



# Higher Education Review of Croydon College

May 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 Croydon College. The review took place from 19 to 21 May 2014 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Glenn Barr
- Mrs Marian Stewart
- Mr Neil Mackenzie (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Croydon College and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)<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 student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
  - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

In reviewing Croydon 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 section explains the method for [Higher Education Review](#)<sup>4</sup> and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

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<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/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106).

<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/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review).

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Croydon College

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

- The maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies 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 Croydon College.

- The high quality and level of support provided for non-standard entry students during the admission process and the early stages of their programme (Expectations B2 and B3).
- The consistent and highly accessible support provided for students through the tutorial system, which makes a significant contribution to facilitating student achievement (Expectations B3 and B4).
- The strategic approach that embeds employability across higher education provision (Expectations B3 and Enhancement).
- The comprehensive information contained in University Centre Croydon handbooks, which students consult regularly and find to be very useful and highly effective (Expectation C).

### Recommendations

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

By September 2014:

- ensure that all higher education students receive comparable inductions (Expectations B3 )
- ensure that all students are provided with an opportunity to engage in the College's student representation process (Expectation B5).

By June 2015:

- adopt a consistent approach to the monitoring and review of all higher education programmes, including the oversight of external examiner reports (Expectations B7 and B8).

### Theme: Student Employability

The College has adopted a strategic commitment to enhancing the employability of its students, and this work is evident throughout its provision of higher education and was clearly articulated by staff at all levels of the institution and recognised by students.

Many courses at the College make use of professional placements in order to ground academic learning in practical skills and in line with the focus on provision of vocational education. The College has established an Employability Hub that offers a central point for

careers support and a dedicated staff resource to support students and staff in employability initiatives. Relevant employers are engaged in the design and review of academic programmes to ensure their relevance and to enhance the learning opportunities available to students.

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

## About Croydon College

Croydon College (the College) is a large general further education college in the centre of Croydon. It has a mission to 'inspire our community through high quality education and training'. Its vision is 'Inspiring and supporting learners through outstanding Teaching and Learning to achieve Further and Higher Education qualifications, developing Employability Skills and changing lives.' Croydon is a socio-economically diverse borough with some wards having low levels of disadvantage and others that are among the most deprived in England. The majority of the College's higher education students are drawn from the local area and sub-region.

The College has over 8,000 students enrolled. A total of 735 students are studying higher education programmes in 2013-14. There are 579 full-time students and 156 part-time. With the exception of one programme area the College manages its higher education through the University Centre Croydon.

The College's dual heritage of technical and art colleges is reflected in the range of the current higher education provision. The portfolio falls into three main categories which are roughly equivalent in terms of student numbers: Education/Early Childhood/Health and Social Care/Criminology, Psychology and Social Justice; Art and Design; Business, Law and Human Resources Management.

Major changes since the College's June 2010 Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) are twofold. Firstly a strategic decision was taken to work with a new degree-awarding body, the University of Sussex. The College was recognised as a full partner affiliated to the University of Sussex in the summer of 2010. The second major change is that permission to use the company name University Centre Croydon has been granted by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). The College's higher education provision is primarily delivered within the University Centre on the Fairfield campus.

The College remains focused on offering opportunities to enter and succeed in higher education for the widest possible constituency. This significantly non-traditional student body requires more support than a more typical young new entrant intake. This, coupled with a reduction in funding resulting from changes in policy, means that there is a significant challenge to maintain and improve the level of service and support.

The College works with two degree-awarding bodies, the University of Sussex and London Metropolitan University. It also delivers programmes leading to awards from the awarding organisation, Pearson. All provision previously validated by London Metropolitan University, other than the Bachelor of Law (LLB) award, has now been transferred to the University of Sussex.

The College has responded fully and effectively to the recommendations made in the IQER report of June 2010.

## Explanation of the findings about Croydon 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 The College's degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation are ultimately responsible for setting threshold standards and ensuring that each qualification is allocated to the appropriate level in the FHEQ.

1.2 The arrangement with the University of Sussex is one where the University recognises Croydon College as a full partner institution. Under this arrangement the College's quality assurance policies and processes operate independently of those of the University but the University approves and recognises them as fit for purpose. The University of Sussex is responsible for the oversight and maintenance of the academic standards of its validated programmes delivered at the College. London Metropolitan University academic regulations provide the guidance for the delivery and assessment of the Bachelor of Laws (LLB) programme, which was revalidated by London Metropolitan University in 2012-13. London Metropolitan University retains responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of academic standards and assessments for this programme. The Pearson BTEC HNC Building Services is designed and validated by Pearson, and the College maintains academic standards through appropriate programme delivery procedures. The programme specifications provide the guidance for teaching, learning and assessment of students at the appropriate level.

1.3 The team reviewed relevant College and University documentation, including collaborative quality assurance and validation documents, external examiner reports, internal programme and higher education annual reviews, programme specifications and assignment briefs. The team also met teaching staff to explore their use and understanding of the FHEQ as a reference point in the maintenance of academic standards.

1.4 Croydon College's quality assurance and assessment policies and procedures effectively support academic standards and assessment on the programmes it offers. The College also utilises these documents and the college's Internal Verifiers' Handbook for BTEC Programmes to support the Pearson Building Services programme. In order to support the delivery of threshold academic standards, the College has a robust three-tier committee system that manages higher education quality assurance and delivery from individual programme to College level provision. External examiners confirm that academic standards and assessment strategies are appropriate on all programmes delivered by the College.

