



# Higher Education Review of Kendal College

April 2015

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Kendal College. The review took place from 28 to 30 April 2015 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Patsy Campbell
- Mr Jonathan Doney
- Mrs Kyanut Ndubuokwu

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Kendal 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 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 6.

In reviewing Kendal 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 2014-15 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/the-quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code)

<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/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<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 Kendal College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the Higher Education provision at Kendal College.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies **meets UK expectations.**
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets UK expectations.**
- The quality of the provider's 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 Kendal College.

- The extensive level of employer engagement in course design and delivery in support of the College's higher education strategy (Expectation B1).
- The robust and inclusive admissions and induction procedures used with all learners, including the screening and support for applicants with additional needs (Expectation B2).
- The thorough and versatile provision of student support for personal development and academic achievement (Expectation B4).
- The comprehensive and frequent monitoring and evaluation of programmes and resources, including themed 'walk throughs' by senior management that lead to effective action planning (Expectation B8).
- The systematic use of detailed and informative Schemes of Work for programme development and employer engagement (Enhancement).

### Recommendations

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

By September 2015 to:

- develop clear, overarching protocols and procedures for work placements in order to clarify the roles, responsibilities and expectations of all stakeholders (Expectation B10)
- identify and integrate the full range of priorities from the Higher Education Strategy within the Enhancement Plan (Enhancement).

### Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The actions being taken to produce the Higher Education Student Handbook for use in September 2015 (Expectation C).

## **Theme: Student Employability**

The College selected the review theme of student employability as a key strategic objective of the College, with each department establishing employer forums for the embedding and promotion of employability skills in programme design, teaching and assessment, and the provision of work placements. A College-wide Matrix-accredited careers advice and guidance service underpins student employability initiatives. There are plans to extend higher education provision based on the future development of specialist facilities supported through employer partnerships.

## About Kendal College

Kendal College is located in the predominantly rural area of South Lakeland with two campuses in the town of Kendal. It has a strong commitment to increasing higher education access and widening participation, reinforced through the recognition of The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) data pointing to nearby pockets of low participation. The College's Higher Education Strategy 2014-2017 seeks to provide high quality local progression with a particular focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. The College's underlying mission of community reach, enterprise and employability has shaped eight key themes for the structuring of strategic priorities to:

- offer an outstanding student experience and value added curriculum
- aspire to be the best performing college
- aspire to be the best college to work for
- a college which 'goes beyond', meets and exceeds industry standards
- create outstanding partnerships
- provide inspirational learning environments
- be a beacon within its community
- achieve the best learner destinations.

The College's estates include the Kendal Training Museum, the Box Theatre, a teaching restaurant, improved science and engineering facilities, and the construction of new arts studios at its Creative Arts centre that allow for the re-introduction in 2016 of higher education programmes in Fashion and Creative Media.

It is the only major provider of vocational education in South Lakeland, resulting in the provision of a wide curriculum at all levels. In 2011 the College was judged as Outstanding by Ofsted and it gained Beacon Status. Progression to higher education has been achieved over a 30-year period, including apprenticeships and work-based learning, based on the use of local market information and a diverse partnership portfolio of over 2,000 employers, including South Lakeland District Council, Cumbria County Council, the Cumbria STEM Centre Ltd, the Lake District National Park, BAE Systems, Siemens, Gilbert Gilkes and Gordon, and Furmanite.

Temporary constraints with the allocation of student places in 2009 caused a substantial reduction to the number of higher education courses offered. The College, however, has continued to support provision for smaller groups of students in vocational areas. It now intends to increase its provision. The College has engaged in curriculum design that strengthens local workforces through responding to advanced skills shortages. Examples include a local internationally successful engineering company's involvement in the new engineering faculty, the opening of an RSPCA-approved Wildlife Animal Rescue Centre in order to launch Animal Management higher education programmes in 2016, and progression to a new Biological Sciences HNC/D based in the new Medical Science laboratory in order to meet the needs of the National Health Service and the increased employment opportunities at GlaxoSmithKline plc.

The College's quality and standards are overseen by the governing body with strategic planning and resourcing responsibilities being based within an executive team. The Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Group and the Director of Curriculum and Quality coordinate and oversee all academic provision set at level 4 and above, with the College-wide Academic Management Group having overall responsibilities for higher education marketing, operational issues, and the monitoring of enhancement action plans.

The Universities of Cumbria (UoC) and Central Lancashire (UCLan) are the College's awarding bodies, and Pearson is its awarding organisation. Since 2009, UoC and UCLan changes to number controls have led to the College's own allocation by HEFCE of new entry places, with a re-assessment and reduction of its higher education portfolio. In 2014-15 there were 77 full-time and 44 part-time higher education students, with 5.95 per cent from ethnic minorities and 9.5 per cent with disabilities. Student retention for all higher education programmes is significantly high at 98 per cent for 2013-14.

Students enrolled on HNC and HND programmes are studying Hospitality Management and a very recently introduced Mechanical and Electrical Engineering qualification. Foundation degree pathways extend to Children, Young People and their Services as well as Computing, Mobile Computing Technologies, Business and the first year of the BA (Hons) Social Work. The College has recently re-introduced a PGCE/Cert Ed through a partnership project with Runshaw and Blackburn Colleges in order to train graduate teachers. Where there has been a recent downturn in applications, the College is exploring alternative strategies for more cost-effective provision, for example the Foundation Degree in Arts and Business, through offering individual modules in event management.

In the 2011 Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) of higher education provision, the College achieved a confidence judgement by QAA. Since then the College has focused on five key developments: student engagement and the creation of an HE Forum, employability, higher education-specific policies and procedures for assessment, staff development for understanding the Quality Code, and two new eLearning programmes for staff and students in higher education.

## Explanation of the findings about Kendal 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. [glossary of terms](#) is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.

# **1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/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 (FHEQ)* 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 The College currently works with and delivers programmes developed and designed by two awarding bodies and one awarding organisation. It is the responsibility of these awarding partners to ensure that threshold academic standards are set at the appropriate level within FHEQ.

1.2 Higher education courses delivered by the College are subject to the internal quality and enhancement policies and procedures of their awarding bodies and organisation. UCLan oversees the Foundation Degrees for Children, Young People and their Services, Business, the BA (Hons) Social Work, and the PGCE/Cert Ed. UoC oversees the Foundation Degree in Computing and Mobile Technologies. All HNC/D courses are overseen by Pearson.

1.3 The College's quality assurance processes meet all of the relevant component elements for the securing of threshold academic standards, thereby allowing for the achievement in principle of Expectation A.1.

1.4 The review team tested the Expectation through analysis of a range of documents relating to the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered by

the College. The College's own policy documents were scrutinised and mapped to this evidence in order to identify compliance. Information was also gathered from meetings with senior staff, programme managers, awarding body representatives, and teaching staff.

1.5 The team noted that the College is cognisant of Subject Benchmark Statements at both sector and subject level and makes appropriate use of these when considering the development, design and validation of new programmes, and when preparing student handbooks and programme specifications.

1.6 The College operates in accordance with the instruments of the awarding bodies and awarding organisation for the maintenance and monitoring of academic standards, together with definitions of roles and responsibilities for the College.

1.7 The College makes full and appropriate use of external reference points for its higher education provision including the FHEQ and the Quality Code. This process is enhanced by local and regional representation on industry committees, including employer forums. Staff were able to cite examples of how they use the FHEQ to inform their practice. External examiners, verifiers and subject specialists further confirmed that assessment meets threshold standards.

1.8 The team confirmed that the College fulfils its obligations and requirements in ensuring the maintenance of academic standards by compliance with awarding body regulations, policies and procedures, and, where appropriate, other external reference points. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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**

1.9 Academic regulations from the two awarding bodies provide the over-arching framework for the College's quality monitoring procedures, with governance arrangements set out in respective Partnership Agreements. The Director of Curriculum & Quality is responsible for ensuring that awarding body and organisation requirements are met, and that arrangements and compliance matters are discussed and monitored by the Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Group.

