. The team learned that complaints would initially be dealt with at a local level and the students met confirmed that if they wanted to complain they would first speak to their tutor.

2.57 The College keeps a log of all complaints; however, the staff met by the team recognise that complaints dealt with at a local level may not systematically be captured. The team were informed that the College does not keep a record of appeals as none have taken place; however, the students met provided the team with some examples.

2.58 Although the team concludes that Expectation B9 is met and that the associated level of risk is low, the team **recommends** that by the beginning of the Spring Term 2015 the College put in place mechanisms that enable the systematic recording, monitoring and evaluation of complaints and appeals.

**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**

2.59 The College does not currently explicitly deliver learning opportunities with other organisations; however, it is committed to extending work placement/experience both as a provider but also as an employer. The increased provision for work-based learning at levels 4 to 6 is part of the College strategy to embed employability skills in the College.

2.60 The College has recently entered into partnership with one of the largest publishing firms in London, Haymarket Publishing. Strategic plans are in development to provide more work experience placements and internships with Haymarket, who have plans to relocate to an adjacent site of the College.

2.61 The staff, employers/alumni and the students met by the team confirmed opportunities exist for both external and internal work placement/experience and the team considered the arrangements to support those students wishing to take up those opportunities were in place.

2.62 The team considers that Expectation B10 has been met, and that the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research degrees***

**Findings**

2.63 The College offers no postgraduate provision.

## Quality of learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.64 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified. Most of the expectations for this judgement area were met with examples of good practice including: the clear and robust recruitment and admission processes and the responsiveness of staff; extensive employer engagement in curriculum development, the professional practice of staff, and students' progression; the planning of learning resources in consultation with industrial partners to maintain the currency of equipment and the support offered by teaching staff and their responsiveness to students throughout their course. This demonstrates the College is fully aware of its responsibilities for assuring quality.

2.65 For the one expectation not met - Expectation B8 - the team concludes that the level of risk is moderate. This is because the College is not fully responsible for the validity and relevance of its programmes as it is not the degree-awarding body. Additionally the unmet expectation does not present any serious risk to the management of quality.

2.66 Therefore, the team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

### 3 Judgement: Quality of the information produced about its provision

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

#### **Quality Code, Part C: Information about higher education provision**

#### **Findings**

3.1 The College provides information for prospective students through the website and at interviews. Information on the website is updated by the College and the responsibility for updating information is undertaken by the programme teams.

3.2 The College provides key information data sets for its franchised provision, from Kingston University for Early Years. However, due to the nature and number of students on particular courses, there is insufficient data to trigger the key information data sets. The College is trying to address this issue by working with the Association of Colleges Higher Education network group. The Adult FE and HE Manager is a member of this group.

3.3 Consistent with its partnership agreements, the College is responsible for publishing information relating to publicity and marketing, the higher education prospectus, programme specifications, student support materials, course handbooks, module information, and teaching and assessment strategies. In addition, the College publishes a range of other policy and strategy statements, as well as various codes of practice and guidance materials relating to the provision for the use of staff.

3.4 Students who met the team were generally positive about the quality of published information (mostly hard copy) which they had received, confirming its accuracy and value in providing them with realistic expectations about the content, delivery and assessment of their programmes. However, as noted under Expectation B9, the complaints and appeals policies are not systematically contained within the student handbooks. The team **recommends** that before the start of the 2014-15 academic year, the College ensure all handbooks consistently contain relevant policies and procedures, including complaints and appeals.

3.5 As noted under Expectation A3, higher education providers make available definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements for a programme of study. However, the team identified inconsistencies between the structures of programme specifications between the Kingston University and Pearson provisions and that some information was missing. The College acknowledged that issues of inconsistency and mapping were being addressed. The team noted that there was an annual review process but were unsure of the College's maintenance and updating of information and the quality processes to ensure parity and accuracy. The team **recommends** that before the start of the 2014-15 academic year the College provide programme information consistent with *Part C: Information about higher education provision* of the Quality Code.