1.5 The ultimate responsibility for allocating each qualification to the appropriate level of the FHEQ rests with the College's degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation. The team concludes that the College is effectively fulfilling its responsibilities in meeting the expectation through close adherence to its degree-awarding bodies' and awarding organisation's policies and programme specifications. Therefore, Expectation A1 is met both in design and operation and 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 All programmes make reference to subject benchmark statements in their validated programme specifications. Subject benchmark statements and professional body frameworks inform programme learning outcomes, and these are individually identified in modular assignment briefs. London Metropolitan University and Pearson are responsible for the design of programmes and for ensuring relevant professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements and subject and qualification benchmark statements are taken into account. The University of Sussex, while retaining overall responsibility for professional and academic benchmarks, has a collaborative approach to the design of programmes validated for delivery at the College.

1.7 The review team tested Expectation A2 through a review of validation reports, annual programme reviews, Annual Monitoring Reports and external examiner reports and programme specifications. The team also met senior management and teaching staff.

1.8 Validation proposals and reports demonstrate the College's thorough internal validation process for higher education programmes. The College level validation takes place at least three weeks prior to external validation by the degree-awarding body and specifically requires validation/revalidation documentation to make appropriate reference to 'external reference points, namely, QAA benchmarks, the FHEQ, QAA Code of Practice and professional body frameworks (where appropriate)'.

1.9 The degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation are responsible for ensuring the appropriate use of relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements during the programme design and validation/revalidation stages. The College fulfils its responsibilities in maintaining its degree-awarding bodies' and awarding organisation's standards through the adherence to programme specifications.

1.10 Overall the review team considered that the College carries out its responsibilities effectively to ensure that programme design takes full account of relevant professional and subject benchmark statements. The team therefore concludes that Expectation A2 is met and 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**

1.11 The University of Sussex and London Metropolitan University use standardised programme specification formats that meet the requirements of *Chapter A3: The programme level* of the Quality Code. Pearson provides published specifications for programmes leading to their awards. The College produces programme handbooks that provide information on the programme aims, module content, learning outcomes, and assessment strategies. The handbooks also present information on the teaching and learning methods that will enable students to achieve intended learning outcomes.

1.12 The review team tested Expectation A3 by reviewing an extensive sample of programme handbooks, module specifications and associated assignment briefs. The team also met teaching staff and students to understand the impact of the handbook content at programme level.

1.13 The evidence showed that the definitive programme information provided aligns with *Chapter A3: The programme level* of the Quality Code. There is some variation in format and content between programme handbooks. In particular, the Pearson BTEC HNC Building Services handbook does not contextualise College and programme information, and is less comprehensive in its range of College and higher education related content than the handbooks for other programmes. All students make very good use of their handbooks, and found them helpful in understanding the requirements of their programme of study. Programme handbooks are available on the College's virtual learning environment (VLE), and students confirmed that their programme handbook, either online or as a potential downloaded document was easily accessible.

1.14 The definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements for a programme of study is regularly reviewed. Review is achieved through the validation, revalidation and periodic reviews cycles prescribed by the degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation.

1.15 The review team concludes that the College makes available appropriate programme-level information and the information is regularly reviewed. The level of variation in content and format of some programme handbooks was not sufficient to indicate that Expectation A3 was not met overall. The team therefore concludes that Expectation A3 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**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**

1.16 The College and degree-awarding bodies have clear procedures in place for programme development, approval and review. While the College follows degree-awarding body procedures for programme validation, it has its own procedure for scrutinising new course proposals.

1.17 Initial authorisation for a proposed new programme rests with the Senior Management Team. If approved, the proposal undergoes internal validation prior to external validation by the degree-awarding body. After validation, application for minor modifications allows programme updating or improvement. The policy on new course approvals and re-approval meets the Expectation.

1.18 In testing the College's procedures, the review team met with senior and academic staff, examined College policies and examples of validation documentation, including those from the University of Sussex and London Metropolitan University.

1.19 Internal validations are thorough with teams and the panel following a detailed checklist and involving external advisers or employers. A three-year cycle of review and revalidation applies to validations with the University of Sussex with subsequent revalidations extending to five years. The LLB programme follows the processes of approval of London Metropolitan University. The College is one of two partners for this programme and curriculum design and approval is primarily that of the degree-awarding body. The Pearson BTEC HNC in Building Services programme, unlike other, validated HNCs at the College, is not subject to the same detailed scrutiny or programme specification. It is, however, subject to standard college validation procedures and provides sufficient information for students in the programme handbook.

1.20 Overall, the review team found that the College's approach to approval and review is thorough and that the procedures work effectively. The team therefore concludes that Expectation A4 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**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**

1.21 The formal agreements with each degree-awarding body and organisation set out the management of threshold academic standards. The degree-awarding bodies are ultimately responsible for ensuring the appropriate use of independent and external participation in the management of threshold academic standards. In addition the College has its own procedures for external participation in validation and periodic review processes. External examiner appointments are the responsibility of the degree-awarding bodies with nomination from the College for the University of Sussex programmes. Validation documentation makes appropriate reference to external benchmarks such as the Quality Code; including the FHEQ, subject and qualification benchmark statements. The College and its agreements, regulations and procedures meet Expectation A5.

1.22 In testing the College's procedures, the review team met senior and academic staff, and examined agreements with degree-awarding bodies, College policies and examples of validation documentation. The team examined minutes of meetings in the College's higher education committee structure and external examiner reports.

1.23 The College uses a broad range of external reference points in the design, management and review of its programmes. The needs of the relevant employment sector inform curriculum design. The College's employability agenda informs curriculum design and assessment. Most programmes have a vocational or work-based learning element with students undertaking placement, applying their studies to their own workplace or undertaking realistic assessment briefs. Foundation degrees conform to the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. The LLB programme references to national training benchmarks and the Post Graduate Diploma in Human Resource Management has Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development validation. There is good evidence of engaging with external examiners and university link tutors.

1.24 Overall, the College not only fulfils its responsibilities to its degree-awarding bodies but also makes extensive use external reference points to inform its activities and further its employability agenda. The review team concludes that Expectation A5 is met and 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**

1.25 The College has its own academic regulations, agreed by the degree-awarding bodies and ultimately fulfilling the regulations of its degree-awarding bodies. Validation and periodic review processes, outlined in Expectation A4, map assessments with programme and module outcomes to ensure appropriate coverage. The college uses the Pearson quality assurance procedures for the management of the HNC Building Services.

