



Higher Education Review of Leeds College of Building

November 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 Leeds College of Building. The review took place from 4 to 5 November 2014 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Glenn Barr
- Professor Andrew Downton
- Ms Sarah Mullins (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review the QAA review team:

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

In reviewing Leeds College of Building 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 2014-15 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,² and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

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

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

² Higher Education Review themes: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106

³ QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus.

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

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Leeds College of Building

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Leeds College of Building.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Leeds College of Building.

- The comprehensive learning and support practices produce high retention and achievement, including progression to employment and top up degree programmes (Expectation B4).
- The effective embedding of employability in the curriculum, assessments and learning experiences of students (Expectations B3, B4 and B6).
- The College's thorough responses to the Annual Student Submission and Action Plan (Expectation B5)
- The College's comprehensive engagement with industry at strategic and individual staff levels (Expectation B10).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Leeds College of Building.

By September 2015:

- ensure all student representatives are appropriately trained to engage in quality assurance process (Expectation B5)
- ensure that the name, position and institutions of external examiners and their reports are brought to the attention of students (Expectation B7)
- formalise and make explicit the processes for periodic review and programme approval (Expectations B1 and B8)
- ensure minutes of meetings accurately record the membership and roles of attendees and action points (Expectation C).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The College is increasingly distinguishing the requirements of higher and further education students in relation to physical and virtual learning resources, teaching observation and programme review (Expectations B3 and B8).

Theme: Student Employability

Leeds College of Building has a strong record in student employability. There was a feature of good practice in its last QAA review in 2010 for its links with employers. This continues to be the case in a college which is vocational and skills focused and which has responded well to initiatives from the government to develop Higher Level Apprenticeships. It has clear strategies to support student employability including Careers, Employer Engagement and Industrial Placements. Student learning and assessments are embedded with work-related knowledge and skills. Staff are well qualified and bring their own industrial experience to support student employability. Links with professional bodies are strong. There is a feature of good practice from this review relating to the individual and strategic engagement with the construction industry. An indicator of the effectiveness of employability is the high student employment rate.

About Leeds College of Building

The College's mission is based on the aim of 'Inspiring lives and building futures'. It specialises in construction education and training across a range of built environment and engineering programmes. It is the only specialist construction college in the UK. It has six campuses in the city of Leeds. A new campus will replace two of these sites in January 2015. Its Higher Education Strategy aims to meet local and national needs in the construction industry. It has a mixture of part and full-time and day release students on HNC/HND and Higher Level Apprenticeship programmes. There are 202 part-time/day release students (101 full-time equivalent) and 20 full-time students, making a total of 121 higher education students.

The College was a lead partner for the construction and built environment sector with the West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network. This has now been superseded by HEART (Higher Education Access Rewarding Transformation). It was successful in its bid for full-time students through 'core and margin' funding.

One of the College's key challenges is to continue to recruit students and find them employment in an economic recession. It has been successful in this over the past five years.

Leeds Metropolitan (now Beckett) University closed its Regional University Network in July 2012. The College now uses Pearson awards. It has also responded to the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills initiatives regarding part-time progression of apprentices in higher education.

In the QAA review in 2010, the College had six good practices. Four of these have provided the basis for improvements, such as the virtual learning environment (VLE) and links with employers. Two good practices are no longer relevant because the College changed its awarding body and did not have the links with another College for teaching observations. There were four desirable recommendations concerning the terms of reference for the Higher Education Strategy Forum, version control of documents, policies for the induction of new staff, and verification of assessments. All these have been implemented.

Explanation of the findings about Leeds College of Building

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 Following the termination of its collaborative partnership with Leeds Metropolitan University, and the completion of all remaining students on awards validated by the University at the end of academic year 2013-14, the College now delivers Higher National Certificate and Diploma (HNC/Ds) in Construction and the Built Environment, offered in partnership with Pearson. Level 5 NVQ diplomas in Sustainable Built Environment and the Level 4 Facilities Management, achieved through work-based learning (competence qualifications), are also offered as part of recently approved Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) programmes, developed by a national steering group of colleges, employers, Pearson and the National Apprenticeship Service.

1.2 The development of the HLA shows that the consortium led by the College aligned this award with the appropriate level of the FHEQ, and that programme learning outcomes are aligned with relevant qualification descriptors and national occupational standards. Appropriate Subject Benchmarks in Construction, Architectural Technology, and Engineering also informed the development of the HLA, through the involvement of relevant public sector regulatory bodies (PSRBs) including the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), Chartered Institution of Building Service Engineers (CIBSE), the

Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and the engineering services sector skills council SummitSkills Ltd.

1.3 Ultimate responsibility for setting standards for the HNC/HND lies with the awarding organisation. The College maintains standards with clear knowledge of these requirements. Relevant benchmark statements are mentioned in programme specifications. These standards are tracked and monitored internally through external examiner oversight. Students are awarded qualifications and credits on the basis of achievement of module and programme learning outcomes as specified in the various programme specifications.

1.4 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.

Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies Reference Points for Academic Standards

Findings

1.5 Ultimate authority for the academic standards and quality of awards at the College lies with Pearson as the awarding organisation. The academic framework for the College's HNC/D provision is specified by Pearson, through their approval of delivery of College awards and their constituent modules. The College's internal quality assurance guide defines in detail how operational delivery of Pearson validated modules and awards should be monitored. The Pearson BTEC Centre guide to assessment framework sets out the structure for the awards. There is a more detailed framework for planning and developing content and assessment. The College's local delivery of the framework is informed by its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy.

