



Higher Education Review of Leeds City College Group

March 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Leeds City College Group. The review took place from 7 to 10 March 2016 and was conducted by a team of six reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Michael Cottam
- Mr Liam Curran
- Dr Dawn Edwards
- Ms Sophie Elliott (student reviewer)
- Mr Laurence McNaughton (student reviewer)
- Ms Christine Willmore.

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

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

In reviewing Leeds City 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 2015-16 are Student Employability and Digital Literacy,² and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

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

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

² Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859.

³ QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.

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

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Leeds City College Group

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

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

Good practice

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

- The strategic approach to supporting and facilitating scholarly activity and the professional recognition of staff, which are firmly embedded across Leeds City College and Leeds College of Music and which enrich the student experience (Expectation B3).
- The implementation of the new VLE platform and its integration with specific mobile hardware at Leeds City College to support student learning (Expectations B3 and Enhancement).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Leeds City College Group.

By September 2016:

- work at a strategic level to improve the quality, consistency and usefulness for students of feedback on assessment (Expectations B6 and Enhancement)
- evaluate the processes for programme change, monitoring and review to ensure they explicitly articulate the relationship between internal and Pearson processes and promote staff engagement with them (Expectations B8, A3.1 and A3.3)
- increase the transparency and thoroughness of the mechanisms within LCoM for the formal approval and oversight of published information (Expectations C, B1 and B2)
- ensure there is oversight at the highest level of the College that the information produced for staff, students and external stakeholders is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy (Expectations C and A2.1)
- consistently apply the strategic approach to enhancement in order to improve the quality of learning opportunities for students across the College (Expectation Enhancement).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The work being undertaken to harmonise selected policies and procedures into single overarching College documents (Expectations A2.1 and Enhancement).
- The steps being taken by Leeds College of Music to review the careers service as part of the wider review of enterprise services, to further enrich the development of enterprise and entrepreneurial skills of students (Expectation B4).
- The work undertaken at Leeds College of Music in the Student Journey Project to improve the organisation of programme information for students, to make it easily accessible and fit for purpose (Expectations C, B3 and B9).

Theme: Student Employability

The development of professional, transferable and employability skills is embedded across Leeds City College Group's higher education programmes. There is a strong emphasis on work-based learning, with the College supporting students in finding appropriate work placements to further their professional experience and establish links with industry. Employers are consulted on programme design to ensure that curriculum content is appropriate for students wishing to develop in their chosen industry. Students confirm that programmes at the College enhance their employability and provide a balance of specialist knowledge and practical skills.

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

About Leeds City College Group

Leeds City College Group was created in 2009 from the merger of a number of further education colleges. In 2011, another further education college and Leeds College of Music (a higher education institution) also became part of the Corporation. Leeds College of Music is now a limited company and charity which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Leeds City College Group, with its own Principal/Managing Director and a board of directors reporting to the governing body of the Group. There is also a joint Academic Board. The scope of this Higher Education Review is the higher education offered by the overall entity of Leeds City College Group, which operationally is delivered by Leeds City College and Leeds College of Music. In this report, the term 'the College' refers to Leeds City College Group, LCC refers to the part of the College that offers higher education programmes across a range of subject areas, and LCoM refers to the specialist conservatoire provision of Leeds College of Music. As appropriate, the report discusses processes and practices that are common across the higher education of the College or specific to LCC or LCoM.

LCC has around 750 higher education students, located on a number of campuses across Leeds and in Bradford, and of whom a quarter study part time. The majority of students are on foundation degree programmes, alongside those completing bachelor's degree top-ups, all awarded by Teesside University, a small volume of teacher education mostly awarded by the University of Huddersfield, and two Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes in Engineering. LCC has been delivering higher education since 1997, and over that time has made strategic changes to its portfolio to respond to market demand and offer better progression routes for its further education students. LCC's mission is 'to be an exceptional and responsive college providing life-changing education, skills and experiences for individuals, businesses and communities', and this is underpinned by values of excellence, respect, ambition, welcoming, teamwork and accountability.