1.26 The review team tested the evidence by meeting with staff and students and reviewing a range of documents including, regulations, validation and external examiner reports, module and course handbooks.

1.27 Programme specifications examined by the team demonstrate a clear identification of learning outcomes and assessment strategies. The University of Sussex and London Metropolitan University have comprehensive Academic Regulations detailing the assessment process. The College has its own suite of assessment documentation to establish a clear framework for robust, valid and reliable assessments. Boards of examiners ensure fair consideration of student achievement for all programmes. The University of Sussex and London Metropolitan University manage their respective boards while the College manages the Pearson BTEC HNC Building Services board of assessors. External examiners confirm the validity and reliability of assessments and appropriate conduct of boards of examiners.

1.28 Overall the team concludes that the assessment processes and documentation are fit for purpose. External examiners confirm that assessments are at the appropriate level. The review team therefore concludes that the College's procedures meet Expectation A6 and the level of associated risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

1.29 In reaching its positive judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All of the expectations for this judgement area were met and the associated levels of risk were low. In all aspects of this judgement area the College complies with the requirements of its degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation. The team identified no recommendations or affirmations for this judgement area. No features of good practice were identified. The review team therefore concludes that the maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation **meets UK expectations**.

## 2 Judgement: Quality of student 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 As described in Expectation A4 above, the College follows the clear procedures for programme design and approval set out in its own documentation and that of its degree-awarding bodies. London Metropolitan University is responsible for the writing and validation of its LLB degree. The University of Sussex Partnership Handbook provides clear and detailed instructions on the proposal, preparation and validation and revalidation of courses to be delivered on its behalf. Guidelines for programme design are explicit. The College complies with its own internal validation procedures, prior to submitting documentation to the University of Sussex for external validation. These procedures meet Expectation B1.

2.2 In testing the processes the review team looked at the documentation and minutes of validation, periodic review and revalidation panels. The team talked to senior and academic staff and met students from a range of programmes.

2.3 The evidence shows that the College has clear and effective processes for the development of programmes for validation. Meetings held with both senior and academic staff demonstrated thorough knowledge of programme development and validation processes. Subject and qualification benchmark statements inform programme development. Curriculum development and assessment instruments take account of the level and occupational requirements of each qualification. Documentation confirms that the College meets conditions and recommendations set at validation. Independent subject specialists, external advisers, employers and students support the development of new programmes and the periodic review of existing programmes. The College prepares thorough, reflective reviews of programme content and performance to inform the revalidation process.

2.4 Overall, the review team concludes that the College's policy and procedures for programme design and approval meet Expectation B1 and the associated level of risk is low.

**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**

2.5 The College has responsibility for admissions policies and procedures under the terms of its agreements with its degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation. Policies and procedures are the ultimate responsibility of the University Centre Croydon Board, which provides strategic oversight and consideration to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of admissions policies and procedures. The policies and procedures used to admit students are clear. Responsibility for admission decisions rests with programme teams, with lead staff members monitoring and reviewing the application of policies and procedures.

2.6 The review team tested the operation of the admissions policies and procedures by talking to students, their representatives and staff. They also scrutinised policy and operational documents.

2.7 The evidence confirms that the admissions process is effective. Admissions policies and procedures are consistently applied and are considered by students to be fair. Students comment on the clarity of information available to applicants and the ease with which they progressed from application to admission. This information includes clear reference to the complaints and appeals process, which has explicit reference to the admissions process.

2.8 The admissions process includes extensive use of interviews. These were perceived by students to be very positive and effective in ensuring they were admitted to the right course at the right level. In addition, all unsuccessful applicants are written to and given the opportunity to join an appropriate course that could lead to a higher education programme in the future. Processes and policies are clearly applied and monitored across the provision and results in a positive experience for students.

2.9 Due to the nature of the College's recruitment there are a high proportion of non-standard entry students. The College fully recognises this and has implemented a very effective range of approaches that take into account this recruitment profile. Students that may require additional support to study at higher education level are identified early and monitored throughout their time at the College. The high quality and level of support provided for non-standard entry students during the admission process and the early stages of their programme is a feature of **good practice**.

2.10 The review team concludes that the College has clear and consistently applied admissions policies and procedures which are accessible to students and staff. Therefore Expectation B2 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B3: Learning and teaching**

**Findings**

2.11 The College's Teaching and Learning Strategy articulates the College's approach to the provision of learning and teaching and learning resources. This is led and monitored by the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Committee. Teaching staff are well qualified and most have teaching qualifications. Teaching development is supported through a mentoring scheme for new staff, the structured observation of teaching and the sharing of good practice in learning and teaching. The College's policies and procedures meet Expectation B3.

2.12 To determine whether this expectation was met the review team tested the evidence through meetings with senior staff, teaching staff and students, and by scrutinising relevant policies, procedures and records of teaching observations.

2.13 The evidence demonstrates that learning and teaching at the College is at the appropriate level and processes are in place to assure this. Students are able to demonstrate the skills they have developed through assessments and told the team that they are very satisfied with learning and teaching and the College.

2.14 Teaching staff possess appropriate qualifications, normally at a level above the course being taught and the majority of staff also have relevant teaching qualifications. Higher Education Academy accreditation is encouraged and staff have engaged positively with this.

2.15 There is a strong evidence of the development of employability skills, which are firmly embedded in the higher education provision. The Teaching and Learning Strategy emphasises the importance of employability skills and their development and the majority of programmes offer the opportunity to gain work experience or to link theory with existing employment where a student is already employed. The implementation of an employability initiative, and the establishment of an Employability Hub to act as a focus for aspects of employability, further emphasises the College's commitment to the employability of students (see also paragraph 4.8 and section 5: Commentary on the Theme). The strategic approach that embeds employability across higher education provision is a feature of **good practice**.