1.6 Responsibilities for maintaining standards are divided between Pearson and the College. Pearson retains responsibility for approving all programmes and modifications. There is shared responsibility for annual monitoring and production of definitive programme information, including programme specifications. All other responsibilities are delegated to the College.

1.7 The evidence for the effectiveness of these processes is demonstrated in the minutes of relevant meetings, the College's documentation on programme and module specifications, and the College quality assurance annual cycle. There are well documented faculty self-assessment reports, quality course reviews, and course handbooks. There is careful recording of assessment processes including internal and external verification of assessments.

1.8 All staff are given directed responsibilities for relevant aspects of the Quality Code, and the team confirmed in meetings that staff were well informed about the College's quality assurance policies and were applying processes consistently and effectively to secure the College's academic standards.

1.9 Assignments are subject to internal quality assurance. There are thorough checks of assessment against a sample of scripts for each unit by external examiners who report that they are satisfied with the management of academic standards. The College monitors external examiners' reports and responds constructively to examiners as well as preparing summaries for review by the senior management team and by the Corporation

1.10 The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards

Findings

1.11 The College notes it is the responsibility of the awarding organisation to maintain definitive records for each approved programme in the form of programme specifications. It is the College's responsibility to make these available to students and ensure they are used as a reference point for delivery and assessment of programmes and throughout the monitoring and review processes.

1.12 Each higher education programme is supported by a specification from Pearson BTEC which is strengthened by the programme specifications, unit and course handbooks. These are produced by curriculum managers to a standard template and contain consistent and detailed information for students. The specifications allow the Expectation for *Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards*, to be met and reflect the Indicators of sound practice.

1.13 In order to test this Expectation the team reviewed the College's self-evaluation document, the student submission, programme specifications, unit handbooks and course handbooks, the Pearson BTEC Quality Assurance Handbook and the Internal Quality Assurance Handbook. It also looked at documentation on the College website and VLE. The review team discussed the use of programme specifications with staff and students.

1.14 The programme specifications are used within external and internal quality assurance. Specifications are easily accessible on the College website to both prospective and current students and are part of the minimum expectations placed on the College's VLE content. Students demonstrated knowledge of programme specifications with students stating that staff discussed the programme specifications in detail. Staff commented on the use of programme specifications for assessment criteria and marking.

1.15 The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.16 Pearson has clear procedures for programme approval and monitoring. The College follows the required procedures and is subject to external monitoring by the awarding organisation. Programme design includes setting assessment activities at the appropriate level for the qualification, checked through internal verification and external examining processes. External expertise informs programme development. Processes of approval ensure that the College maintains academic standards at the appropriate level and the College's processes support the maintenance of these standards in accordance with awarding organisation regulations.

1.17 The review team examined approval and programme documentation from the awarding organisation and discussed the processes of maintaining academic standards by the College. The team met senior management and teaching staff to confirm knowledge and use of national benchmarks and frameworks.

1.18 The development of the HLA programme involved extensive external consultation to ensure that the qualifications met the needs of students, employers and professional bodies. Mapping of three Subject Benchmark Statements in Engineering, Construction, Property and Surveying and Architectural Technology preceded consultation and reference to professional bodies and standards. Consultation took place with the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), and the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE). A final mapping to national occupational standards with the Construction Industry Council, the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and SummitSkills Ltd further ensured occupational validity for the programme. Cooperation with a number of partner colleges and Pearson secured Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) accreditation for the qualification. In the College, approval to run the HLA and other new programmes rests with senior management and the Corporation (the Governing Body). Such extensive processes confirm the thoroughness of the College's approach to maintaining standards in development and approval of programmes.

1.19 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:

- **the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment**
- **both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.**

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

Findings

1.20 Pearson approves the delivery of awards and their constituent modules subject to the application of defined quality assurance procedures. The College implements and is subject to the awarding organisation processes of assessment, internal verification and external examination. Annual external assessment and sampling by the external examiner ensures that College programmes meet defined standards and an outcomes-based approach. The external examiner considers merit and distinction levels as defined in the Pearson award framework as well as threshold level achievement.

1.21 The application of internal and external quality assurance procedures ensures the demonstration through assessment of relevant learning outcomes and the satisfaction of threshold and awarding organisation standards.

1.22 To confirm that the College meets the expectation the review team examined awarding organisation regulations and the College's quality documentation and procedures, and met staff responsible for assessment and verification.

1.23 Electronic tracking processes record student achievement by unit and programme outcome. These processes provide accurate records for Boards of Examiners to make appropriate decisions. Internal verification of assessment activities prior to issue ensures that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve outcomes at the appropriate levels. Internal verification of a sample of assessed work provides confidence in the assessment decisions. The College follows awarding organisation regulations ensuring that qualifications awarded are as a result of the achievement of relevant learning outcomes. External examiners confirm the effectiveness of these processes and that decisions are sufficient, valid and reliable.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.

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

Findings

1.25 Monitoring of the standard of awards offered at the College takes place on an annual basis through the Pearson external examiner process. The external examiner checks that the standards of assessment and achievement demonstrated by students are consistent with Pearson higher national award standards. An overarching annual statement from Pearson confirms that the College meets the required standards to deliver BTEC Higher National qualifications.

1.26 Monitoring of the delivery of awards internally employs the mechanisms outlined in the Quality Assurance Handbook. The team confirms the embedding of processes established in this handbook in programme delivery, monitoring and review. Through its internal processes of monitoring and review and external monitoring by the awarding organisation, the College assures itself and its stakeholders that it consistently maintains academic standards.