1.10 Programme specifications and module descriptors are agreed at the point of approval with the awarding bodies, and these procedures set academic standards and form the basis for subsequent course delivery and assessment. For provision involving standards set by the awarding organisation, implementation is determined through the College's regulations for Higher National provision.

1.11 The arrangements and responsibilities agreed between the College and its awarding bodies and organisation in principle meet the requirements of the Expectation.

1.12 The review team considered a range of relevant documents including staff and student handbooks. The team also met staff, students and awarding body representatives to discuss their understanding of the governance of the higher education provision.

1.13 Links to awarding body regulatory guidance are included in student programme handbooks and staff handbooks and relevant regulations for Higher National qualifications are available in awarding organisation handbooks. Regular partnership meetings and staff development days with the awarding bodies enable the College to work collaboratively to monitor academic standards. The team noted that the College works effectively with its validating partners to ensure that the module specifications are defined clearly and reflect academic frameworks.

1.14 Annual course reviews and the writing of self-evaluation reports are standard practices for all programmes, and these are submitted consistently to the awarding bodies. Additionally, periodic course reviews are conducted by UCLan. Although not a mandatory requirement, and in order to support the development of its higher education provision, the College has also concluded that its Higher National programmes will benefit from the same internal reporting processes and has plans to implement these during the current academic year.

1.15 Comprehensive course module records, programme specifications and programme handbooks show FHEQ levels, credit values and intended learning outcomes. Module boards are convened at the end of each semester, at which representatives from all partner colleges and the relevant awarding body are present and where marks are considered and the determination of results confirmed. These are forwarded to the awarding bodies and awarding organisation for consideration, and external examiner comments are also received at this time.

1.16 The team confirmed that the College complies fully with the academic regulations of its awarding bodies as set out in the partnership agreements. Higher education teaching staff have received appropriate training and the College's Higher Education Quality Group has produced its own detailed staff guide on the Quality Code which was described by staff as helpful. This document comprises all the expectations of the Quality Code with explanations of each indicator and advice on how to comply with each expectation.

1.17 The team concludes that the College works efficiently within the regulatory frameworks of the awarding bodies and organisation and that the Expectation is met and the 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**

1.18 The awarding bodies have ultimate responsibility for definitive programme documents approved through validation, or amended after changes have been confirmed in accordance with agreed regulations and procedures. The awarding organisation is responsible for core definitive programme documents to which the College adds programme specifications pertinent to its own delivery. The College has responsibility for ensuring that definitive records are managed appropriately for student and staff use, including the use of handbooks approved by awarding bodies and the production of records of study.

1.19 These arrangements indicate that Expectation A2.2 is met in principle.

1.20 The review team tested this Expectation through scrutiny of programme specifications, course handbooks, programme validation and review documents, and discussions with students, staff, and representatives from awarding organisations.

1.21 The College produces definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements for each programme of study, with the Director of Curriculum and Quality working with Heads of Schools to ensure that definitive records are maintained and updated where necessary. Definitive information is made available to students through programme specifications and course and unit handbooks, which are available on the College's virtual learning environment (VLE). Documentation is consistently detailed and comprehensive, addressing areas of accreditation, validation, staffing, teaching, examining, resources, funding and fees for different categories of prospective students.

1.22 The arrangements for monitoring programmes are set out in the partnership agreements and define responsibilities for the College, including the checking of records of study and course documentation for accuracy and consistency through annual course reviews.

1.23 Minutes of Partnership Meetings are maintained by both partners with a minimum of one delegated representative from the College, such as the Director of Curriculum and Quality, and one from the awarding body, such as the designated appointee, attending. External examiners and subject advisers report on the accuracy and currency of programme documentation used by students and staff.

1.24 The team concludes that definitive programme information is clear, transparent, accessible and appropriately managed, ensuring that the Expectation is met and the associated 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**

## Findings

1.25 The awarding bodies and organisation are responsible for the approval and validation of taught programmes in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations. They appoint, train and receive the reports of external examiners, and appoint external subject specialists to scrutinise standards at programme approval, revalidation and periodic reviews. The College participates in programme approval and reapproval processes.

1.26 These processes and responsibilities allow the Expectation to be met in principle.

1.27 The review team considered a range of documentation covering policies, minutes of the partnership meetings, process descriptors, programme specifications and quality manuals. Further documentation was provided for aspects of module selection, the identification of local employer needs, student and staff input to the processes of course selection, design and approval, and the most recent report on partnership activity for academic year 2013-14. Discussions involved meetings with staff and students, employers, and representatives from the awarding bodies.

1.28 The team noted that the process for bringing forward course proposals for approval works effectively and in accordance with the agreed procedures with the awarding bodies. Documentary evidence confirmed that the College adheres to the clear, detailed and robust regulations for the design and approval of modules, programmes and qualifications in their partnership agreements.

1.29 The division of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring alignment with UK threshold and awarding body academic standards are clarified in relevant documentation. Student and employer feedback is used to identify any need for new courses, with one illustration involving the development of a local HNC and HND in engineering in order to enable students to progress from level 3. College staff teaching higher education programmes receive training in the application of the Quality Code when designing, approving, validating, delivering, assessing, monitoring, and reviewing programmes. The College has produced a recent annotated guide - The Kendal College Staff Guide to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education - for all teaching staff as a reference source. The quality of teaching staff is scrutinised through the consistent consideration of staff CVs at validation and periodic reviews, and of engagement in staff development initiatives.

1.30 Externality is an integral part of all course approval, validation, monitoring and assessment involving students, external examiners, advisers, employers, peer observers, external moderators and external subject specialists. The Principal confirmed the recent establishment of an employer engagement strategy to enhance the input of employers to the development of higher education provision at the College. The review team also noted another development based on the College's recognition of the need to enhance its internal processes for the initial stages of course approval. This has resulted in the recently introduced higher education course approvals plan.

1.31 The team concludes that the College meets the Expectation concerning the approval of taught programmes and the setting of academic standards, with low risk.

**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**

1.32 The awarding bodies and organisation have responsibility for defining the achievement of learning outcomes related to standards, with the College participating in the amendment of modules and criteria in accordance with approved assessment strategies and procedures. Modules are described fully in approval and validation documentation together with explicit programme specifications, intended learning outcomes, assignments and other key information which demonstrates adherence to Subject Benchmark Statements published by QAA, the academic framework of the awarding body and their regulations. External subject specialists and examiners appointed by the awarding bodies report on the appropriateness of the proposals in relation to all issues of quality and standards. Learning outcomes and module/qualification credit are agreed through the course approval process of the awarding bodies with whom the College works. These are set through programme specifications and module descriptors and may be amended through the formal processes of the awarding bodies. The College Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy sets out clear expectations for assessment practices and processes.

1.33 These policies and processes allow the standards outlined in Expectation A3.2 to be met in principle.

1.34 The review team considered documentary evidence relating specifically to quality and standards, including external examiner reports, minutes of meetings with partner colleges and awarding bodies, charts to explain the reporting process through meetings and committees, module evaluation questionnaires and summaries, schemes of work audits, the College Self-Assessment Report Policy, annual reports, and action plans.

1.35 The 2011 QAA review found that 'at programme level the College has a rigorous annual review process that is used effectively to enhance academic standards' with the review team recognising the continuation of these effective practices and procedures. New modules are reviewed by the awarding body after the first three months to ensure that quality and standards are satisfactory. Module evaluation questionnaires garner student responses to every module, with information summaries feeding into annual reviews. External examiners use reporting templates which specifically ask for comments on the design of programmes, their alignment with academic standards and learning outcomes, and the appropriateness of the material of the programme to the level of qualification. The awarding organisation has its own assessment policy and process with evidence of clear and robust procedures being used by the College.