2.16 There is sound evidence of the sharing of good practice in learning and teaching. This includes the structured use of lesson observations and standing items on relevant departmental and programme committees . There is also a mentoring system for new teaching staff that has a positive impact on the development of teaching and learning practice.

2.17 Support is provided to ensure all students are able to achieve intended learning outcomes. There is positive use of personal tutoring to support learning, which is valued highly by students. In particular students who had entered through a non-traditional route, or who had taken a significant break in their education found the tutorial support especially helpful (See also paragraph 2.9 and associated feature of **good practice**). Students who require additional support are identified through the Higher Education Achievement Tracking

system that operates across the College's provision (see also paragraph 2.23) . Students with disabilities are identified and provided with support to achieve on their chosen course. Students reported having had a very positive experience of this service. Students were also positive about the feedback that they received on their assessed work, stating that it was generally timely and supported their development for future assessments. The consistent and highly accessible support provided for students through the tutorial system, which makes a significant contribution to facilitating student achievement is a feature of **good practice**.

2.18 The VLE is used consistently and extensively to support learning, including the use of interactive content. Students were positive about its use and were supported by teaching staff and relevant technical staff. Staff are making positive use of data made available by the system to support developments in VLE implementation.

2.19 Deliberate steps are taken to engage students positively with the learning and teaching that they receive (see also Expectation B5). This has resulted in a number of changes to provision, for example to assessment strategies. Students were generally satisfied with the learning resources available to them, and were also aware of how to make requests for additional library resources. However, students on the Pearson BTEC HNC Building Services programme have not been informed of all learning opportunities available to them at College. The induction for these students did not cover the use of the library, the VLE or the quiet study areas reserved for higher education students. Pearson BTEC HNC Building Services students had not been introduced to the VLE and had a three-month wait after enrolment before receiving login details and receiving an induction. The review team **recommends** that by September 2014 the College ensure that all higher education students receive comparable inductions.

2.20 Overall, the team concludes that policies and processes to support learning are effective. While there is a need to ensure that all students are informed of the opportunities available to them, the majority of students were well informed. The team concludes that it was feasible for the recommendation to be promptly addressed and that therefore the overall impact on provision as a whole was minimal. Therefore, Expectation B3 is met and the 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**

2.21 The College takes a strategic approach to enabling the development and achievement of its students. The Teaching and Learning Strategy sets out this approach. There are links between programme teams and the College support services with named higher education links within Student Advice Services, Learning Support and the library. Students receive an induction to their programme and programme handbooks are made available on the VLE. A personal tutor system operates, which aims to support students and facilitate academic progression and retention. Students have a range of opportunities for developing their personal, professional and academic skills with the development of employability skills embedded in the curriculum.

2.22 The review team assessed the evidence through meetings with students, teaching staff and support staff, and by scrutinising policy and strategy documents.

2.23 The College's arrangements for enabling and monitoring the development of students are good and include the Higher Education Achievement and Tracking system described in paragraph 2.17.

2.24 Personal tutoring arrangements are strong and valued by all students. Personal tutoring, together with the Higher Education Achievement and Tracking system are effective in identifying students that require additional support and ensuring that they are able to develop and achieve on their chosen course. This support is particularly valuable for non-standard entry students and is very effective in facilitating their higher education learning.

2.25 The College adopts an evidence-led and strategic approach to providing learning resources to students that are relevant to their programmes. The availability and appropriateness of learning resources is considered as part of programme validation and periodic review processes. Students were very satisfied with the resources available through the VLE, use of which is extensive and consistent across the majority of programmes. Some students expressed concerns about the availability of library resources and library opening times. The College has acknowledged these concerns and has responded within the bounds of its strategic approach referred to above. This has allowed the College to continue to provide a good standard of learning resources to students in the light of reduced funding. As a result, while all of the changes that students are seeking have not materialised, students understand the position faced by the College and a workable compromise has been found.

2.26 The College has a clear, strategic approach to providing students with employability skills through the new development of its Employability Hub, careers support, commercial up-skilling of staff, the use of employability days and industry specialist lectures. As a result students are provided with a significant range of opportunities to develop professionally while studying with the College.

2.27 Overall, the team concludes that the college generally allocates and manages its resources and supports its students in a way that enables academic, personal and professional potential to be achieved. The team concludes that Expectation B4 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student engagement**

**Findings**

2.28 The College's definition of student engagement is set out in the student charter and in a draft student engagement strategy. Representational structures are in place and regular meetings take place between student representatives and senior managers. Students have seats on all key committees and boards, including the board of governors, and each course is expected to have an elected student representative. In addition to formal committee structures, the College uses a variety of approaches to obtaining student feedback. These include surveys, involvement of students in formal review/validation processes, module evaluations and the personal tutorial system.

2.29 The review team tested the College's engagement of students by meeting with students and their representatives, meeting senior staff, teaching staff and support staff, and by scrutinising a range of documentation including policies, strategies and survey reports.

2.30 Formal representational structures are in place and these work well in most cases. Regular meetings take place between student representatives and senior managers. Students have membership on all key committees and boards and are supported in expressing their views through these committees . Course representatives are in place on the vast majority of programmes. However, students on the Pearson BTEC HNC Building Services programme did not have a course representative and stated that no information about student representation had been part of their induction. The review team **recommends** that by September 2014 the College ensure that all students are provided with an opportunity to engage in the College's student representation process.

2.31 Course representatives are offered training and support through the central higher education registry function. The Course representatives that the team met had a thorough understanding of their role and commented positively on the support that they received in expressing their views to the College.

2.32 Deliberate steps are in place to engage students in all aspects of their student experience. Students gave examples of changes to teaching, learning and assessment strategies that had taken place as a result of their feedback .Staff are open to student feedback and encourage it through both formal and informal means. Examples of changes that have been made as a result of student feedback include the improvement of library stock for public health courses and the reprogramming of assessments on business programmes.