1.27 The review team examined internal and external monitoring documentation to check conformity with the processes set out in the College and Pearson Quality Assurance handbooks. Meetings with senior staff and teaching staff further confirmed the application of these processes.

1.28 The College has a clear annual cycle of monitoring and review. Review procedures involve analysis of retention, achievement and success rates. Its Judgement of programme success depends on achievement of high scores in these measures. Additional measures of programmes achieving high standards are student success in external competitions and awards and programmes meeting employers' needs. The College's new higher education review process provides a more focused approach, explicitly addressing the achievement of academic standards. Pearson monitoring processes check and confirm that the College meets national standards. As noted in Expectation B8 the College reflects upon the validity and relevance of its programmes as part of the annual review process but programmes are not subject to an explicit, formalised periodic review and revalidation to a planned timetable .

1.29 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the degree-awarding body are appropriately set and maintained.**

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

Findings

1.30 External independent oversight, provided by standards verifiers (NVQ) and external examiners (HNC/HND), is inherent in the mechanism by which the College's validating partner, Pearson, confirms the setting, monitoring and maintenance of UK threshold academic standards at the College. External examiners visit annually to monitor Higher National programmes, and standards verifiers visit to monitor the NVQ programmes which form part of the HLA award. An annual Centre Quality Review and Development report is also provided by a Pearson-appointed external assessor.

1.31 The College monitors external examiners' reports and responds constructively to examiners as well as preparing summaries for review by the senior management team and by the Corporation. Faculty and college-wide curriculum self-assessment reports are used to monitor, maintain and enhance academic standards. Benchmarking of higher education student progression and outcomes against previous years' performance and national norms indicates that student retention, success and achievement are all ahead of national subject averages, and have improved year on year for the last three years within the College.

1.32 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of awarding organisations: Summary of the findings

1.33 The College meets all the Expectations regarding the maintenance of academic standards and there is low risk. Ultimate authority for the academic standards and quality of awards at the College lies with Pearson as the awarding organisation. The academic framework for the College's HNC/D provision is specified by Pearson, through its approval of delivery of College awards. The College notes it is the responsibility of the awarding organisation to maintain definitive records for each approved programme in the form of programme specifications. These are reproduced in handbooks. Pearson has clear procedures in place for programme approval and monitoring. The College follows the required procedures and is subject to external monitoring by the awarding organisation. The College implements, and is subject to, the awarding organisation's processes of assessment, internal verification and external examination.

1.34 The review team concludes that the maintenance of threshold academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of the awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design and Approval

2.1 Comprehensive processes of consultation preceded the introduction of the HLA programme. Responding to national initiatives, the College led the development of the Higher Apprenticeship in Construction Management (Sustainability). The College worked extensively with employers, other colleges, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and government agencies. Working groups examined Subject Benchmark Statements, the *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and occupational standards in order to inform curriculum development.

2.2 For HNC/D programmes the College relies on its awarding organisation, Pearson, for programme design and consequent alignment with the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. College processes for design and approval of programmes, working with awarding organisations and external bodies to ensure consideration of academic standards and student learning opportunities, are effective.

2.3 To test design and review processes the review team met senior staff, teaching staff and employers. The team examined documentation including minutes of internal and external meetings and programme specifications.

2.4 Senior management consider proposals for new programmes prior to confirmation by the Governing Body. College processes ensure full consideration of academic standards and learning opportunities prior to submission to awarding organisations for approval. The College consults with employers and professional bodies to maintain the currency of its curriculum offer. Mapping of the curriculum to academic and professional body benchmarks ensures that the programme is relevant and current. Employers who met the team confirm the willingness of the College to develop new programmes. The team noted plans, led by the Principal and the College's employer group, to explore programmes or developments furthering a sustainable construction agenda. However, the College does not publish principles which it considers when designing or developing programmes. It is **recommended** that the College formalise and make explicit the processes for periodic review and programme approval.

2.5 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission

Findings

2.6 It is the College's responsibility to recruit, select and admit students. The College's 'Think Differently, Think Diversity' campaign shows a college-wide commitment to diversity and inclusion in recruitment and selection. The College's Admissions Policy contains procedures in order to provide transparent, inclusive processes.

2.7 Students receive information regarding recruitment, selection and admissions at open days, through the College website, the Student Prospectus and from Student Services. Entry requirements, both standard and non-standard, show inclusivity and do not contain unnecessary barriers. The College has a centralised admissions team with a newly reviewed Admissions Policy which contains clear procedures for various enquiry and application types. Students with a complaint regarding admission are provided with a clear procedure, including expected timeframes.

2.8 The review team tested the operation and effectiveness of the admission, recruitment and selection procedures by examining the information available for students and information available to staff involved in the recruitment, selection and admissions process. There were meetings with students and senior, academic and support staff.

2.9 Recruitment, selection and admissions policies are transparent and inclusive. The Equality Diversity and Human Rights policy states the College will address areas of under-representation in terms of gender and ethnic profile through targeted positive action and the College is proactive in recruiting female students. Students said that recruitment activities were beneficial in providing information that enabled them to make informed decisions. They also stated that the selection process was clear and the admission process was easy to navigate. The College holds matrix accreditation for information, advice and guidance which shows confidence in staff capabilities.

2.10 There are effective processes in place to highlight any students with additional needs. Students can indicate additional support needs on their application, during induction or throughout the course and they are then referred to the Learning Support Unit. Additional needs will result in an individual learning plan and tailored support. Students praised the personalisation and availability of support put in place.