1.36 Although the awarding bodies and organisation bear the responsibility for meeting UK quality threshold standards for their qualifications, the College takes relevant steps to support its partners under the auspices of the Director of Curriculum and Quality and the Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Group. External examiners testify that professional

and statutory requirements are satisfied when documents are considered at the Annual and Periodic Reviews. The College has its own internal evaluative annual process used to review programmes. This takes into account external examiner reports, student feedback including module internal and external questionnaires, termly performance reviews, student progress, schemes of work, statistical data and annual self-assessment.

1.37 Students confirm that they consider assessment to be progressively more challenging as they move from level 4 to level 5, and are positive about the types of assessment used and the value of the feedback they receive.

1.38 The team also observed the effective rapport between link members of staff from the awarding bodies and the College staff managing and delivering programmes. This observation, combined with analysis of the thorough and wide-ranging documentary evidence, confirmed that assessment systems and procedures were working well. The team concludes that the College meets, with low risk, the Expectation for the demonstration of learning outcomes through assessment based on the satisfaction of academic standards.

**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**

1.39 The College's provision is subject to the monitoring and review procedures of its awarding bodies and organisation. This process is supplemented by internal College processes for performance review and self-assessment by Heads of School, the Director of Quality and Curriculum, and the Quality Manager. Internal self-assessment, which includes higher education provision, culminates in a College Self-Assessment Report which is subject to validation by College Governors and involves student and external representation. The reporting procedure then feeds into external monitoring and review requirements. External subject specialists and external examiners are appointed by the awarding bodies to help to establish and to monitor and maintain academic standards.

1.40 The procedures and systems referred to in documentation provided by the College allow the Expectation to be met in principle.

1.41 In addition to annual and course review documentation, including the recent UCLan Periodic Course Review of the College, the review team analysed further evidence on student engagement in monitoring and review. It looked at the processes of module, programme and qualification design and approval at the College by scrutinising documentation of these processes including minutes of meetings with partners and awarding bodies. It particularly considered papers analysing assessment issues, such as monitoring and review reports. The team also discussed quality and standards issues with senior teaching and support staff and students.

1.42 The team tracked the commendation from the 2011 QAA review for the College's rigorous processes for module, programme and qualification design, approval, monitoring and review. These processes continue to be robustly applied, and have been further strengthened within the College through the creation of its Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Group. This Group contributes to curriculum areas, validates annual reports and monitors and validates action plans.

1.43 The team confirmed that staff within the College displayed knowledge and understanding of the maintenance of academic standards and their roles and responsibilities to the awarding bodies, and the awarding organisation. Following validation and approval by the respective awarding body, modules are reviewed after the first three months and annually thereafter. Heads of School oversee the broader scope of further and higher education provision and attend moderation meetings and assessment boards. They produce school action plans derived from annual evaluation and self-assessment reports and maintain oversight of standards and assessment.

1.44 Periodic course reviews have external subject specialist advisers who review course documentation as part of the key quality assurance mechanism for the University. These advisers monitor and review issues of appropriate levels of elements of course content and delivery for the qualification, the alignment of module assignments with Subject Benchmark Statements and UK threshold academic standards, and the award body's own standards. They also probe the accuracy of published information and handbooks. The

process works very well in practice as the system encourages external specialists and examiners to pick up anomalies which have escaped College staff and correct them very quickly.

1.45 The team concludes that the College's policies and processes explicitly address the achievement of UK threshold standards and the maintenance of standards required by the awarding bodies and organisation. The frequent and helpful communications that exist between the awarding bodies and the College, and the thorough nature of processes for programme monitoring and review, ensure that the Expectation is met with low risk.

**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**

1.46 External examiners and external verifiers appointed by the awarding bodies and organisation are responsible for ensuring that academic standards are met and report to their respective awarding body and organisation annually. The College responds to issues raised by external specialists within the annual review processes of both awarding bodies. The College discusses and responds to the findings of external examiner reports through regular and systematic evaluation and monitoring reporting procedures.

1.47 These processes ensure compliance with the awarding bodies and awarding organisation's approval processes and the Quality Code. The processes and responsibilities outlined by the College in principle allow the standards outlined in Expectation A3.4 to be met.

1.48 The review team considered a range of documents relating to external advisers, examiners and verifiers. The review team also met staff, students, employers and awarding body representatives.

1.49 The team noted the consistent and robust use of procedures and systems for ensuring external and independent expertise for the setting and maintaining of academic standards. The College's partnership approach provides a robust and consistent process for the introduction of higher education programmes and includes involvement from key stakeholders such as employers. Illustrations for where external advice had been used were evident. One example is the selection of modules for the new HNC/HND Electrical and Mechanical engineering course, which has been developed through identifying required skills based on local market intelligence. Another involves gathering information from employers and representatives from local and national health trusts in order to inform Childhood Health and Social Care provision. The application of such independent expertise was then confirmed through meetings with the Principal, employers, and staff.

1.50 Examples of annual evaluation and monitoring reports confirmed the use of rigorous and detailed response procedures for issues raised by external examiners. The College emphasises the need for more specific feedback when external examiners submit generic reports for more than one provider to their awarding body, with subsequent discussions with College staff and representatives from awarding bodies confirming that procedures are used for identifying and developing relevant action plans.

1.51 External advice is consistently gathered and applied for the setting, delivery and achievement of UK threshold academic standards, and the academic standards of the awarding bodies and organisation are appropriately set and maintained. The team concludes that the College is successful with its use of independent expertise and that the Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

## The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations: Summary of findings

1.52 In reaching its judgement about threshold academic standard, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.53 All of the seven Expectations in this area have been met with low risk judgements in all cases, with no recommendations or affirmations being made.

1.54 The team concludes that the College, in partnership with its awarding bodies and organisation, manages successfully its responsibilities for using appropriate reference points and establishing academic frameworks and regulations for governing the approval and award of academic credit and qualifications. Definitive records are maintained, and learning outcomes are demonstrated through assessment based on the satisfaction of academic standards. Processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented, including the use of externality at key stages when setting and maintaining standards.

1.55 On the basis of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the review team concludes that the maintenance of threshold academic standards at Kendal College **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

### **Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design and Approval**

#### **Findings**

2.1 Responsibility for the design, development and approval of programmes lies with the awarding bodies and organisation, with the College contributing to all aspects of these processes as well as delivery.

2.2 In designing its programmes, the College aims to provide progression possibilities for students who wish to continue their studies locally by developing follow-on higher education programmes in response to local student demand. During the process of programme design, development and approval the college includes input from students and employers as well as external subject specialists.

2.3 In order to spearhead the increase in students enabled by recent removal of the cap on student numbers, the College has drawn up a Higher Education Strategic Plan. It has also introduced an HE Course Approval Policy in recognition of the need to enhance this aspect of its course approval process, especially through formalising the evidence base for new proposals.

2.4 The Director of Curriculum and Quality has overall responsibility for the design, development and approval of programmes in line with awarding body and organisation processes and regulations. Heads of School have direct responsibility for new programme development and associated staffing, resources and marketing.

2.5 The College's quality assurance processes meet in principle all of the relevant component elements within Expectation B1.

2.6 The review team considered a range of documentation for course approval and performance review policies, annual evaluation and self-assessment reports, periodic course reviews, and external examiner and subject specialist reports. The review team met employers, representatives from awarding bodies, students, and staff responsible for curriculum design and development.

2.7 Discussions with senior and teaching staff confirmed that effective partnership processes are in operation for programme design, approval, and delivery. Aims, processes and responsibilities for the evolution of modules and programmes are clearly articulated in partnership agreements. The recent UCLan periodic review of the College noted the successful operation of processes in its partnership arrangements. External examiners and verifiers further confirm the effectiveness of procedures.

2.8 The team explored the College's emphasis on its involvement with employers, guided by an Employer Engagement Strategy embedding employability within curriculum areas across all departments. Discussions with employers noted highly complimentary feedback about the College's proactive engagement in course development in order to develop future workforces. This included the design of progression pathways for the College's substantial apprenticeship cohorts within its further education provision and the

involvement of employers in senior management 'walk throughs' that inform programme planning. Discussions with students and staff provided numerous examples of programme development that addressed from the outset employer needs and the importance of work placements and work-based learning. The extensive level of employer engagement in course design and delivery, in support of the College's higher education strategy, is **good practice**.