2.33 The review team concludes that the College effectively engages with students. With the exception of HNC Building Services students, students are clear about how the representation system works and are positive about the way the college responds to their concerns. The recommendation made in this section relates to one programme area only and can be addressed promptly. Therefore, the team concludes that overall Expectation B5 is met and the level of associated 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**

2.34 A Teaching and Learning Strategy sets out general principles underpinning the College's approach to assessment across all levels of its provision. Further development of the principles takes place at programme level and in programme specifications. Assessment design ensures that students meet the learning outcomes of their programme of study.

2.35 Comprehensive strategies, processes and regulations support the assessment of student performance. As stated in Expectation A6 the University of Sussex and the London Metropolitan University have comprehensive academic regulations detailing the assessment process and the College's own assessment documentation establishes a clear framework for robust, valid and reliable assessments. Assessment for the Pearson BTEC HNC Building Services conforms to the requirements of the College and Pearson. The College's procedures for assessment enable Expectation B6 to be met.

2.36 To test assessment processes the review team met senior staff, academic staff, and students. The team reviewed external examiner reports, assessment tasks and module and annual programme reviews. Academic regulations, the assessment strategy, assessment tariff, and assessment and mark criteria provided additional evidence.

2.37 The assessment strategy and assessment tariff set the overall approach to assessment within the College, while standard assessment and mark criteria ensure consistency across programmes. Standard documentation, realistic assessment schedules and electronic processes provide effective administration of the assessment process. Student handbooks and programme specifications clearly identify the intended learning outcomes for the programmes. Students confirm that they are made aware of these throughout their studies and when undertaking assessment activities.

2.38 Assessments are thorough in covering the learning outcomes and students are clear about the level of the assessments and the relevant skills required to complete them. The College has introduced a wider variety of assessment activities as a result of reflective annual reviews and from monitoring student feedback. Students are well prepared and supported for assessments through formative activities, including the proofreading of assignments by specialist staff and in support for examination writing skills.

2.39 Internal moderation and second marking procedures are robust. Electronic submission of written assignments allows effective monitoring of deadlines and the use of anti-plagiarism software. Students are aware of late submission penalties and procedures to investigate and penalise academic misconduct. Feedback to students is helpful and allows them to identify how higher grades could be achieved. Programme leaders electronically monitor the return of marks to students to ensure that it is within set timescales. Detailed and comprehensive module and annual programme review reports allow course teams to consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of the assessment strategies in place. External examiners confirm the appropriateness of assessment activities and that they meet intended learning outcomes at the appropriate level.

2.40 Overall, the review team concludes that the College's approach to assessment is thorough. Assessment documentation contains clearly articulated grading criteria

communicated to students prior to assessment. External examiners and students commented on the clarity of assessment tasks. The College's policy and procedures ensure that students have appropriate opportunities to show that they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for their programmes. The team concludes that Expectation B6 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.41 Both the University of Sussex and the London Metropolitan University have clear definitions of the role of the external examination process. The College nominates suitable persons to undertake the role of external examiner and the University of Sussex reviews the nomination, makes the appointment and provides the induction. The College's University Centre Board considers the nominations prior to proposal. London Metropolitan University and Pearson appoint and induct their own external examiners. It is the responsibility of the College to ensure that all required programme documentation and student assessed assignment evidence, together with second marking evidence, is available for the external examiner by designated deadlines.

2.42 The University of Sussex reviews and forwards external examiner reports to the College for evaluation and response. After internal consideration the College returns the programme teams' responses and associated action plans to the University. External examiner reports and responses form part of the annual monitoring process. The College therefore has in place regulations and procedures for external examining to meet Expectation B7.

2.43 In testing the College's procedures, the review team met senior and academic staff and students. The team scrutinised external examiner reports, college responses, action plans and review documentation. Minutes of the Programme Boards, Boards of Study and the University Centre Board provided further evidence that the College consistently applies stated procedures.

2.44 Responses to external examiner reports for University of Sussex programmes are comprehensive. Detailed action plans include dates and names for achievement of actions. Thorough and evaluative annual programme reviews and Boards of Studies consider the external examiner reports and action plans. Issues feed into the University Centre Croydon Annual Monitoring Report and the considerations of the University Centre Croydon Board. The structured approach to external examiner reports, from programme team to University Board, ensures effective monitoring and response for University of Sussex programmes. The LLB programme is subject to the London Metropolitan University procedures for response and action. It is included in the programme review, Board of Study and University Board process and is mentioned in the statistical section of the annual monitoring report. It is therefore subject to similarly thorough processes of monitoring and overview as University of Sussex programmes. However, consideration of the external examiner report for the Pearson BTEC HNC in Building Services stands apart from these processes. Considered as part of the College's further education review procedures, this excludes it from the otherwise comprehensive monitoring and committee processes for higher education programmes. The review team **recommends** that by June 2015 the College adopt a consistent approach to the monitoring and review of all higher education programmes, including the oversight of external examiner reports.

2.45 Student representatives attend Programme Boards and the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Committee meetings, which include discussion of external examiners' comments. Representatives give feedback to their peers in class and through the VLE. External examiners meet with students during their visit and students confirmed that the College puts external examiner reports onto the VLE.

2.46 Overall, the review team considers the College's processes for action and oversight of external examiners' reports to be sound. Processes for nomination of external examiners and responses to their reports are thorough. Students the review team met were aware of the existence of external examiners' reports and knew how to access them. The team therefore concludes that the College's processes meet Expectation B7 and 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**

2.47 Programme teams produce comprehensive annual programme reviews taking into account student, staff and external examiner views and a range of performance data. The process involves peer review by other higher education programme leaders. Quality enhancement plans are central to the process for checking the previous year's actions and setting new targets. Finalised annual programme reviews and associated data, inform the higher education Annual Monitoring Report, which is scrutinised by the College Executive Group and the Governing Body. This single Annual Monitoring Report covers higher education programmes with the University of Sussex and London Metropolitan University.