2.11 Procedures are set out for the admission processes for full and part-time students within the Admission Policy and the Admissions Induction Framework. Interviews can be requested by relevant tutors or students to aid the selection process and information is given on expected timeframes for receipt of an offer or refusal letter. Students acknowledged the effective use of interviews and believed the information provided before and after enrolment, including the information included in the enrolment pack, was sufficient for their transition from prospective to current student. The College monitors and updates its admission policy annually. The current admissions policy has recently been reviewed and updated in order to improve clarity and distinction for higher education students.

2.12 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.13 Learning and teaching is underpinned by the College's Teaching Learning and Assessment (TLA) strategy and by its Quality Improvement Policy (QIP). The TLA sets out strategies for providing a learning experience that allows student development and achievement. The QIP defines support strategies for achieving the TLA objectives through staff team meetings. A key feature of learning and teaching is the embedding of employability skills, especially through work experience.

2.14 Learning and teaching is evaluated through the observation of teaching, staff appraisal and development, stakeholder involvement and feedback, particularly from students and employers. Learning and teaching are also reviewed through formal annual quality review processes in Quality Course Reviews (QCRs) and faculty self-assessment reports (SARs).

2.15 To determine whether this Expectation had been met, the review team scrutinised the TLA and QIP policies and related reports and meeting minutes, and met academic and support staff, senior staff and students.

2.16 Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (OTLA) is core to the College's operational oversight of its standards of teaching and learning. Students' input is included in observations. Actions are fed into annual operational plans for the faculty and monitored at performance management reviews. Staff have significant relevant industrial experience and nearly all have degree or higher qualifications and relevant teaching certification. An appropriate range of internal and external staff development opportunities are provided for staff, including opportunities to register for higher degrees and to undertake periodic industrial placements.

2.17 The College uses a range of key performance indicators to evaluate its learning and teaching performance, including student satisfaction (measured through its internal biannual SPOC report), student retention, achievement, success, attendance, punctuality and employment data.

2.18 Student perception of teaching and learning is very positive. Teachers use a variety of methods that reflect student needs. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities are well supported through the College's learning support unit and by the Equality and Inclusion Officer. Students reported that their teachers explain learning outcomes, assessment methods and timetables, and marking criteria, for each course unit at the start of the unit to ensure they understood how to achieve positive outcomes, as well as this information being included in module handbooks.

2.19 The College VLE supports student learning by providing convenient access to learning materials resources. All teaching and learning materials at least meet the College's 'bronze' standard, with some already being 'silver' or 'gold' and staff training towards achieving 'silver' and 'gold' standards for all programmes is now being rolled out. Students are generally very positive about the quality and availability of VLE content, which is

intensively used by students. The College has indicated that it recognises the importance of the VLE in particular for supporting part-time students who are on-site infrequently. There are plans to further extend its use to enhance part-time students' online study opportunities.

2.20 The library recognises the distinct needs of students. It has a learning resources policy specifically tailored to higher education which also recognises that part-time students may require library resources for an extended period between visits on-site. Student satisfaction with library resources as a whole is consequently high, although some students were disappointed that the Emerald online journal subscription had been terminated, but seemed not yet to be aware of the College's intention to replace this with an alternative online journals package.

2.21 The College has developed a Student Charter, which outlines its expectations of how students will engage with their courses as well as its commitments to students, but at present this does not distinguish expectations and commitments for higher education students from those for further education. In meetings with the principal, senior staff and staff the Higher Education Strategy is becoming increasingly differentiated from further education, and the team **affirms** this development in relation to physical and virtual learning resources, teaching observation and programme review.

2.22 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low.

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.23 At a strategic level, the College is responsible for managing physical and virtual resources and staffing, as defined by its partnership with Pearson, its development plan, its strategic framework and its HE strategy. College targets are set by the senior management team. These are monitored through faculty and college self-assessment reports and Quality Course Reviews. The Higher Education Strategic Forum provides a mechanism for support teams across the College to report on how services across the College are meeting students' needs. Students have access to group and individual tutorials. The College has policies and procedures that support disabled students, equality, diversity and human rights, learning difficulties, and encouraging women into science and engineering.

2.24 The review team reviewed support and resourcing for students by scrutinising the policies and procedures referenced in the previous paragraph and by testing how they were delivered through meetings with students and staff.

2.25 The College recognises that its students have differing needs depending on whether they are registered full-time, part-time (day release) or part-time (block release). It makes support arrangements accordingly. Full-time students have timetabled personal tutorials each week and tutorial group schemes of work. Part-time students, with more limited time on-site at the College, have access to personal tutor support. Both full and part-time students indicated that they were well supported by these arrangements.

2.26 The College's employability support for students is founded on its Careers Policy and Industrial Placements Policy. Employability skills are embedded in the curriculum and in assessed work experience in the case of the level 5 NVQ Diploma. Site visits, organised with partner employers, are frequent and are appreciated by students as providing practical illustrations of the employability skills they need to develop. As well as providing work experience information through notice boards, there are several examples of how employers often contacted students direct to offer employability opportunities. Students are also encouraged take part in competitions. Examples of students developing potential can be seen with students winning national awards for educational excellence.

2.27 The College's Employer Engagement Strategy aims to offer outstanding educational services to regional, national and international businesses in the construction industry. This involves responding to employer demand, developing new programmes and working with employers to develop workplace training and apprenticeship schemes. Employers, confirmed that the College was successful in achieving these aims, and was a partner of choice amongst providers with which they worked. They offered site visits and guest lecturers to the College, and were supportive of the recently developed HLA. Employers noted that the College produced highly skilled workers and supported and encouraged the best candidates for particular roles to apply to them. Overall, the team regard the College's effective embedding of employability in the curriculum, assessments and the learning experience of students as **good practice**.