2.9 The team concludes that the College meets, with low risk, the Expectation for operating effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.

**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**

2.10 Recruitment and admission to the College is by direct application, with the exception of the BA (Hons) Social Work where application is to UCLan. These processes are guided by a recently revised admissions policy and include an appeals and complaints process in relation to the offering of a place. The College's approach to recruitment, selection and admission meets the Expectation in principle in order to adhere to the precepts of fair admission.

2.11 The review team considered supporting documents including policies, finance information for higher education students, and staff development in addition to the admissions policy. Further information was gathered through discussions with staff and students.

2.12 The review team recognised the robust processes in place for recruitment, selection and admission. The College has recently formalised a new admissions policy, available on the College website, which explains its appeals and complaints process in relation to the offering of a place. The admissions process is administered by a Higher Education Co-ordinator who records applications on the student information management system, and ensures that suitable candidates, as identified by Heads of School, are interviewed. The Higher Education Co-ordinator is the main point of contact and establishes the ongoing relationship with students from the start of the application process. Guidance is also offered to prospective students at open days.

2.13 The College is aware of the continuing need for updating and standardising information with plans for new documentation and briefing packs in 2015-16. The team also learned about the College's sustained and proactive use of shadowing procedures, where prospective applicants visit current classes in order to 'taste' higher education before making a formal application.

2.14 Most programmes recruit entrants through face-to-face interviews with a member of the relevant lecturing team. Late admissions are permissible dependent on the student's ability to join the programme and succeed, with additional tutorial support provided to ensure that the student is able to access any relevant information needed.

2.15 Care is taken to match students with appropriate programmes at time of interview, and any special requirements are noted. The admission process, in keeping with the College's Equality Policy, identifies where possible any learning disabilities at early stages within the process, with interviews pointing individuals to specialised disability support. Examples were noted where staff had sometimes visited the interview session at the request of a participant or tutor. The team noted feedback from students with disabilities confirming that the admission and selection process identified their specific needs and provided additional support. They further confirmed the provision of ongoing tutorial support once students were enrolled and then realised that there were some learning difficulties.

2.16 The Higher Education Co-ordinator also offers in-depth advice and support for accessing student loans and available bursaries, and attends seminars and conferences

regularly at the awarding bodies for updates and support. New staff observe interviews conducted by experienced staff in order to familiarise themselves with the application and selection processes.

2.17 Records of student selection, admission and recruitment data are systematically gathered and analysed for ethnicity, gender and disability factors. Data is summarised in the annual and periodic reviews and inform discussions on student retention, achievement, and programme planning or closure.

2.18 In the event of a place not being offered following the final decision by the Head of School students have the right to appeal using well defining procedures. Further guidance is offered by student support teams to all unsuccessful applicants in order to explore suitable alternative options.

2.19 The review team noted student praise for the speed, clarity, ease, and efficiency of the College's admissions and induction process. Offer letters detailing any conditions and start dates are forwarded by the Higher Education Coordinator within five days of interview. All students receive comprehensive induction handbooks and are introduced to staff and other students through interactive sessions. This procedure was consistently applied, including students already at the College and progressing from level 3.

2.20 On the basis of this detailed and extensive evidence the team considered the College's robust and inclusive admissions and induction procedures used with all learners, including the screening and support for applicants with additional needs, to be **good practice**.

2.21 The review team concludes that the College meets, with low risk, the Expectation for transparent, reliable, valid, and inclusive procedures for recruitment, selection and admission.

**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**

2.22 The College has recognised the need to establish an overarching Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy to provide greater consistency and clarity with respect to teaching, learning and assessment on its higher education programmes. This has been introduced recently within the oversight of the Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Group to ensure that there are extensive and rigorous processes in place to maintain the quality of learning opportunities. Internal annual review and self-assessment processes contribute to quality improvement planning for enhancing the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices.

2.23 The College's approach to continuing professional development (CPD) forms part of the Higher Education Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy and includes formalised staff development and training programmes for the support of learning and teaching practices.

2.24 These systems, policies and procedures allow the Expectation to be met in principle.

2.25 The review team examined a range of documents, paying particular attention to the new Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy. Other evidence included programme action plans, departmental quality improvement plans, surveys and questionnaires, minutes of meetings, and student and programme handbooks. During the visit, the team discussed a variety of learning and teaching issues with staff, employers, and students.

2.26 The team noted that internal annual reviews culminate in an audit by the Quality Team, who gather and scrutinise data, including student responses and external examiner and self-assessment reports. Examples were noted where programme and departmental Quality Improvement Plans emerge from this process. Learning and teaching action points are consistently integrated into subsequent annual evaluation reports as well as the College's Enhancement Action Plan. These processes are monitored by the College Management Group and the Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Group,

2.27 The team confirmed that the College gathers student opinion about their learning from a number of sources, including questionnaires, forums, 'Student Voices', interviews, Head of School visits to higher education groups, and student representation on team meetings. Student feedback is used widely to monitor the quality of learning opportunities. Their views, in addition to those of employers and external examiners, are included within review and self-assessment processes overseen by the Director of Quality and Curriculum before being formalised with learning and teaching action plans.

2.28 Students express high levels of satisfaction with the teaching they receive and value the strong engagement with their tutors. They cited good organisation of programmes, appropriate and timely feedback, a challenging curriculum, improved skills development,

increased employability opportunities, the use of Schemes of Work, and their overall development as independent learners.

2.29 The current grade profile for formal lesson observations of tutors is judged as 'Grade 2: Good', with the team recognising that this is higher than that for its further education provision. The College is piloting a more developmental and ungraded series of staff observations to underpin the CPD process. These can result in action plans which are monitored via performance reviews. The College has an established requirement that staff undertake peer observation run in conjunction with a partner college. Staff especially value this procedure as it provides a further opportunity to develop and share good practice.

2.30 Effective arrangements are in place to check the qualifications and experience of staff teaching on higher education programmes during the course validation process conducted by the awarding bodies. Advanced practitioners supervise the higher education staff development processes and act as mentors for all new teaching staff. This arrangement forms part of the probationary process from which individual developmental action plans are produced.

2.31 The team recognised that in accordance with the College's Higher Education Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy all higher education teaching staff receive remission for scholarly activity and are encouraged to keep up to date with their discipline areas through College development days and external events. The scholarly activity of each staff member is discussed and documented at their performance review. Teaching staff are positive about the arrangements for further study and cited many examples of how the College had supported them.

2.32 The College offers a programme of training sessions for staff and has implemented Learning Lunches where good practice can be shared. These inform the College CPD programme and ensure that those staff best qualified to teach on higher education are used appropriately. The College is also developing an e-learning package entitled Teaching in Higher Education which can be undertaken at any time of year. It is aimed primarily at new teachers but can also be used by existing staff as a refresher, and will ultimately be compulsory for all staff.

2.33 The team concludes that the College meets, with low risk, the Expectation concerning learning opportunities and teaching practices. Students are very positive about the quality of teaching at the College, with staff engaging fully with the principles and procedures of the Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy.

**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**

2.34 The College's Higher Education Strategic Plan places the learner experience as its first priority, with key elements that include the continuation of high progression levels, developing employability, supporting students, and maintaining high levels of student satisfaction. The alignment of existing and future courses to local employment and community needs based on long-standing consultative relationships with employers strengthens this strategy.

2.35 Resourcing issues and requirements are considered by the awarding bodies and organisation as a part of the validation and annual review processes, with subsequent actions and targets being incorporated into the College's strategic development. The Higher Education Co-ordinator has a formally defined role as the main point of contact in supporting students through their chosen transitions, and in organising pre-course guidance interviews with support staff. There is a tutorial support system, with facilities and expertise available for full and part-time students including those with more specialised learning support requirements.

2.36 These systems, arrangements and procedures allow the Expectation to be met in principle.

2.37 The review team considered a wide range of documentation relating to student development, including minutes from meetings with employers, handbooks, schemes of work and resource plans. Meetings were held with senior managers, teaching staff, support staff and students.