2.48 A three-tier system of Programme Board, Boards of Studies and University Centre Board monitors programme performance throughout the year. Additionally, the College Executive Group reviews Quality Enhancement Plans and a range of data at three points during the academic year as part of the College's overall quality cycle. Programmes are also subject to periodic review and revalidation to a planned timetable. The processes meet Expectation B8.

2.49 In testing the College's processes, the review team met senior staff, academic staff and students. In addition, it reviewed examples of Annual Monitoring Reports, Quality Enhancement Plans and minutes from the College's higher education committee system.

2.50 The team saw evidence that monitoring processes are effective and result in actions to secure improvement. For example, student input during programme review resulted in offering a particular module on the LLB, improvements to the timing of assessments and the nature of feedback on business programmes. The College is also effective in reviewing its own processes, for example it identified a need for more reflective annual reviews and improvement plans, which the team confirm was successful. Annual programme reviews examined by the team are comprehensive and reflective providing ample evidence for the thorough Annual Monitoring Report. Senior and teaching staff, whom the review team met, clearly described the processes, their involvement in them and how the annual monitoring processes fed into overall college enhancement plans. The Pearson BTEC HNC Building Services programme, reviewed as part of the College's further education quality processes, lacks the same level of detail and reflection. The omission of this programme from the higher education annual monitoring process and higher education Annual Monitoring Report results in an incomplete review and overview of all higher education programmes at the College (see also paragraph 2.44 and recommendation).

2.51 Overall, the review team saw effective processes for annual and periodic review. Clear and reflective annual reports with timelines and action points were evident for University of Sussex and London Metropolitan University programmes. The team therefore concludes that the College processes meet Expectation B8 and the level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.52 Student complaints and academic appeals are subject to the College's internal complaints procedure, and those of its degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation. The College has fair, effective and timely procedures for handling students' complaints and academic appeals.

2.53 The review team considered the way in which complaints and appeals are dealt with in practice through a review of College, degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation procedures, records of complaints, the student submission and discussions with staff and students.

2.54 The College has thorough, transparent processes for managing complaints and appeals. The generic complaints procedure is applicable to all College further and higher education students and other stakeholders, and has clearly prescribed maximum timescales for responding to set stages in the complaints procedure, as well as information on whom to contact. Formal complaints are responded to at senior management level by the Assistant Principal Curriculum Development and Quality, who presents an annual Complaints Report to the College Governors. The Complaints Report 2012-13 presented to the University Centre Croydon Board states that a total of 25 formal complaints were made by higher education students. The complainants were from a variety of academic levels and programmes of study across University Centre Croydon. 60 per cent of the formal complaints were resolved to the students' satisfaction, and 44 per cent of the complaints were found to be unjustified following an internal review. Students reported that many issues were dealt with effectively at the informal stage although records of informal complaints are not currently maintained by the College.

2.55 The College has a two-tier system for resolving complaints. Students are recommended to try to resolve a complaint at an informal level prior to lodging a formal complaint. Students have the right of appeal against any formal complaint or a complaint relating to the assessment process. All appeals are lodged with the higher education Registry Manager. Registry staff will support students making a complaint to ensure independence of the implementation of the complaints procedure. Information on the complaints and appeals procedures is available in programme handbooks and on the College's VLE. Students confirmed that the complaints procedure on the VLE was easily accessible.

2.56 In addition to the individual complaints process, the student body have forums that permit issues of collegiate or student cohort concern to be raised. Elected student representatives are able to bring student issues of concern to the attention of relevant boards and committees. There is a Student Governor who is able to represent student views to the College's Governing Body. Student Council meetings and the Student Parliament provide an additional forum for student representatives to discuss issues of concern.

2.57 The Academic Regulations for London Metropolitan University and the University of Sussex contain relevant sections on their respective complaints procedures. The College's document 'Quality Assurance at University Centre Croydon' sets out a range of quality assurance information, including the higher education complaints procedure. The University of Sussex has approved the content of this document. Both the University of Sussex and London Metropolitan University Academic Regulations permit appeals against the

assessment process but not against academic judgements. The University of Sussex and London Metropolitan University will only investigate a complaint from a student once the College complaints procedure has been exhausted. Pearson will process a student complaint once internal College procedures have been exhausted.

2.58 Documented complaints and appeals are considered during the higher education programme reviews and annual monitoring processes, and are individually referenced in the University Centre Croydon Annual Monitoring Report, which is submitted to both the University of Sussex and London Metropolitan University.

2.59 The review team concludes that the College has effective processes in place to manage informal and formal complaints and appeals. The processes support internal College appeals and formal appeals to the degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation. Students and staff have found the complaints and appeals systems to be effective, easily accessible and transparent. The team therefore concludes that Expectation B9 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation:** Met

**Level of risk:** Low

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others**

**Findings**

2.60 The College has responsibility for the effective management of its arrangements with employers and placement providers where learning opportunities within the work environment constitute an integral aspect of the student's programme. The College provides placement handbooks for students, employers and placement providers. The handbooks are designed to ensure that all parties understand the programme the student is undertaking, their respective roles and responsibilities and how they can support the student. The approach taken towards the quality assurance of placement learning enables the College to meet Expectation B10.

2.61 The review team looked at programme specifications, programme handbooks, and placement documentation. The team also met students, teaching and support staff and had telephone discussions with placement providers.

2.62 The College provides good support to students and placement providers for students for whom a placement is an integral part of their programme of study. The vast majority of students who enrol on the College's higher education programmes are either in employment or are self-employed, and use their employment experiences to contextualise theory and practice. The FD in Early Years, and the FD in Public Health and Social Care have mandatory placements integrated into their programmes. Students are normally able to use their places of employment as their placement setting. However, if students are not employed in the sector they are expected to identify their own placement setting. Placement selection is student directed but support is available should a student experience difficulty in identifying and securing an appropriate placement setting.