3.6 Students can access a wide range of additional programme information, learning materials and careers advice on the College's website and virtual learning environment. The College is continuing to develop the quality and consistency of information that these sites contain.

3.7 The College's virtual learning environment is widely used by students, but information and guidance is inconsistent and at times, confusing. For example, not all programmes published electronically external examiner reports, and key documents such as programme handbooks are not always easy to locate. The use of additional resources, such as handouts, session outlines and links to external resources, vary widely, as does the way in which the resources are presented and organised. While the team found examples of sound practice, in the nature and range of online resources, this was not the case across all courses. The College has produced a gold, silver and bronze approach to the minimum content and presentation requirements for course level virtual learning environment information. Further engagement with this approach would support the accessibility and transparency of the virtual learning environment for all students. See also Expectation B2.

3.8 The team saw a number of examples of good practice, with reference to higher education information for applicants, which contributed to the team identifying the feature of good practice in Expectation B2 and included information about the application and interview process.

3.9 Overall, the College in conjunction with its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation has in place effective quality assurance policies and procedures for checking the accuracy of information about its higher education provision. Both staff and students confirm that the main sources of information are fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. However, the College should ensure that handbooks consistently contain relevant policies and procedures and that the requirements of the Quality Code are fully embedded in its procedures around the maintenance and updating of information.

3.10 The team therefore concludes that the College meets Expectation C and that the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## Quality of the information produced about its provision: Summary of findings

3.11 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified. The expectation for this judgement area was met, with a number of examples of planned developments where the College has recognised that further work would enhance practice and contribute effectively to the student experience including continuing development of the quality and consistency of information of the virtual learning environment and the College higher education website.

3.12 Therefore, the team concludes that the information about learning opportunities produced about its provision **meets** UK expectations.

## 4 Judgement: 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 enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College meets UK expectations. The review team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

4.2 There are currently a number of enhancement initiatives across the College. However, the College recognised that a more consistent approach is required for the monitoring and reflection on enhancement activity and this is to be addressed through the newly formed HE Forum. The HE Forum is a new cross-College group representing all aspects of the higher education provision and provides reports on a termly basis to the College Leadership Team (CLT) and to the Curriculum Managers Meeting. The remit of the forum includes showcasing good practice for further dissemination and making recommendations for the enhancement of the students' learning opportunities, achievement and employability.

4.3 The College has also recently introduced a cross-College Employability Skills Task and Finish Group. The team learned that the remit of the Group is to map, coordinate and address areas for the development of all aspects of employability skills. The group will meet twice termly and will provide reports of those meetings to the CLT and the Curriculum Development Managers Meeting, making recommendations to improve practice.

4.4 The review team **affirms** the College's continued development of deliberative structures to include the HE Forum and Employability Skills Task and Finish Group for the oversight and dissemination of enhancement activities.

4.5 The College has also taken a strategic approach to the professional development of high quality teaching practice among all staff and the use of professional practitioners. The team heard from staff about the setting up of a peer and development group for the sharing of staff development opportunities with local colleges, and at a local level, the sharing of practice between teaching staff and employers.

4.6 The team confirmed through meetings with staff, employers/alumni and students the strong links with employers (such as Haymarket and Harlequins), the practice of bringing in guest lecturers and the use of practitioners for teaching and in curriculum design. The team also heard from employers the value of using industry standard software and 'live briefs' supported by external engagement.

4.7 A recent development as part of the College's commitment to developing employability skills for all of their students is the setting up of the Richmond upon Thames Enterprise Society. It is envisaged that the Society will provide a forum for developing and exchanging ideas relating to entrepreneurship and enterprise.

4.8 Enhancement activity further includes the availability of online resources and e-book packages for the College's work-based learning students. The students in full-time employment confirmed that they were provided with a high level of support and also flexibility of study days to fit with their work commitments.