LCoM has around 1,000 higher education students, on foundation, bachelor's and master's degrees and postgraduate diploma programmes, all awarded by the University of Hull. Most students study full time at the purpose-built premises in the Quarry Hill arts quarter in Leeds. LCoM offers higher education in the conservatoire model, with programmes covering a

range of musical styles, as well as music production and music business. LCoM was founded in 1965 and has been offering degree-level programmes since 1978. In its Strategic Plan 2015-20, LCoM states its aim to be 'artistically ambitious, quality driven and industry focused, actively engaged in the future of music making and with an environment that nurtures independence and creative risk', supported by core values to be creative, rigorous, supportive and sustainable.

Since the previous QAA reviews of LCC and LCoM, there have been a number of changes in the awarding bodies with which the College works. The current main relationships date from 2012-13 with Teesside University and 2013-14 with the University of Hull. The College was approved to deliver Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes in 2012. The last intake of students on Teesside University programmes will be in September 2016 and the College is currently considering alternative awarding bodies for LCC programmes. Where there have been changes to an awarding body in the past, the College has followed an exit strategy to ensure that students have not been disadvantaged, where necessary enabling students to complete their qualification under the previous awarding body.

A new Principal for Leeds City College Group took up the post in September 2015.

The College identifies the main challenges to its higher education provision as increased competition following changes to government policy on funding and student numbers, and dealing with changes in strategy by the universities with which it has chosen to work. As a consequence, the College is seeking foundation degree awarding powers to give it greater independence. The College is keen to maintain its financial stability in a challenging further education environment, and is investing in the development of its campuses.

LCC underwent Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review by QAA in 2011. The single recommendation resulting from this review has been appropriately addressed, with the introduction of a feedback form to enable a more systematic approach to collecting views from employers. LCC has continued to build upon the areas of good practice identified, through maintaining the role of the Higher Education Development Office in offering staff development for programme teams, ensuring support for staff for professional development and scholarly activity, and improving the student experience through use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) and tutorial support.

LCoM underwent Institutional Audit by QAA in 2007. The review resulted in a number of recommendations, although some of these have subsequently been overtaken either by the changes to the awarding body or by the merger with Leeds City College Group. The committee structure at LCoM has been streamlined, and progress has been made in developing oversight of policies, processes and documentation and in clarifying roles and responsibilities, but this has been slow and some gaps remain, which have contributed to the judgements made in this review, as discussed under the relevant Expectations below. The relatively frequent changes in awarding body have necessitated changes to LCoM's internal quality assurance framework, which has consequently only had a limited time in which to become embedded.

LCoM has responded appropriately to the recommendations concerning collecting and acting on student feedback, through more systematic use of surveys and the creation of dedicated staff posts. LCoM has also developed its monitoring of academic performance data and management of data relating to student assessment, and has put in place support for staff to undertake scholarly activity. LCoM has continued to build upon the areas of good practice identified, in particular its use of connections with the music industry and expert professional practice to enhance the student learning experience.

Explanation of the findings about Leeds City College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#) is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.

1 Judgement: 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 LCC and LCoM are required to comply with the academic and quality assurance frameworks of their respective awarding bodies as formally recorded in the Memorandum of Agreement with Teesside University, the Collaborative Partner Agreement with the University of Hull and for Pearson awards, the Centre Approval documentation. The awarding bodies are responsible for ensuring that LCC and LCoM programmes meet the requirements of the FHEQ, and take account of other external reference points through scrutiny of the programme approval documentation.

1.2 For LCC programmes awarded by Teesside University this consists of a programme approval proposal and a programme specification that make reference to external reference points. For LCoM programmes awarded by the University of Hull the programme specification makes reference to external indicators of quality and standards, with the Record of Recommended Decision recording that the programme meets university requirements. For Pearson awards this is articulated in the programme specification with proposals for new awards being considered by LCC Higher Education Quality and Enhancement Committee (HEQEC, previously known as the Higher Education Committee).

1.3 These policies and procedures, and the close working relationships between the College and the awarding bodies, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.4 The effectiveness of the College's approach in securing threshold academic standards was tested by meeting senior staff and staff with specific responsibilities for academic standards from both LCC and LCoM, and the link tutors for Teesside University and the University of Hull. The review team also reviewed the academic regulations and programme approval documentation for programmes approved by both awarding bodies, and equivalent documentation for Pearson programmes.