2.38 The team recognised that student support within the College is very strong at all stages in the learning journeys of students. A key strength involves the successful establishment by the Higher Education Coordinator of an ongoing relationship with students, with tutor contacts starting consistently at the point of first enquiry and continuing through to admission, enrolment and induction. Orientation days provide new students with the opportunity to become familiar with the College and to meet the teaching staff. Additional learning needs declared at interview or at enrolment, require referral to a Learning Services tutor as appropriate. Diagnostic assessments and screening can lead to further support being provided. The student services unit provide further guidance and support for areas such as finance, careers, employment, work placement and study skills. Students can also access the College's advice service, for supporting progression into employment, and may book one-to-one sessions with Learning Centre facilitators for help with CV building, job applications and setting mock interviews. This service is available for one year after completion of programmes.

2.39 The team confirmed that all students receive information through clearly defined and structured inductions, guided by a checklist used by all staff. This is followed by systematic provision of programme handbooks which provide broad resources information, programme-specific assessment information, timetables and guidance on the academic skills. Students are also introduced to the VLE, the library and its services.

2.40 The College's Learning Centre has been subject to a recent review by UCLan, who reported its resources for higher education students to be satisfactory. Discussions with

students confirmed that they are also invited to attend an induction programme at the UCLan Preston campus.

2.41 Detailed Schemes of Work require lecturers to take account of learning styles and additional needs of students and groups, including the use of appropriate teaching and learning strategies. They are shared with students on the VLE so that they can access appropriate learning outcomes for each teaching session.

2.42 Discussions with students and staff confirmed the success of systematic tutorial support programmes for individual students and small groups. This is mostly formalised, with additional provision at the request of students. Tutorial system procedures vary across full-time and part-time courses, although no negative commentary was noted in documentation or meetings. The team recognised that students are very positive about the flexibility of support that tutorials provide, including telephone contact when attendance of on-campus sessions is not possible.

2.43 The team noted the use of rigorous processes for the allocation of resources for higher education programmes. Resource plans emerge from curriculum design and the outcomes of annual reviews where accommodation, staffing, equipment and learning resources are included. Allocation is then determined in line with the College's strategic development.

2.44 The overall thorough and versatile nature of the provision of student support for personal development and academic achievement is **good practice**. The College provides an extensive and effective range of student support mechanisms which students compliment highly. The team concludes that the College meets, with low risk, the Expectation concerning the provision and monitoring of resources and arrangement for supporting students in their development of academic, personal and professional potential.

**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**

2.45 The College has a Student Voice policy, and this is available on the VLE and the College's website. The policy aims to engage students in influencing their learning experiences and programme improvement and includes a system for higher education student representation within the College's decision-making. The College is committed to involving all students in its strategic decision-making and operational management processes and to offering an opportunity for students to have direct involvement in assessing and shaping their own learning experience.

2.46 Such arrangements ensure that the College meets Expectation B5 in principle.

2.47 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's approach to student engagement through discussions with staff and students, and consideration of support documentation including the student submission, student feedback summaries, and student representation policies and systems.

2.48 The team noted that the College values the benefits of listening and responding to views of students, helping students become the central part of the College community. The Student Voice policy is in the process of developing higher education-specific procedures for gathering feedback and encouraging participation in quality assurance and enhancement. Students are encouraged to make their views known to the College through their programme representatives and through discussions with staff using a wide range of higher education-specific surveys, questionnaires, forums, course reviews and a complaints procedure. They complete an induction questionnaire at week six of their programme and an end of programme questionnaire. The results of these questionnaires are analysed and used in the self-assessment process and inform action plans. Their contribution is valued by the College and is fed into the Annual and Periodic reviews.

2.49 The team noted examples where higher education student representatives attended the validation of the cross-College Self-Assessment Report (SAR), the Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Group, the Health and Safety and Sustainability committees, the Student Council, and meetings with the awarding bodies. Student Ambassadors are involved in the development of the strategy and materials for school liaison and open days, and Senior Ambassadors are actively involved in the recruitment and training of the new Ambassadors. Further and Higher Education Student Council representatives work together on a weekly basis to design and develop new ideas and information. This involvement extends to networking with representatives in other partner colleges and the awarding bodies.

2.50 The team explored procedures for involving part-time students in student representation. Discussions with staff and students confirmed that special arrangements are made for higher education groups who cannot attend formal meetings, including consistent termly visits by Heads of School to all higher education groups in order to seek student feedback.

2.51 Student views gathered by student representatives are fed into relevant programme and school action plans, with the addition of generic issues to the Student Voice action plan and the College Enhancement Action plan which are monitored by Heads of School and

senior management. Actions from student suggestions are fed back by staff and published on the College website and via 'You said, we did' screens. Students are also informed about the outcomes of survey and forum information through the College website with the College also using feedback walls in canteen and Learning Resource Centre areas in order to show how issues have been tackled and improvements have been made.

2.52 The student submission emphasises that responses to students' views are clearly demonstrated in changes, with examples including the increased availability of wireless access, the extra car parks, and improvements to the VLE. Students recognise an ethos of continual improvement in the College and note the contribution of individuals to the new University Hub. The student submission is enthusiastic and confident about their voice being heard and acted upon in the College, including the involvement of a higher education student as one of the two student voices in governors' meetings.

2.53 The team noted that Student Services are establishing a generic training programme and an annual student conference for student representatives. This forms part of the College's plan to extend specific support to its higher education students. This is in its formative stages and currently students are not fully aware of the details, although they confirmed that invitations to participate in training had been received.

2.54 The team concludes that students understand how the representation system and other mechanisms operate and the College monitors and responds effectively to the student voice. The College deliberately and actively engages students and provides appropriate platforms for communication and negotiation, and as such the College meets, with low risk, the Expectation for students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their learning.

**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**

**Findings**

2.55 Awarding bodies have the responsibility for ensuring that assessment processes are equitable, valid and reliable. Assessment strategies are set at the point of programme approval and through subsequent monitoring and validation/re-approval events. The College is responsible for the setting of assessments and their scheduling to cover all learning outcomes.

2.56 The College has recently introduced a specific Assessment and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy for its HNC/HND provision. For programmes run by the awarding bodies, the College applies the respective awarding body RPL process and it aligns its own RPL policy with that of its awarding bodies.

2.57 The College's quality assurance processes meet in principle all of the relevant component elements within Expectation B6.

2.58 The review team explored this Expectation at meetings with College staff, students and representatives from the awarding bodies. A range of documents on assessment was consulted, including assessment instruments, external examiner reports, quality manuals and documents, student handbooks, the Success Matrix assessment report of March 2015, and minutes of relevant meetings.

2.59 The team confirmed that documentation demonstrates that assessments are a joint responsibility between awarding bodies and the College, with rigorous and consistent procedures being followed for the use of assessment processes. At approval, programmes have assessed assignments agreed at the appropriate level for the award. Criteria for marking are clearly stated and the expected learning outcomes are included in programme handbooks and in definitive programme documentation. Submission deadlines are set by the awarding bodies and published in the handbooks. Robust RPL procedures are in place and all relevant aspects of formative and summative assessment are introduced and explained to students by tutors throughout programmes, including rules on plagiarism. The team noted student feedback about the need for more classroom support for the appropriate use of referencing within one programme, although this issue was not highlighted in subsequent discussions with students.

2.60 There are regular meetings between the awarding bodies and the College to discuss assessment matters, with examination boards attended by College representatives. The scrutiny of external examiner and verifier reports identifies learning opportunity issues through reporting to Annual Monitoring boards and partnership meetings, with reports confirming that assessment procedures are followed consistently. Students view assessments as appropriately challenging, with additional verbal feedback considered particularly helpful and encouraging.

2.61 The Staff Guide to the Quality Code and an annual programme of staff training on assessment feedback and marking reinforce the College basis for the design and conduct of effective assessment. A new Higher Education Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy

was launched in February 2015. The team noted an example where, for the most recent HNC/HND programme, relevant College staff were trained in assessment policy and requirements by the Quality Manager in order to ensure rigour and standardisation across programmes.