4.9 Although the College has acknowledged that a more consistent approach to enhancement would be beneficial, the introduction of the HE Forum, and the Employability

Skills Task and Finish Group, as well as sharing staff development opportunities with local colleges and the College's commitment to develop employability skills, contribute to enhancement. The team concludes, therefore, that the expectation that deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities has been met, and that the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

## Enhancement of learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.10 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified. Although the College's approach to the systematic monitoring and review of enhancement activity is in its infancy, the team considers the expectation to have been met based on the level to which the College has introduced and integrated a set of initiatives to enhance both employability skills and support for those student studying in part-time mode.

4.11 Therefore, the team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Findings

5.1 The team investigated the theme of Student Employability at the College. The team found that students were well prepared for progression into employment and/or advancing within existing employment roles.

5.2 The College provision since 2011-12 has centred largely on part-time, work-based learners. The majority of the higher education students are employed and completing a qualification as part of the skills development, demanded by their employer. A number of the higher education programmes already embed employability skills and have extensive and effective links with employers. The team heard in their meetings with students and alumni that students were well prepared for employment, or continuing employment.

5.3 The College's higher education provision is vocationally focused and students are supported using a number of approaches including strong and established links with employers and integrated 'live' projects and briefs. The College actively engages with employers and has developed an Employment Engagement Strategy. This strategy focuses upon three strands: the development of apprenticeships, provision of statutory programmes, and bespoke packages for employers. The development of progression routes and HNC/Ds are an essential element. Progression pathways are mapped from advanced apprenticeships in IT, Engineering Construction and Customer Service to appropriate level 4 and 5 qualifications. The team heard that the College is committed to extending work placement/experience both as a provider but also as an employer. The increased provision for work-based learning at levels 4 to 6 is part of the College strategy to embed employability skills in its provision.

5.4 The College is committed to developing employability skills for all students and has set up the Richmond upon Thames College Enterprise Society to provide a forum for developing and exchanging ideas relating to entrepreneurship and enterprise.

5.5 Currently, there is little evidence of how the provider utilises and/or analyses destination/leaver statistics. The team noted that the College HE Forum and the Employability Skills Task and Finish Group, whose remit is to implement and monitor employability skills across the provision, will have an overview of employability and develop more systematic ways to capture and record effective data that can be easily communicated to prospective students and employers.

5.6 Some Graphic Design staff engage in their own professional practice in design/illustration, which provides useful contacts and networking opportunities, and ensures an expectation and currency of professional practice as part of the teaching and learning on the course.

5.7 As part of the Building a Sustainable Future initiative, the College has entered into partnership with one of the largest publishing firms in London, Haymarket Publishing. Strategic plans are in development to provide more work experience placements and internships with Haymarket, who plan to relocate to an adjacent site of the College. Haymarket will work more closely with the College to influence and lead the design of provision, to ensure that it is relevant to the needs of industry for now and into the future. A range of ideas have already been discussed in principle such as scholarships for higher education students and collaborative projects, building upon the track record of higher education Graphic Design students over the last few years.

5.8 Employer Forums are used systematically in Construction and the Built Environment and Engineering programmes to review the validity and relevance of the programme. External examiner reports have made reference to strong links with industry, strong teaching, success in competitions and class-leading creative output.

5.9 The Graphic Design programme also makes some use of the Employer Forums to review the validity and relevance. Industry involvement and 'live briefs' are an important and significant part of the course design, as are the industry experts who are an integral part of the teaching and learning. High level and local designers are used to provide a broad range of expertise. In Early Years, employers provide mentors for students and advise and provide support for the work-based assignments. There was also evidence of employers and industrial partners in consultation with the College, examining how learning resources maintained their currency.

5.10 In Graphic Design, the course blog is used in an innovative way to ensure that creative exhibitions and future employment opportunities are kept alive and current.

5.11 The team noted that the College is keen to develop an alumni association, in order to keep in touch with students who have studied at the College and who are now in work. Past students are invited back to discuss how the programme has supported them in finding employment and how the College can improve further.

## 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 27-29 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/assuringstandardsandquality](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality).

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](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary).

### 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* (FQHEIS).

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

### **Programme (of study)**

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

**Programme specifications**

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

**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.

QAA717 - R3712 - May 14

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786