2.28 The review team concludes that the College effectively allocates resources and devises learning and support to enable students to reach their potential. The College has an excellent record of supporting students to secure jobs and further study. The team considers that the College's comprehensive learning support practices, which produce high student

retention and achievement, including progression to employment and top-up degrees, represent **good practice**.

2.29 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.30 There are various opportunities for students' engagement in enhancement and quality assurance at the College, ranging from survey feedback to student representation on committees. The Student Involvement Policy clearly sets out the processes for student engagement. It is reviewed annually.

2.31 Student engagement includes various formal and informal mechanisms to gather the student voice, such as Student Perceptions of Courses (SPOCs), targeted surveys, the student representative system, the Student Forum and the Student Liaison Committee. There is a student representative from each programme. However, there was limited student representation on college committees.

2.32 In order to test the operation and effectiveness of student engagement at the College the reviewers examined the Self-Evaluation Document, the Student Submission and the Student Involvement Policy, read minutes of meetings with student involvement and student feedback, and discussed student engagement with staff and students.

2.33 The College has successfully created an environment where students are encouraged to engage with the quality assurance process. There are examples of the College responding to student feedback, such as modifications to the type and timing of assessments, the higher education common room and the relaxation of internet restrictions. The Student Liaison Committee allows students to share information. Actions taken on the issues are discussed at subsequent meetings to ensure students are aware of any action taken. Minutes from the Student Liaison Committee are received at meetings of the Corporation, showing the collective student voice is considered at college-level. Although there is limited student participation on the College committee structure there is currently a student member of the Higher Education Strategic Forum. The students involved in the opportunities provided feel that their input is valued, appreciated and acted on.

2.34 Each year there is a Student Submission with an action plan for the College to address. The response is thorough and comprehensive in addressing student concerns. The College's thorough response to the annual Student Submission and action plan is **good practice** as it promotes increased understanding and provides evidence of deliberate steps to engaging students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

2.35 Although the Student Involvement Policy states that student representatives are trained for their role, this contains limited guidance rather than official training regarding the role, responsibilities and opportunities related to student engagement. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College provides all student representatives with appropriate training to enable them to engage in quality assurance processes. This will increase students' understanding of key issues, increase the effectiveness of student representative input and improve student representative visibility.

2.36 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

2.37 The Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy sets out general principles underpinning the College's approach to assessment. Assignment design ensures that students meet the learning outcomes of their programme of study. Comprehensive processes of moderation, verification and monitoring support the assessment of student performance. This is a clear framework for robust, valid and reliable assessments. Examination boards ensure consistent application of assessment regulations and recording of results for awards.

2.38 To test assessment processes the review team met senior staff, teaching staff and students, examined documentation including the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, assignment briefs, quality documentation and external examiner reports.

2.39 Student handbooks and programme specifications clearly identify assessment requirements and the intended learning outcomes. Extensive electronic resources available through the VLE support student study for assessment. Students confirm the clarity of the assessment tasks and the relevant skills required to complete the tasks at the appropriate level. The assessment calendar provides a framework within which deadlines are finalised to avoid a bunching of assessments. Student survey scores for clarity and speed of feedback are high. Students confirmed the survey findings, praising the speed and supportive nature of feedback on assessed work. Assignment documents allow for formative feedback during the completion of a task and staff and students confirm the value of formative assessment and feedback. Inclusive assessment design and reasonable adjustments to deadlines support students with identified disability. Library staff provide sessions on research and referencing skills and the avoidance of collusion and plagiarism.

2.40 Assessments use case studies and current construction projects undertaken locally and nationally. Visits to sites complement the assessment activities to provide current and realistic context for the assessment activities. Assessment activities for some units involve employers in setting and observing presentations. Annual review procedures allow staff to consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of the assessment strategies. Assessments support students in developing employability skills and knowledge. External examiners confirm that contextualised grading criteria and supportive feedback allow students to identify how to achieve higher grades.

2.41 The processes for submitting assignments and monitoring deadlines are sound. Students submit hard copy assignments supervised by administrative staff. A pilot project of electronic submission of assessments allows close monitoring and checking of assessed work. Students do not have access to the anti-plagiarism software available to teaching staff. Electronic processes provide effective tracking of the assessment process.

2.42 Overall, the review team concludes that the College's approach to assessment is thorough. External examiners confirm the appropriateness of assessment activities and that they meet intended learning outcomes at the appropriate level. The College's procedures ensure that students have appropriate opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes for their programmes.

2.43 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.44 Exam boards are held at the end of each semester to finalise student grades, enabling them to be entered on the College's online student tracking system. The Pearson BTEC Quality Assurance Handbook sets out the roles and responsibilities of external examiners. The College receives examiners' reports and is responsible for responding to them, by sharing them with programme teams and across the faculty. External examiner reports are included in Quality Course Reviews and the faculty self-assessment report.

2.45 The review team tested the College's external examining procedures by looking for evidence that the College makes scrupulous use of external examiners reports through its responses to their recommendations, and the potential for external input to contribute to the enhancement of programmes. This evidence was accumulated from examiners reports and the College's responses, from audit trails of follow-up actions taken by the College in response to recommendations, and through meetings with students and staff.