2.63 Placement handbooks are issued to students and placement providers. They contain useful information and are fit for purpose. College placement mentors provide very good support to both students and placement mentors in order to ensure that placement learning outcomes are met. Disclosure and Barring Service checks for students in placements involving young or vulnerable people are carried out in a timely manner.

2.64 The College Employability Hub, established as part of the employability initiative, is intended to expand links with local employers and to develop and refine all College students' employability skills. A range of employer events at the College and the delivery of focused employability skills short courses have had the additional advantage of extending the range of possible placement and/or work experience opportunities for both students and for the up-skilling of staff. For example, one staff member was able to benefit from a work experience opportunity at the Treasury, and new placement opportunities for students include placements in a design studio and Orient Express workshops. (See also paragraph 2.15).

2.65 The review team concludes that the College has effective processes in place for managing and monitoring its work-based learning opportunities provided through arrangements with employers. Expectation B10 is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

2.66 The College does not deliver research degrees.

## **Quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings**

2.67 In reaching its judgement about the quality of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All applicable expectations have been met and risk is judged low in each case. Three recommendations were made in relation to a total of five expectations. Three features of good practice were identified in relation to this area. These three apply to three expectations and one, relating to employability, further contributes to the judgement on Enhancement of student learning opportunities.

2.68 The three recommendations all relate to a situation where one programme area is managed in the further education section of the College and therefore separately from the remaining higher education provision. The recommendations are made to ensure that the College has a comprehensive and coherent oversight of all higher education. The actions required will not therefore require or result in major change to structures, processes or practices and are capable of being implemented promptly.

2.69 The review 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 manages its responsibility for providing accurate information through the communications and marketing teams. Programme leaders are responsible for the accuracy of on-programme information. The degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation set out the College responsibilities in the formal partnership agreements and supporting documentation. The majority of information for the public, prospective and current students, and staff is made available online either through the College website or the internal VLE. The information on programmes provided through the University Centre Croydon is available through a discrete area on the College website. This also includes information on facilities and support services. Course handbooks are available on the VLE. The recently developed student charter draws together information also available in handbooks. All UCAS information is managed by the College admissions team. Academic standards and quality information are set out in the relevant degree-awarding body or organisation regulations and in the College Quality Assurance Handbook.

3.2 The review team tested information was fit for purpose, trustworthy and accessible by speaking to students and staff, scrutinising the documentation mentioned above and the website and VLE.

3.3 Students told reviewers that the information provided before they joined the College was informative and accurate. The courses on which they were enrolled were meeting their expectations and the information provided to them prior to starting their study had proved helpful. They also commented on the ease with which they were able to locate the information they required.

3.4 The information provided to students studying with University Centre Croydon is comprehensive, accessible and of a high quality. Handbooks are provided to all students through the VLE. The information is relevant and students reported that they found the handbooks to be very useful. They frequently make reference to them to support their understanding of their course, learning outcomes and how to achieve them. The advice and guidance found in the handbooks provide strong support for studying at a higher education level. Handbooks also formed a key part of the induction for students studying within the University Centre Croydon (see also paragraph 1.13). The comprehensive information contained in University Centre Croydon handbooks, which students consult regularly and find to be very useful and highly effective is a feature of **good practice**.

3.5 The VLE is a key source of information for current students and all programmes except the Pearson BTEC HNC Building Services were using it to support student learning. Students found the VLE to be a supportive resource and it was clear that it was an important reference point when seeking out information. The team were able to confirm the quality, accuracy and accessibility of information on the VLE. The advanced features of the VLE were also being used to monitor usage by students and to influence future developments.

3.6 Ultimate responsibility for the accuracy of public information lies with the marketing department. Proofs are sent to relevant senior programme staff prior to publication for verification. The team were satisfied that staff knew of their responsibilities for the accuracy and completeness of information and were mindful of the procedures to be followed to ensure appropriate sign-off.

3.7 The College maintains very good records, information and statistics in order to assure the maintenance of academic quality and standards across its provision. This is reported and discussed at relevant boards and committees and communicated to validating partners where necessary. Senior managers and academic leaders showed a strong understanding of data which they used to inform the maintenance of standards and to quality assure learning opportunities.

3.8 The College provides a staff quality handbook available on the VLE. It is regularly updated with relevant information including examples of best practice, guidance and model documentation. Staff find the handbook useful and refer to it frequently.

3.9 Overall there are effective policies and procedures for checking the accuracy of information about the College's higher education provision. Staff and students confirmed the key sources of information as fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation C is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation:** Met

**Level of risk:** Low

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

3.10 In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The expectation for this judgement area was met and the associated level of risk was low. One feature of good practice was identified and there were no recommendations or affirmations. The review team therefore concludes that the quality of the information 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 College's approach to enhancement is clearly articulated through Strategic Drivers that encompass both the College's further and higher education provision. One Strategic Driver identifies the College's aims for student success and quality improvement. There are five associated Strategic Imperatives that set out the proposed framework for enhancing students' learning opportunities. Strategic Imperatives are routinely monitored at governor and senior management level through their incorporation into the College's key performance indicators. The Strategic Approach to Enhancement is supported by a monitored Quality Enhancement Plan. The work of the University Centre Croydon Board contributes to enhancement, for example, through the sharing of good practice. Individual Programme Boards also routinely consider quality enhancement.

4.2 The review team tested the College's strategic and operational approach to improving the quality of students' learning opportunities through a review of the College's Strategic Drivers and Strategic Imperatives, minutes of relevant meetings, the student submission meetings with staff and students in order to understand the College's approach to enhancement.