2.62 The College states that students are largely satisfied with marking procedures used by staff, and that the College and awarding body policy of handing back marked work within 15 working days operates successfully. This is borne out by the student submission and through meetings with students where written feedback was described as being delivered consistently within allocated timeframes. Marking criteria and learning outcomes are fully explained and a sample is moderated by the partner universities before confirmed marks are given to students. Students have access on the course VLE sites to examiners' reports, but not all see the potential relevance of these reports to their own academic further development.

2.63 The team concludes that the College's assessment processes are thorough, carefully monitored, and rigorously applied. Awarding bodies and external examiners and verifiers endorse the effectiveness of procedures, and students are positive about the nature of their assessment and the feedback they receive. The College meets the Expectation for the operation of equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment in order to demonstrate the extent to which students have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.

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

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

### **Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining**

#### **Findings**

2.64 External examiners are appointed by the awarding bodies, who provide training for their roles and responsibilities. Additionally, subject specialists appointed by UCLan contribute to periodic programme reviews. The awarding bodies receive and respond to external examiner reports, with consideration of feedback incorporated within periodic reviews. For awarding organisation provision, the College's Heads of School and programme teams receive external verifier reports. The College has a procedure for reviewing and responding to all external comments through its committee structures, annual monitoring reports and programme action plans.

2.65 These arrangements and responsibilities allow Expectation B7 to be met in principle.

2.66 The review team considered a range of documentation relating to external examining, including external examiner reports and their resultant action plans. The team also met awarding body representatives, staff, and students.

2.67 The team confirmed the College's use of consistent and appropriate reporting procedures and action planning for external examiner and verifier feedback. The College's Director of Quality and Curriculum and the Quality Manager review all external reports and look for recurring themes which are then considered at the Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Group before feeding into the College's Enhancement Action Plan.

2.68 Discussions with senior staff and awarding body representatives confirmed that external examiners can also act as subject specialists and as course advisers. The UoC appoint an external examiner specifically to the College, with clear reporting procedures being followed. The team explored the generic basis of UCLan external examiner reports for partner providers, with the College noting that comments are rarely ascribed to itself. Discussions with staff and awarding body representatives confirmed that programme partnership meetings examine these reports in detail to ensure issues are addressed, with link tutors also exploring comments with programme teams. Some of the generic feedback can be attributed to a specific module evaluation questionnaire that allows a college to be identified, with further College-specific information being identified through attendance of assessment and moderation boards with the external examiner present. Outcomes from external examiner feedback are consolidated in the UCLan periodic review process for the College.

2.69 Students have access to external examiners' reports and are aware of and engage with the external examining process. They confirm that external examiner and verifier reports are made available to them on the VLE and most acknowledge the importance of these in relation to their own learning experience.

2.70 The team considers that the College has strong and clearly articulated processes in place for receiving, considering and responding to external examiner reports. Staff respond to reports in timely and appropriate ways using prescribed systems and procedures, with a thorough understanding of the reasons for externality. The team concludes that the College meets, with low risk, the Expectation regarding the scrupulous use of external examiners.

**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**

2.71 Programme monitoring and review is undertaken by the College in accordance with the processes of its awarding bodies and organisation. All higher education aspects of the College's quality monitoring cycle are coordinated by the Director of Curriculum and Quality and the Quality Manager. The HE Curriculum and Quality Group has responsibility for enhancing academic standards in the College provision. Internal monitoring is undertaken by the Academic Management Group and Senior Leadership Management Group, under the supervision of the Director of Curriculum and Quality, using a wide range of Key Performance Indicators, including external examiner reports, student data, schemes of work, module evaluation questionnaires and other internal and external student questionnaires. This process involves all stakeholders.

2.72 The College's quality assurance processes meet in principle all of the relevant component elements within Expectation B8.

2.73 The team tested Expectation B8 through scrutiny of monitoring and review documentation supplied by the College before and during the review, and during meetings with senior, teaching and support staff and students.

2.74 The team noted that the purpose and nature of programme monitoring and programme review is described in the partnership agreements with awarding bodies. Reviews are regularly held to assure the quality of the provision in the interests of the students, such as the sufficiency of the resource base, including staff expertise and development, the learning environment, and provision for students with specialised learning requirements.

2.75 The College's internal review process is thorough and robust, including the use of Module Evaluation Questionnaires, internal and external questionnaire results, termly records of all students' progress and annual self-assessment and evaluation reports. Review documentation is prepared systematically by the programme teams, in partnership with the awarding bodies and organisation. The College completes its own evaluation and provides a range of documentation to the awarding bodies for Periodic Course Review. The team found evidence of involvement in the programme and monitoring processes by students, teaching and support staff, external specialists and representatives from the award bodies.

2.76 The team recognised the well-defined and widely understood roles of the Director of Curriculum and Quality and the Quality Manager in the monitoring review of quality and standards in the College higher education provision. External examiner and specialist reports are very positive about the monitoring and review of learning opportunities provided to students. There is evidence that annual programme and periodic reviews monitor standards closely, including discussion of external comments and the drawing up of action plans.

2.77 The team confirmed that preparation processes which gather data and documentation about course content and delivery, staff development, student progress and achievement, student data and programme resources are constantly in action throughout the year. The Academic Management Group involving Heads of School meets weekly to monitor

programmes, including the HE Enhancement Action Plan, recruitment, marketing and individual issues. The Senior Leadership Management Group monitors the higher education provision on a monthly basis, including systematic analysis of student attendance and retention. The Curriculum and Support Performance Review has a formal remit for reviewing, on a termly basis, Schemes of Work, individual student progress, student feedback, module evaluation questionnaires, learning and teaching observations, and the monitoring of Departmental Quality Improvement Plans. The Higher Curriculum and Quality Group meet termly to review the Annual Evaluation reports and Annual Monitoring reports. All processes are consistently applied and monitored continuously, and where committees have a remit for all programmes it is clear that higher education is specifically identified and addressed.

2.78 The team recognised the provision of staff development for more inexperienced colleagues engaging with annual evaluation reporting processes, leading to a mandatory in-house training programme implemented by the Quality Office in 2014-15 for Programme Leaders. Heads of School provide information about their staff and students for an annual departmental SAR. From all these reports a Quality Improvement Plan is drawn up which is monitored at staff meetings and at the Curriculum Performance Review.

2.79 During November all staff members have a formal observation to help to identify topics suitable for inclusion in the CPD Bitesize programme towards development and dissemination of examples of good practice. Periodically, the College's observation team (consisting of the Director of Curriculum and Quality, the Quality Manager, Heads and Assistant Heads of School and Governors) conduct themed learning and teaching 'walk-throughs' for practical and theory classes. Themes are relevant to good teaching practice and have, for example, included health and safety aspects relating to equipment used by higher education students. Supportive and developmental discussion then aims to assess whether further provision is required. On the basis of the extensive and systematic monitoring and review of programmes, the team agreed that the comprehensive and frequent monitoring and evaluation of programmes and resources, including themed 'walk-throughs' by senior management leading to effective action planning, is **good practice**.

2.80 The team concludes that the College meets, with low risk, the Expectation for assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities through using effective, regular and systematic processes for the monitoring and review of programmes.

**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**

2.81 The College has an established Complaints and Compliments policy for formal appeals which is available on its VLE. The process is summarised in the Higher Education Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy with students having the right to lodge complaints with the respective awarding body. Academic appeals are subject to the regulations of the awarding body and information about links to these regulations is provided in student handbooks. Information about processes to be used for awarding organisation programmes is provided in the College Assessment and RPL policy for HNC and HND awards.

2.82 Such arrangements ensure that the College meets Expectation B9 in principle.

2.83 To test the effectiveness of the College's procedures, the team discussed the College's arrangements with staff and students. The team examined the policy and procedures available to students on the VLE, in student handbooks and through links to awarding body regulations, as well as on the College website.