1.5 The review team saw evidence that both LCC and LCoM follow the academic and quality assurance frameworks of their respective awarding bodies.

1.6 At LCC the team confirmed that external reference points are considered at an early stage of programme development through the Proposal to Develop a New Higher Education Award form, which is submitted to HEQEC. LCC then completes a programme approval proposal, which makes explicit reference to Subject Benchmark Statements, professional body requirements and National Occupational Standards, for consideration by Teesside University. At LCoM the Record of Recommended Decision confirms the adherence of the programme to the University of Hull regulations and external reference points. As part of the programme approval process an independent external scrutineer considers both the programme and module learning outcomes in the draft programme approval document, checking them against the relevant qualification descriptors for their alignment with FHEQ.

1.7 The team saw programme specifications for Teesside University and Pearson awards that make explicit reference to the FHEQ and the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement(s). For University of Hull awards at LCoM, programme learning outcomes are detailed in the programme specification and mapped against the Subject Benchmark Statement for Music for University of Hull awards.

1.8 Staff at the College are made aware of the external requirements in relation to threshold academic standards, including the Quality Code, through staff development activities held by LCC and LCoM and through the requirements of the Quality Code being cross-referenced in the College's higher education policies and procedures. LCoM receives support from its awarding body as an integral part of the programme design and approval process, with staff being able to attend support and training sessions. At LCC the link tutor from Teesside University plays a key role in supporting staff in the development of new programmes.

1.9 Based on the evidence seen, the review team concludes that the College is effective in meeting the requirements of its awarding bodies and Pearson in relation to the use of external reference points to secure academic standards. Therefore the Expectation is met and the 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

1.10 Security of the academic standards for programmes at LCC and LCoM is ultimately the responsibility of the awarding bodies and organisation with which the College works. The College is responsible for complying with the academic regulations and related policies and procedures of the awarding bodies and Pearson.

1.11 The College ensures that it complies with the requirements of its awarding bodies and Pearson through its own deliberative structures and internal quality assurance processes, which differ between LCC and LCoM. For LCC, HEQEC reports to the Higher Education Academic Board and through the Executive Leadership Team to the College Board of Governors. Maintenance of academic standards and quality assurance are the responsibility of the Dean of Higher Education, who reports to the Deputy Principal Learning and Teaching, supported by the Higher Education Development Office (HEDO). LCoM's senior academic authority is the Academic Council that reports to both the Higher Education Academic Board at LCC and the University of Hull's Joint Board of Studies. The Board of Examiners and Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group report to the Academic Council. The Director of Curriculum oversees academic standards and quality assurance.

1.12 These deliberative structures would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.13 The effectiveness of the deliberative structures was tested by meeting senior staff and staff with specific responsibilities for securing and maintaining academic standards from both LCC and LCoM. The review team also considered the academic regulations of the awarding bodies and the formal agreements with the College, and equivalent documentation for Pearson programmes, and reviewed the governance structure of LCC and LCoM and minutes from the deliberative bodies listed above.

1.14 The team confirmed that the Higher Education Academic Board is the guiding academic authority of the College and has responsibility for higher education strategy, quality and standards at both LCC and LCoM. The majority of its members are from LCC, with two representatives from LCoM. Overall responsibility for academic standards and the quality of teaching at the College resides with the Board of Governors. The team saw evidence that it exercises this responsibility through the deliberative committee structures at LCC and LCoM, receiving a summary report of the annual monitoring reports (AMRs) that focuses on student retention and success and outcomes from the National Student Survey (NSS). The team noted, however, that there was no evidence of the Board of Governors exercising responsibility for the oversight of information produced for staff, students and external stakeholders, and this has led to the recommendation made under Part C.