4.3 The College has an ethos that encourages enhancement of student learning opportunities. However, College staff have a range of views on the nature of enhancement as it applies to higher education provision. In discussions with staff the team had difficulty in discerning a shared understanding of the College position. However, the team were satisfied that enhancement activity was taking place and that it is aligned to the College strategy.

4.4 The College's approach to enhancement is effectively supported by the student voice. The Student Council and the Student Parliament provide the opportunity for students to become involved in enhancing and supporting the general College environment. They also provide platforms for students to raise issues aimed at supporting the development of the overall learning environment of the College.

4.5 There is a systematic, thorough and self-reflective evaluation of programme delivery. Evaluation takes place across all levels of the University Centre Croydon through the effective committee structure. This provides the opportunity to monitor the effectiveness of provision and to identify the potential for enhancing students' learning opportunities. The process includes the annual review of programme level delivery and quality assurance. The University Centre Croydon Annual Monitoring Report not only reports on university partner individual programmes, but also on issues affecting the wider higher education brief, for example the College's employability initiative.

4.6 The College's comprehensive and well established system of observation of teaching and learning contributes to the enhancement of learning opportunities by providing feedback to teaching staff and managers and is used to identify aspects of good practice that can be shared. In addition the University Centre Croydon implements 'Learning Walks' where classes are visited by an observer who will observe the class and consult with students on their 'in-class' learning experience, and the management of the class session. A formal report on the outcomes of the Learning Walks is presented to the University Centre Croydon Board.

4.7 The staff Appraisal process and the internal and external continuing professional development (CPD) sessions have also contributed to the enhancement of learning opportunities. For example, opportunities have been provided to enable staff to further develop skills in the use of the VLE, giving constructive feedback and the development of employability skills. Staff are also provided with the opportunity and time for commercial up-skilling. This ensures that they are familiar with current practice in their area of expertise, for example, a Business lecturer spent time at the Treasury, and a Public Health and Social Care lecturer spent a day with a medical team researching drug resistant TB. Records of CPD activities and up-skilling are reviewed during annual appraisals, where staff members are asked to reflect on the impact of their CPD activity in enhancing the learning environment.

4.8 An innovative activity linked to the Strategic Imperatives is the College's decision to focus on employability during 2013-14. The initiative prioritises support and planning to ensure all learners have optimal chances of employment on course completion. This is facilitated through a variety of learning opportunities aimed at developing a range of key skills required by employers. In October 2013 the College also opened its Employability Hub. The Hub provides a range of practical support, for example, short courses designed to improve employability skills such as: CV preparation; advertising part-time employment opportunities; and arranging employer showcase events at the College. Students speak highly of the activities of the Employability Hub. The early indications are that the activities of the Employability Hub will be a valuable asset in the enhancement of the student learning opportunities (see also paragraph 2.15).

4.9 The College has a strategic vision for the enhancement of learning opportunities. It achieves this through a range of effective operational approaches. The College ensures that students are able to participate in the process of enhancing their learning environment. It further seeks to enhance students' learning experiences through effective and professionally current classroom teaching and through innovative activities such as the Employability Hub. The team therefore concludes that the expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation:** Met

**Level of risk:** Low

## **Enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings**

4.10 In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. There are no recommendations, affirmations or instances of good practice. The College has a strategic approach to enhancing student learning opportunities and there is an ethos of continuous improvement. The review team therefore concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets UK expectations.**

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Findings

5.1 The College has adopted a strategic commitment to enhancing the employability of its students, and this strategy is evident throughout the higher education provision. This commitment is clearly articulated by staff at all levels of the institution and is recognisable to students.

5.2 As described in Expectations B3 and B10, many courses at the College make use of work related placements in order to ground academic learning in practical skills. This aligns with the College's focus on the provision of vocational education. Placements are student led. They complete workbooks during the placement and receive guidance from academic staff. Feedback about the value of placements was generally positive and students appreciate the opportunity to put their skills to practical use. In addition, there are effective procedures in place to support students while on their placement.

5.3 The College strives to provide employability opportunities for students that are directly relevant to their field of study. This is achieved through strong links between teaching staff and relevant local employers and practitioners. The College took the decision to implement a cross-college employability initiative in 2013 that goes beyond the vocational skills required of profession specific courses and seeks to develop skills and attributes that help students to secure employment and succeed. The College consulted a wide range of employers, including leading national companies, on the skills to be developed. Using the feedback from employers the College has created an expectation around eight employability attributes for all students on all courses. At the time of the review the attributes were being mapped to specific modules within the higher education offering.

5.4 An Employability Hub has been established to help deliver the employability initiative. The Hub offers a central point for careers support and a dedicated staff resource to support students and staff in employability initiatives. The work of the Hub was still relatively new at the time of the review. However, the College's commitment to this area of work was apparent and the Hub had already begun to have an impact on the opportunities available to students. Moreover, students had been engaged in the development of the departmental plan for the Employability Hub, demonstrating further the College's desire to meet the expectations of students. An example of the impact of this student engagement is the increased provision of mock interviews, offered as a direct result of student feedback. These interview opportunities have been well received by students and are seen as beneficial in their attempts to secure employment.

5.5 Relevant employers are engaged in the design and review of academic programmes, which helps to ensure their relevance and to enhance the learning opportunities available to students. This includes engaging employers in programme and module development, inviting employers to engage in 'Learning Walks' at the College and commercial up-skilling days for academic staff. The commercial up-skilling initiative was seen as particularly positive by staff, who had improved and updated the content of their teaching as a result of the experience.

## 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* (HEQIS).

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

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

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

**Programme specifications**

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

**Public information**

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

**Quality Code**

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

**Reference points**

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

**Subject benchmark statement**

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

**Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

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

**Threshold academic standard**

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

**Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

**Widening participation**

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

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© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2014  
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel: 01452 557 000  
Email: [enquiries@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@qaa.ac.uk)  
Website: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

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