2.84 The team noted that informal processes for complaints are encouraged in the first instance in order to attempt rapid resolution via discussions with tutors. Where formal complaints emerge, the Director of External Relations and Client Services assesses whether matters can be resolved informally before initiating formal procedures, and then supervises the investigation into the complaint culminating in a report from the College. All complaints and actions taken are reported annually to the Governors, and are used to monitor and improve higher education provision. If the complainant disagrees with the outcome the Principal can take forward the complaint. If the appeal is successful, the College takes appropriate remedial action and meets the complainant's expenses.

2.85 The College policy states that complaints will be acknowledged within five days and a response sent within 12 working days with the complaint log for the two complaints from the last two years showing compliance with agreed systems and procedures. There is also a distinct College policy for appeal against failure to gain admission, where staff are warned that the College appeals policy allows for appeals against the processes used, but not against staff judgement of the applicant's academic ability to complete the programme.

2.86 The team recognised that induction processes and student handbooks include summaries of complaints and appeals policy alongside information about how to lodge a complaint or make an appeal. The team noted some inconsistencies for Engineering and Mobile Computing Technology handbooks regarding the amount of detail provided, and the format used for making links to awarding body information sources. The issue of student handbook information, with an associated affirmation, is also highlighted in Expectation C.

2.87 Taking account of the document from the College and discussions with staff and students, the team concludes that the College has fair and timely procedures for handling students' complaints and academic appeals, and as such the Expectation is met with low risk.

**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**

2.88 Strategic priorities for the College include ensuring that all learners are well prepared for employment, including progression from apprenticeships and the application of a work placement policy. Reviewed annually, the new Employer Engagement Strategy, launched in January 2015, embeds employer engagement across all departments. The College works with a considerable number of local employers and employer advisory groups, as well as many national and international companies.

2.89 The provision of appropriate policy, strategy and priorities meets Expectation B10 in principle.

2.90 The review team considered a range of documents and information relating to working with other organisations and employers. The team met students, employers (many of whom have a long-standing relationship with the College), staff responsible for employer engagement, and students.

2.91 The College places great emphasis on its involvement with employers and the team recognised from the evidence provided and in discussions with staff, students and employers that the process is highly effective and beneficial to the learner. Employers are highly complimentary about the College, its staff and the quality of students they receive for placement opportunities as well as later employment. The team also found evidence of informal learning opportunities involving employers and students, but these procedures or arrangements with other organisations had not been fully documented or formalised. Detailed placement protocols are in place for some programmes, with links to professional bodies, but these are not standardised throughout the College.

2.92 There is evidence of linkage between employability support provided by placements and the promotion of students' personal development plans. Information for students regarding work placements is given at induction and can be found in programme handbooks. The team noted the variability of work placement requirements based on specific procedures and regulations associated with the awarding bodies as well as individual employers. The College manages work placement opportunities for those students who require them, but in the majority of cases students are in full-time employment and do not request such support. Those students not in full-time employment and who are required to undertake a placement are, in the first instance, encouraged to secure their own placements. Should they be encountering difficulties in finding a placement, the College Work Placement Team provides support with the responsibility for work placements lying with programme leaders in each programme area.

2.93 Employers had variable experiences of the receipt and use of College information packs across courses and stated that they had received no clear information about any direct or formal involvement in teaching, learning and assessment. Furthermore, the team found that placement handbooks are used in some cases, but not all. On the basis of these observations, the team **recommends** that the College develops clear and overarching protocols and procedures for work placements in order to clarify roles, responsibilities and expectations of all stakeholders.

2.94 The team recognised that College staff are able to cite many examples of how they engage with employers both locally and nationally in this respect, and students are positive about their placement experiences. There is some variability with the management and monitoring of placement opportunities, with opportunities for extending the more established placement procedures to new programmes where demand for placement opportunities may increase. The team concludes that the College meets, with low risk, the expectation that secure and effective arrangements are in place for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than awarding bodies.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.95 The College does not currently deliver research degrees.

## The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.96 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.

2.97 Of the 10 applicable expectations, all are met with low risk judgements throughout.

2.98 There are four features of good practice linked in particular to learning opportunities. Selection and recruitment processes involve rigorous and inclusive procedures for admission, including the screening and support of students with additional needs. Programmes and resources are comprehensively and frequently monitored and evaluated, feeding into effective action planning. As a part of the implementation of the College's Higher Education Strategy, there is extensive engagement with a wide range of employers. Students are supported in numerous ways in order to develop academically and personally.

2.99 The team also made one recommendation regarding student learning opportunities: to develop clear overarching protocols and procedures for work placements in order to clarify the roles, responsibilities and expectations of all stakeholders. There are examples of programmes where placement methods are well established, and with the College's ongoing emphasis on employability and the planned expansion of higher education there is much opportunity for extending this expertise to new programme areas.

2.100 On the basis of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at Kendal College **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 The College provides a range of public information about its higher education provision, including policy and performance documentation, with its website including strategic priorities and performance headlines for stakeholders. This includes paper-based and online systems and pro formas for prospective students on admission criteria, application procedures, start dates and fees. Information is also provided about the awarding bodies and organisation, with the definition of responsibilities and procedures for the approval of marketing materials, materials sign-off, and the presentation of information.

3.2 Such arrangements ensure that the College meets Expectation C in principle.

3.3 The review team tested the accessibility and appropriateness of information through: sampling College publications and information leaflets; partnership agreements, policy and strategy documents; equality and complaints and student disciplinary procedures; module and programme descriptors; student handbooks; and feedback from students. The College website and VLE was also scrutinised, in addition to the exploration of issues through discussions with College staff, representatives from awarding bodies, employers and students.

3.4 The team confirmed that the Heads of School, in consultation with course tutors and awarding bodies are clear about their respective responsibilities for assuring the quality of information about learning opportunities. Responsibility for the provision and updating of Higher Education Statistics Agency information lies with the Director of College Information Services. The College systematically manages appropriate, accurate and detailed information for prospective and current students and employers, as well as awarding bodies and employers. The College uses systems and procedures for annually updating and signing off publicly available programme information. This includes information on programme modules or units, learning outcomes, assessment strategies, external examiner and verifier reports, and progression. College information also clearly states the dates for approval of quality assurance policy documents in addition to the dates they are due for review.

3.5 Higher education information appears in all programme handbooks, but as noted by the College these vary greatly in length, format, content and emphasis, according to the requirements of the awarding bodies. External advisers have responsibility for reviewing student handbooks. The team explored an isolated criticism for one course, involving the production by the awarding body of overly detailed handbook information with minor inaccuracies. Subsequent discussions with students and analysis of feedback data confirmed the generally high levels of student satisfaction with the quality of handbook information. The College is, however, aware of the need for more consistency, resulting in the introduction of a draft generic handbook for the current academic session. The team **affirms** the actions being taken to produce the Higher Education Student Handbook for use in September 2015.

3.6 Students also complimented the quality of course literature and the user-friendly nature of the website when making decisions about the selection of courses and modules.

The helpfulness of information about schemes of work, learning materials and resources, assessment instruments, links to awarding body information sources and the provision of comprehensive coursework deadlines were emphasised. The team noted the investment by the College in well received and successful platforms for the provision of accessible electronic information through VLE within the Kendal College Hub, supported by a new dedicated post for developing and auditing a new VLE with defined minimum standards. A key priority for the College involves enhancing access to general information about College services and support.

3.7 The College also values face-to-face interaction as a method for imparting information with the consistent involvement of Student Services, the Higher Education Co-Ordinator and Ambassadors from higher education courses available at all College Open events in order to provide in-depth guidance about application processes, career planning, and applying for student loans.

3.8 On the basis of the evidence gathered from documentation, websites and meetings, the team concludes that the College meets, with low risk, the Expectation concerning the quality of information about learning opportunities.