1.15 The annual monitoring process enables the Academic Board at LCC, Academic Council at LCoM and the awarding bodies to assure themselves that threshold academic standards are being maintained. Teesside University receives a Collaborative Provision Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Report from LCC and the University of Hull and an annual Partnership Quality Enhancement Report from LCoM. Scrutiny of the minutes of Academic Board made available to the team confirmed that academic standards at both

LCC and LCoM are considered through the LCC Higher Education Annual Review and the LCoM AMR, which both include discussion of the external examiner reports.

1.16 HEQEC also includes representatives from LCoM. HEQEC considers and approves proposals for new awards and quality assurance reports as well as higher education policies and procedures, thus exercising responsibility for quality and standards. HEDO receives and reviews annual reports from programmes, from which the LCC Higher Education Annual Review is prepared for consideration by Academic Board.

1.17 At LCoM the membership of Academic Council includes the LCC Dean of Higher Education. Academic Council reports to the Joint Board of Studies, a joint committee between the University of Hull and LCoM which provides a forum for discussing programme development and quality assurance, referring matters to the Academic Council and/or the University Joint Development Board for discussion or approval as appropriate. LCoM's Academic Council has a standing item on its agenda on Quality and Student Engagement under which a range of issues pertaining to academic standards are discussed, including the AMR, the outcomes of the NSS and comments from external examiners. From the minutes of Academic Council reviewed by the team it was evident that there is discussion at a senior level at LCoM of matters relating to academic standards, enhancement and curriculum development and that responsibility for academic standards for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes is exercised through the AMR to LCC Academic Board and the University of Hull.

1.18 The team confirmed that at LCC the Dean of Higher Education is responsible for ensuring compliance with the academic and quality requirements of the awarding bodies and Pearson, although the Further Education Quality Team lead the relationship with Pearson. LCC's approach to quality assurance and enhancement is described in the Guide to Quality Assurance, which includes a section on the safeguarding of academic standards and the Guide to Quality Assurance and Enhancement for Higher Education.

1.19 The Director of Curriculum is responsible for academic standards and quality assurance at LCoM, supported by the Head of Undergraduate Studies and Head of Postgraduate Studies, who work with their staff in developing new programmes along with the link tutor from the University of Hull. LCoM follows the quality assurance procedures laid down in the Quality and Standards Framework of the University of Hull and its partnership-specific Collaborative Handbook. Both of these are extremely detailed reference documents. There is no equivalent to the LCC Guide to Quality Assurance, which distils the awarding body's regulations into key information that staff need to be aware of as an easily accessible reference to quality assurance in higher education and the awarding body academic and quality framework.

1.20 The awarding bodies are represented at the Board of Examiners held at the College to ensure they are conducted in accordance with their academic framework and regulations, and the link tutors also attend.

1.21 The review team noted differences in the approach taken by LCC and LCoM to the maintenance of standards and management of the quality of learning opportunities. The College is in the process of harmonising its policies and procedures relating to students and the curriculum to create shared single College policies. This process is being overseen by HEDO and is due for completion and implementation by September 2016. There are opportunities for joint working and the sharing of good practice to strengthen the College's approach to securing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The review team therefore **affirms** the work being undertaken to harmonise selected policies and procedures into single overarching College documents.

1.22 Based on the evidence seen, the review team concludes that the College operates effective frameworks and structures to secure academic standards and to meet the requirements of its awarding bodies and Pearson. Weaknesses in the governance structure relate to the oversight of information and are considered under Expectation C. Therefore the Expectation is met and the 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

1.23 The definitive record for College programmes awarded by Teesside University, the University of Hull and Pearson is the programme specification. A comprehensive programme specification is prepared as part of the programme approval documentation for all of the College's higher education awards, using the awarding body's template. The programme specifications contain details of assessment. Changes to the approved programme specification go through a formal process overseen by HEDO at LCC and Registry at LCoM, with the approved version held by the awarding body and made available to staff and students at LCC on the website, and LCoM on the VLE.

1.24 This approach would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.25 The effectiveness of the approach was tested by meeting senior staff, and staff with specific responsibilities for securing academic standards from both LCC and LCoM. The review team reviewed the responsibilities checklist and programme specifications for programmes with all awarding bodies, as well as the LCC website and LCoM VLE.