2.46 Examples of external examiner reports were provided to the team covering HNC/D qualifications, level 5 NVQ and the final Leeds Metropolitan University external examiner report. There are summary reports identifying good practice, issues and actions circulated to College senior management. These are included in the annual faculty self-assessment report and quarterly Quality Course Reviews. All reports are monitored by the Faculty Director and action plans signed off by both the Assistant Faculty Director and Faculty Director.

2.47 Although students confirmed that they were aware of the College's use of external examiners through their programme specifications, they were not made aware of the examiner's name, position or institution, nor were external examiners reports brought to their attention. It is therefore **recommended**, that the College ensures that the name, position and institutions of external examiners and their reports are brought to the attention of students.

2.48 The review team confirmed that the College and its awarding organisation make scrupulous use of external examiners to maintain the standards of awards and contribute to quality assurance and enhancement of its programmes.

2.49 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.50 The College views quality monitoring as a continuous process. A quality schedule sets out a calendar of committee and forum meetings, student surveys and review processes. The College monitors all levels of its provision through its operational plan and quarterly faculty performance management meetings. Self-assessment reports are scrutinised by the College management and the Governing Body.

2.51 Programme teams produce comprehensive reviews taking into account student, staff and external examiners' views and a range of performance data. Action plans are central to the process for checking the previous year's actions and setting new targets. The new Higher Education Annual Review process complements the existing college review processes.

2.52 College processes for quality assurance of programme delivery and assessment are thorough, allowing the College to assure itself that programmes are effective in securing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. Monitoring and review are effective in that the College tests the effectiveness of the process.

2.53 In testing the College's processes, the review team met senior staff, academic staff and students. In addition, it reviewed examples of self-assessment reports and committee and forum minutes.

2.54 The committee structure and forum groups provide a route for reporting upwards and downwards from students, course teams, managers and governors. Student surveys and forums inform programme teams, faculties and support services throughout the academic year. Curriculum managers report to the Faculty Management Team which in turn reports through quarterly performance management review meetings to the Senior Management Team.

2.55 Detailed quality course reviews for each pathway within faculties take place twice a year. However, course and faculty review includes higher education programmes at the same time as a variety of further education programmes at levels 2, 3 and GCSE. The College has identified a need for a more focused and reflective higher education review process. The draft document now requires evaluation and reflection on standards and enhancement and follows the expectations of the Quality Code. External examiners' reports and feedback from employers further inform this process.

2.56 The monitoring processes are effective and result in actions to secure improvement. Examples include extended study space for higher education students, improvements in computer facilities, freer access to internet resources and improved wireless internet facilities. The College is effective in reviewing its own processes, for example student perception surveys are now higher education specific and the new Higher Education Annual Review process introduced provides greater focus on higher education issues. The review team **affirms** the steps the College is taking to increasingly distinguish the requirements of higher and further education students in relation to programme review.

2.57 The College reflects on the validity and relevance of its programmes as part of the annual review process but programmes are not subject to a broader periodic review and revalidation to a planned timetable. Checks on the effectiveness of programme design involve team and faculty self-evaluations and the views of students and employers. Students provide feedback on modules but are not involved in review of curriculum content or programme structure. The review team **recommends** that the College formalise and make explicit the processes for periodic review.

2.58 Overall, the review team saw evidence that monitoring processes are effective and result in actions to secure improvement and that the College is effective in reviewing its own processes.

2.59 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.60 The College Complaints Procedure sets out the process if students have a complaint. Students with an issue regarding assessment can follow the Academic Appeals process available in the Internal Quality Assurance Handbook.

2.61 The College attempts to resolve student complaints informally to ensure action is taken swiftly. The Complaints Procedure has clear timeframes and states a student's first step should include approaching individual staff members for informal resolution, with progression to the Quality Improvements Coordinator if issues cannot be resolved. Appeals Procedures are clearly set out for students, with expected timeframes and detailed description of each stage of the process which includes discussion with the assessor concerned and internal quality assurance, concluding with an internal assurer's panel. Students are made aware of the formal procedures through the College website and VLE.

2.62 The review team tested the operation and effectiveness of the complaint and appeals procedures by talking to students and staff and examining the information made available to students regarding appeals and complaints through the College website and VLE.

2.63 Effective use is made of informal attempts for resolution of issues, both for complaints and issues relating to academic appeals. Students are able to approach members of staff and raise matters of concern without fear of disadvantage. Staff always attempt to resolve issues brought to them swiftly and effectively. Staff stated that both complaints and appeals procedures were discussed at induction and they are aware of where to direct students if informal resolution was insufficient. There is always the chance that informal environments can reduce the students' confidence in continuation of a complaint if informal resolution is not effective, but support staff are available for guidance and to ensure there is an awareness of the formal procedures. Student surveys show that 88 per cent of students agreed they are made aware of the complaints procedures. Reviewers were given a VLE demonstration which showed clear links to the formal procedures and support services available. There have been no formal complaints or appeals for higher education to date.

2.64 The review team found the appeals and complaints procedures to be clear, accessible and effective with informal opportunities available to students that allow for early resolution. Support and guidance for students is easily accessible and students are able to raise matters of concern without risk of disadvantage.

2.65 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

2.66 The College supports a wide range of work experience opportunities, including apprenticeships held by part-time students, work placements and internships undertaken by full-time students. None of these contributes directly to assessed learning outcomes of the HNC/D awards. Currently, the College's only involvement in managing assessed higher education provision with others is through its monitoring and oversight of assessment of the level 5 NVQ Diploma competencies associated with the HLA in Construction Management. Verification of the competencies of students undertaking the level 5 Diploma is the responsibility of Pearson-appointed external verifiers, operating according to the Pearson specification for the Diploma. College staff work alongside employers and Pearson to review and moderate competency assessments that contribute to the level 5 NVQ award.