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

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

3.9 In reaching its judgement about the quality of information about learning opportunities, the team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.10 The team noted that the College systematically provides accessible information for prospective and current students, employers, staff, and public stakeholders, and for those with responsibility for maintaining standards and assuring quality. Details about the higher education portfolio are specific, accurate and comprehensive, including the identification where appropriate, of awarding bodies.

3.11 No recommendations or good practice statements are made, with one affirmation concerning the College's production of the generic Higher Education Student Handbook for use in September 2015. This action builds on the current use of a draft version during 2014-15, in order to establish more consistency with the use of handbook information across all programmes.

3.12 On the basis of the documentation provided, and discussions with staff and students, the team concludes that the College provides information that is fit for purpose, trustworthy and accessible and in so doing Kendal College **meets** UK expectations for the quality of information about learning opportunities.

## 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 has developed an Enhancement Action Plan which draws together a wide range of operational activities informed by a broad range of internal and external inputs. The plan is cross-referenced to the Quality Code plan developed by the Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Group under the auspices of the Director of Curriculum and Quality, and is monitored by the Academic Operational Group.

4.2 The design of the College's quality assurance processes meet in principle the Expectation.

4.3 The review team examined a range of documentation relevant to the College's systematic enhancement of its higher education provision, including external examiner reports, student questionnaire responses and forum minutes, committee papers, periodic and annual review reports, initial partner agreements with awarding bodies and organisation, quality enhancement policies, the monitoring of quality procedures, and the framing of the new College Enhancement Action Plan. Enhancement issues and procedures were also discussed at meetings with the Principal, employers, representatives from awarding bodies, staff and students.

4.4 The team noted the Principal's sustained support for enhancement of the entire College provision during the past 15 years, personally overseeing developments culminating in the higher education portfolio and leading regular themed 'walk throughs' in the College that involve other senior staff as well as employers who are governors.

4.5 The team recognised the College's successful response to IQER recommendations through managing a more formalised strategic approach to ensuring the enhancement of student learning opportunities by integrating its enhancement initiatives within a College Enhancement Action Plan overseen by the Academic Operational Group.

4.6 The evidence base demonstrates the use of a wide range of documentation by the College when planning its enhancement programme. This includes the College Strategic Plan, the Learning, Teaching and Assessment policy, the Staff Guide to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and statistical evidence on students and their performance. In addition, documents from all awarding bodies contain clear descriptions of robust principles, practices and procedures for enhancement starting with the initial Partnership Agreements and continuing through to approval, validation, assessment and periodic review.

4.7 This substantial list builds on improvement action plans and good practice noted in previous College SARs with four examples being noted by the team. First, the development of the peer observation system as sustained practice involving the exchange of peer observers with Blackburn College, with plans to extend the system to include other providers. Second, the updating of the College's Industry CPD system, which is intended to enhance the support for staff currently maintaining a working role in their industrial field. Third, the welcoming by students of the College's advanced plans for offering in September 2015 two free additional courses to higher education students as a method for enhancing their qualification and their employability. Fourth, the establishment of a more distinct higher education ethos through the University Hub, and its planned separate location for higher education when funding permits.

4.8 The team noted, however, that while there are strategic and effective processes in place for deliberate improvements to learning opportunities, the College's Enhancement Plan, as currently devised, is dominated by shorter-term timescales and targets without explicitly recognising the longer-term objectives outlined by the College for its future higher education provision and for employer engagement. The team **recommends** that the College identifies and integrates the full range of priorities from the Higher Education Strategy within the Enhancement Plan.

4.9 The team noted that Schemes of Work featured significantly within the College's self-assessment evidence. They capture ongoing feedback from students and are developed and shared with learners on the VLE. Schemes of Work have extended to all higher education programmes following the successful implementation of this scheme within the College's further education portfolio. The team noted that the College is proud of this development, with constant evaluation through biannual audits that contribute to performance reviews accompanied by feedback to staff and the collation of action points for CPD training. This strategic and deliberate initiative is an illustration of the College's conviction that forward planning leads to improved quality of learning, with very favourable feedback being gathered from discussions with employers, students and staff about the clarity and usefulness of Scheme of Work documentation and information. This systematic use of detailed and informative Schemes of Work for programme development and employer engagement is **good practice**.

4.10 The team agreed that the College, through its robust assessment and monitoring processes, consistently and systematically develops action plans that demonstrate an intention to constantly enhance the student experience. The College is fully focused on the improvement of its provision. Every meeting during the review visit generated enhancement evidence with additional examples including the evolution of proactive admission practices, engagement with its own alumni to support student work placements, and the development of a teaching museum. On the basis of these discussions and the analysis of the documentary evidence, the team concludes that the College meets, with low risk, the Expectation for taking deliberate steps to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

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

## The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.11 In reaching its judgement about the Enhancement of learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.12 The team considered a range of evidence and engaged in discussions with students, staff and employers in order to confirm that the College effectively uses a strategic, integrated and systematic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities. This includes identifying and supporting activities for improving learning and achievement, with the use of appropriate quality assurance procedures to identify opportunities for enhancement.

4.13 There is one instance of good practice, involving the systematic use of detailed and informative Schemes of Work for programme development and employer engagement. The team notes that these Schemes have been extended from further to higher education delivery in four programme areas. They include multi-purpose documents covering programme information, assessment and teaching strategies and student feedback. They generated highly complimentary commentary during a range of meetings with staff, students and employers.

4.14 There is also one recommendation concerning the need to make more explicit the objectives and deadlines from all of the priority areas of the Higher Education Strategy within the College's Enhancement Plan. At present this document provides shorter-term operational targets, without taking full advantage of the College's longer-term ambitions for expanded higher education provision.

4.15 On the basis of the documentation provided, and discussions with staff and students, the team concludes that the College takes deliberate steps to improve the quality of students' learning experiences and **meets** UK expectations for Enhancement.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Findings

5.1 Employability is a key strategic objective of the College, and its established and extensive links with a large number of employers, locally, regionally and nationally, provide considerable input and expertise to existing courses and to new course development. This enables the College to respond effectively and efficiently to local economic and community need which is then reflected in its higher education provision. The College employs assessors who link with employers on a daily basis and who provide valuable feedback on industry trends and developments. Representation on industrial panels and committees is strong and the Principal chairs the One South Lakeland Partnership, a partnership working to improve employment, business, health and education in the region.

5.2 Staff have strong links with employers and each department holds annual employer forums. These forums provide an opportunity for feedback and to inform development, planning and sector needs. The College is significantly enhancing its resources to meet local employer need and, acting in an advisory role, employers provided examples of their direct input into advising on the purchase of specific programme resources. The Skills Funding Agency questionnaire 2013-14 found high levels of employer satisfaction with the College.

5.3 The College has recently introduced the requirement for all courses to embed employer engagement at the planning and approval stage of new courses. Most higher education programmes already encompass an element of work experience or placement, and some have specific employability skills development modules. Where possible, learning outcomes of programmes and modules are aligned with relevant professional standards. Students are supported in the development of their employability skills through a matrix-accredited careers, advice and guidance service. Engagement at course level includes employer participation through lecturing and mentoring, course design, providing and assessing work placements, and an annual Jobs and Skills Fair. Programme teams arrange visits to organisations and businesses where appropriate. Students are supported in undertaking additional qualifications and are positive about the extent to which their employability is being enhanced.

5.4 Students acknowledge the importance of work-based learning and employability skills and confirmed that their course related well to current industry and vocational standards. The College has a rosette listed fine dining restaurant in Kendal which is predominately run by apprentices, and it also manages the Kendal Museum. The team recognises the College's plans and ambitions for the expansion of its higher education provision based on the future development of specialist facilities supported through employer partnerships.

## 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 29-32 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](http://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](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx)

### Academic standards

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

### Award

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

### Blended learning

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

### Credit(s)

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

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

### Dual award or double award

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

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

**Enhancement**

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

**Expectations**

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

**Flexible and distributed learning**

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

See also **distance learning**.

**Framework**

A published formal structure. See also **framework for Higher Education qualifications**.

**Framework for Higher Education qualifications**

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

**Good practice**

A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA 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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