1.26 The review team confirmed that the awarding bodies maintain the definitive programme specification for each approved programme, releasing this to LCC or LCoM if they wish to make a minor programme modification. For LCC programmes, minor modifications are considered by HEDO and if approved, a request is made to Teesside University to release the definitive programme specification, which is amended by HEDO and then returned to Teesside University with the revised version being uploaded to the LCC website. Changes to Pearson programmes are made by the course team, with HEDO updating the programme specification. Formal approval would be sought from Pearson for a significant change but to date this has not occurred in the programmes delivered by LCC. For LCoM programmes, changes are considered by the Academic Council then forwarded with the updated programme specification by Registry to the University of Hull for formal approval. Programme drift resulting from cumulative minor changes is prevented on Teesside University awards through tracking of minor changes by HEDO at LCC and through oversight by the Academic Council and University of Hull for LCoM awards.

1.27 It is the College's responsibility to make programme specifications available to students and to ensure that they are used by staff as a reference point for delivery, assessment, monitoring and review of programmes. Programme specifications are available on the LCC website and through the VLE at LCoM. Students from both LCC and LCoM whom the review team met were not aware of the programme specification for their programme but did know where they could find the relevant information.

1.28 The review team saw evidence that the College was fulfilling its responsibilities as set out in its agreements with its awarding bodies for the maintenance of definitive records of programmes and therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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

1.29 The College is required to comply with the academic and quality assurance frameworks of its respective awarding bodies and has internal processes for the approval of modules and programmes prior to submission to these bodies. The approval process for programmes offered within LCC is documented in a Programme Approval, Review and Modification Handbook. Both the business case in the Strategic Planning Approval document and academic case are critically reviewed internally and approved by LCC prior to submission for approval by Teesside University. For LCoM programmes, the University of Hull procedures are used throughout. Programme approvals and modifications are considered by Academic Council before they progress through the University of Hull approval process. All College programmes awarded by Teesside University and the University of Hull have been through a process of approval or reapproval since 2011, using these processes.

1.30 Programme design includes setting appropriate assessment activities. The awarding body processes require reference to external reference points including the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, professional body requirements and National Occupational Standards. For Pearson awards this is articulated in the programme specification, with proposals for new awards being considered by HEQEC.

1.31 The awarding body processes cover both programme approval and programme modification, with differentiated processes for major and minor change, and include the involvement of external examiners. For Pearson programmes, LCC is responsible for approving changes within broad limits.

1.32 The processes in place for programme approval and modification would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.33 To test the effectiveness of the processes, the review team examined approval and programme documentation and discussed the processes of maintaining academic standards with senior management, teaching staff and link tutors from the awarding bodies.

1.34 For programmes awarded by Teesside University and the University of Hull the team saw evidence of active involvement of the awarding body, and of internal and external processes for programme approval and modification being implemented consistently and rigorously. For major modifications these involve largely the same processes as programme approval. Minor modifications are defined and are subject to a shorter process, with approval by an internal modifications panel. External examiners are used to ensure consistency. The process recognises the risk of programme drift and there is an annual overview of changes to programmes as part of annual review processes.

1.35 The approval processes ensure that the College sets academic standards at an appropriate level and the College's processes support the maintenance of these standards in accordance with the awarding bodies' requirements, albeit through different processes within LCC and LCoM.

1.36 Pearson operates clear procedures for programme approval. LCC has not yet sought to modify its Pearson programmes. There is LCC documentation setting out the processes and criteria to be used for programme approval, modification and review, but the application to Pearson awards is not clearly articulated. LCC acknowledge that they have not yet formally documented the application of procedures for modification in relation to Pearson programmes. This lack of articulation in relation to internal processes has led to a recommendation under Expectation B8 in order to ensure robust scrutiny of academic standards when programmes are modified.