2.67 The team reviewed documents defining the level 5 NVQ and documenting its oversight by external verifiers and through the use of e-portfolios to record data for each individual student. The nature of the interaction between the awarding organisation, the College and employers who provide the apprenticeships through which units of the NVQ are delivered was explored through meetings with staff, employers and students. The College's strategic approach to supporting students' employability was explored through its Employer Engagement Strategy and Careers Policy.

2.68 Employers confirmed that, in line with its Employer Engagement Strategy the College is attentive and responsive to employers' needs and proactive in developing new provision to meet developing and changing employment patterns in the construction industry. The College has also worked actively with public and private sector partners, including leading the HLA development consortium of colleges, employers, PSRBs including the National Apprenticeship Service, to develop a new national award, and to adapt current College awards to meet changing employer needs. Employers indicated that students graduating from the College were well prepared for the construction industry and highly valued by industry. Several students had achieved national construction industry awards and scholarships, which were indicative of the quality and preparedness of the graduates the College produces. Industry demand for College graduates is high, and work placements were readily available with College support for full-time students who were not already in relevant employment.

2.69 The team concludes that the College's comprehensive engagement with industry at strategic and individual staff levels is **good practice** and that it makes a positive contribution to students' learning experiences; overall the College has effective policies, procedures and staff engagement with employers to contribute to the management of both the level 5 NVQ Diploma within the HLA, and less formal co-curricular engagement with employers.

2.70 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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*

2.71 The College does not offer research degrees.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.72 The College meets all the Expectations for the quality of student learning opportunities and there is low risk in all cases. College processes for design and approval of programmes, working with awarding organisations and external bodies to ensure consideration of academic standards and student learning opportunities, are effective. There is a well organised recruitment and admissions process with the College paying particular attention to inclusion and diversity. Teaching is guided by a learning and teaching strategy. There are regular teaching observations and gathering of student feedback. Students are very positive about the teaching saying that staff are able to bring their industrial knowledge and experience into the sessions.

2.73 The College provides extensive and specialised learning resources which support students' learning. Academic and personal tutorials are well organised and appreciated by students. The College support of students is particularly effective in considering the different categories of students (full and part-time and day release).

2.74 The College has successfully created an environment where students can become actively engaged in quality processes, both formally and informally. There is a Student Engagement Policy and students complete end of module and year questionnaires.

2.75 Assignment design ensures that students meet the learning outcomes of their programme on successful completion of assessed work. Verification and moderation practices are robust. Student feedback is thorough and work is returned to students in a timely manner. The College makes effective use of external examiner reports which are considered by staff with good practices and issues identified.

2.76 There is a well organised process for annual monitoring and review. Reports are comprehensive and thoroughly considered by relevant committees. The appeals and complaints procedures are clear. Formal procedures are hardly used, but accessible and effective with informal opportunities available to students to allow for early resolution. The College has excellent relations with employers, professional bodies and the building industry as a whole.

2.77 There are four features of good practice, four recommendations and an affirmation.

2.78 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 Information for the public and prospective students is supplied through the College website, with specific higher education pages, various open and enrolment days and the prospectus. Students gain additional information through a detailed induction process, enrolment pack and through access to the VLE.

3.2 The College website and prospectus contain sufficient, relevant information regarding entry requirements, curricula content, progression routes, financial information and the admissions process. The College's missions and values are clearly stated alongside a commitment to equality and diversity. Programme specifications are available on the website for prospective and current students with relevant information such as learning outcomes, units and assessment information. Current students also receive additional information in programme and unit handbooks which are standardised for consistency. The information made available meets the Expectation in the Quality Code, *Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision*.

3.3 In order to test the operation and effectiveness of the information supplied by Leeds College of Building the review team examined information for the public and prospective and current students such as the higher education Student Prospectus, the College website and programme specifications and discussed the information available with staff and students.

3.4 College open days are published in the prospectus and website. The College also offers an open-door policy for enquiries which are dealt with by suitably qualified staff. The College holds the matrix standard for information which states that staff in student services are highly skilled and effective. All students attend an induction which addresses various topics including library, IT and health and safety. Survey results show 90 per cent of students agree that overall the information received at induction was useful. The College sets out what it expects of its students and what current students can expect of the College throughout the induction process through the information provided and within the Student Charter.

3.5 The increasing emphasis placed on the enhancement of VLE use and content has ensured that there is robust information available at College level and programme and module levels. There are clear, easily accessible, links to induction information, additional resources and student services, enabling students to access all relevant information. Information is placed on the VLE by teaching staff who have received training and the quality of information is currently overseen by the Learning Resource Manager.

3.6 The College website is managed by the marketing team who consult with staff or the Faculty Director to ensure information is correct. Key documents are used to inform the website and prospectus, which are produced and proofread by Faculty Management Teams who have final overview of course related documents.

3.7 The review team found that some of the formal minutes of meetings were unclear and therefore **recommends** that the College ensures formal minutes of meetings accurately

record the membership and roles of attendees and action points in order to increase clarity for those with responsibility for academic standards and quality.

3.8 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

3.9 The College provides a wide range of information for students at all stages of their journey. Pre-entry, admissions, course and careers information is clear and accurate. The website is well organised and provides students with relevant information. There are clear processes for ensuring information about learning opportunities is accurate and fit for purpose. There was one recommendation relating to formal minutes, membership and action plans of meetings.

3.10 The review team concludes that the quality of information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

Findings

4.1 The College Higher Education Strategy aims to enhance the quality of higher education provision linking it to the College's overall mission and values. The College's aim for higher education is to promote excellence in teaching, learning and assessment and the management of the students' higher education experience.

4.2 Quality assurance processes identify opportunities for enhancement of the curriculum and student experience through student perceptions surveys and programme monitoring. An ethos promoting the improvement of student learning opportunities and sharing good practice permeates the institution across all levels of management, teaching and support staff.

4.3 The review team tested the College's strategic and operational approach to improving the quality of students' learning opportunities through meetings with the Principal, senior staff, teaching and support staff, students and employers. Documents examined included minutes of relevant meetings, the College's Higher Education Strategy, review documentation and student surveys and forums.

4.4 Senior managers, teaching and support staff demonstrate an appreciation of the meaning of enhancement and relevant processes to support it. The Annual Planning event in July 2014 facilitated staff discussion on the meaning of enhancement in a higher education context. There is a high level of awareness of the need for improvement embedded throughout the College in extensive quality improvement processes. Among the wide range of examples of enhancement provided to the team was the high level of employer involvement, the strong employability agenda, positive student opinion surveys, staff qualifications and data monitoring.

4.5 Extensive opportunities exist for sharing of good practice in the College. Peer observations and the observation of teaching linked to staff appraisal and professional development facilitate the identification and support of good practice. Good practice is shared at the Annual Planning day and the Higher Education Strategic Forum, as well as through informal sharing between a cohesive group of committed staff. The terms of reference and minutes of the Higher Education Strategic Forum show that it provides a useful forum for identifying and sharing good practice and reviewing processes to encourage improvement. Teaching staff, managers and support teams report at the forum on how they are making an impact on student experience.

4.6 Students play an increasingly important part in the processes of enhancement of the College's higher education provision. As identified in Expectation B5, the annual Student Submission and action plan provides a structured approach to the articulation and response to student opinion. Targeted student surveys on library and computing facilities complemented by an overall higher education student survey further inform opportunities for enhancement.

4.7 The College identifies explicit enhancement themes for implementation and review based on the use of information from students, employers and external examiners. There are clear improvements which enhance student learning opportunities. The College's comprehensive engagement with industry and the effective embedding of employability in

the curriculum, assessments and the learning experience of students are the result of deliberate steps taken at strategic level to enhance student learning opportunities. The deliberate steps taken by the College to increasingly distinguish the requirements of higher and further education students in relation to physical and virtual learning resources, teaching observation and programme review provide further evidence of enhancement.

4.8 The College has an emerging strategic vision for the enhancement of learning opportunities. From its questioning of College staff, the review team discovered there were emerging themes in the enhancement process. It achieves enhancement through a range of operational approaches which are effective. The College increasingly involves students in the process of enhancing their learning experience.

4.9 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met in Enhancement: deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities; and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: summary of findings

4.10 Quality assurance processes identify opportunities for enhancement of the curriculum and student experience through student perceptions surveys and programme monitoring. The College makes effective use of information. An ethos promoting the improvement of student learning opportunities and sharing good practice permeates the institution across all levels of management, teaching and support staff.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The College has a range of policies that relate to higher education careers education, guidance and employability, including its Careers Policy, Industrial Placements policy for staff and Work Experience policy (primarily for further education students). It also has an Employer Engagement Strategy that benefits students' employability by promoting substantive relationships with regional, national and international businesses and public sector organisations in the construction industry.

5.2 Due to the focused nature of courses at the College, covering only Pearson Higher National and level 5 NVQ awards in the construction industry, virtually all units offered have strong vocational elements, and are delivered by teaching staff with credible (and in some cases continuing) professionally relevant training and experience. The team found, from its meetings with staff and employers, that employer engagement is used proactively to enrich the curriculum through site visits and industry visiting lectures, and employers are actively involved as stakeholders in the review and development of the Higher National curriculum that the College offers, both in advising on appropriate Pearson modules to include, and in adapting the modules to closely reflect regional and national employers' practice and training needs. The effective embedding of employability in the curriculum has already been identified as **good practice** (see Expectations B3, B4 and B6).

5.3 More than half the students at the College are completing their award part-time (on day release or block release), and are already employed (often undertaking apprenticeships) in the construction industry). Increasing numbers are now being recruited to the new Higher Level Apprenticeships offered in conjunction with employers, which formalise part of the industry work-based learning in a Level 5 NVQ Diploma in Sustainable Built Environment. The College led the national team of colleges, industry and professional bodies that developed this award, now validated by Pearson.

5.4 Full-time students at the College can take advantage of placement and internship opportunities formally organised by the College Careers Service placement office. The team heard during meetings with teaching and support staff that College staff are proactive in helping students to obtain placements, using their own industry experience to identify suitable applicants and prepare them for the application process. Industry representatives the team met confirmed that they valued College graduates highly and were keen to employ them because they were well prepared vocationally as well as academically, and added value to their businesses. Students confirmed, in their meeting with the team, that the College was very supportive in helping them to obtain work experience, and that industrial placements for full-time students were readily available as the recovery of the industry took hold after the recession.

5.5 Personal development of students at the College is formalised through the Tutorials Policy, which, for full-time higher education students, includes specific timetabled group tutorials on links with employers and placement opportunities. The Careers Policy sets out students' entitlement to employability support, including developing a range of job and study searching skills, assistance with careers action planning and research, and additional support for students with special needs.

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/assuring-standards-and-quality

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

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