1.37 Overall, the evidence seen by the review team indicates that the College operates effective processes to fulfil its responsibilities in relation to processes for the approval of programmes, which ensure that academic standards are maintained. While there is a lack of clear articulation of the application of processes to Pearson programmes, this does not present a significant risk to the maintenance of academic standards. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

1.38 The College is required to use the procedures and assessment regulations of its awarding bodies for the design, approval and marking of assessments. The programme approval process operated by the awarding bodies confirms that the overall assessment strategy for the programme and practices within all modules are appropriate and that the assessments enable learning outcomes to be met. This process ensures that programmes satisfy UK threshold standards as well as complying with the awarding body academic frameworks and regulations. For Pearson programmes at LCC, staff are responsible for the design and contextualisation of assessment tasks based on the generic learning outcomes that are set by the awarding organisation.

1.39 LCC has in place an assessment and moderation policy that provides comprehensive guidance to staff involved in the assessment and internal moderation of learning outcomes. In addition, LCC provides staff with a detailed and informative Assessment and Moderation Handbook that provides an overview of the key aspects of the assessment process, such as assessment design, conduct of assessment, marking and grading, feedback to students on performance, internal moderation, and external examination. For LCoM programmes, academic staff follow University of Hull guidelines with regard to assessment and moderation practice.

1.40 The design of these processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.41 The team tested the effectiveness of these processes by examining the processes for assessment, programme specifications, records of boards of examiners, and evidence of internal moderation processes. In addition, the team also met a range of students and staff from LCC and LCoM.

1.42 The team confirmed that academic staff at both LCC and LCoM make effective use of the programme specifications that identify the methods by which learning outcomes are assessed. All learning outcomes are mapped against modules within programmes with a clearly defined assessment strategy. The awarding bodies and Pearson provide grading descriptors that are used in the marking of students' work.

1.43 Within the College there are sound procedures in place for making changes to assessments. At LCC, proposals are fed through to HEDO and at LCoM they are processed through the Academic Council prior to any discussions with external examiners and awarding body link tutors.

1.44 All assessment briefs and samples of student work are internally and externally moderated at both LCC and LCoM. LCoM also makes use of external instrument assessors for student final recitals, final performances and presentations. At both LCC and LCoM all dissertations are double marked.

1.45 Student achievement is confirmed through boards of examiners at both LCC and LCoM. The College provides clear and detailed information for the procedure to be used. The boards of examiners are held at the College and attended by link tutors from the awarding bodies and external examiners. A formal record of the board of examiners is forwarded to the respective awarding body. External examiners' comments on assessment, second marking and internal verification are taken into account at these meetings and subsequently incorporated into individual programme AMRs.

1.46 External examiner reports are positive and confirm the standards of awards are appropriate and comparable with other UK higher education providers. They also confirm that the College's assessment procedures, examination and determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted, and that boards of examiners meetings' are conducted in accordance with awarding body procedures.

1.47 The review team concludes that the College is managing its responsibilities effectively in ensuring that assessment activities enable students to achieve the learning outcomes, and external examiners confirm that the academic standards align with UK threshold standards as set out in the FHEQ. Therefore the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.48 The College monitors and reviews academic standards by implementing the internal verification and external examining requirements of its respective awarding bodies, including procedures for programme review.

1.49 LCC and LCoM both have a clear annual cycle of monitoring and review. The LCC Higher Education Annual Review is strategic, with an emphasis upon retention, progression and completion. The attainment of academic standards is verified through award meetings, pathway meetings and annual review processes, which bring together evidence from external examiners, other external reference points, and progression and award data. The Higher Education Annual Review is considered by Teesside University, alongside the Collaborative Provision Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Report from LCC.

1.50 For LCoM programmes, the annual review is conducted through an AMR and Partner Quality Enhancement Report process prescribed by the awarding body. These are submitted to the University of Hull and explored through its internal quality processes but are also considered by LCoM Academic Council with headline stories included in a report to Academic Board.

1.51 LCC provides specific guidance on the operation of the LCC stages of these processes. LCoM relies upon the programme review documentation specified by the awarding body. In both cases link tutors provide additional support.

1.52 At LCC, HEDO monitors all external examiner reports and approves responses. Module reviews are monitored by programme managers and discussed in programme annual review. HEDO produces a spreadsheet detailing performance of every higher education programme that forms part of the Higher Education Annual Review and is reported to Academic Board. LCoM provides performance data by pathway in its annual report, which also goes to Academic Board.

1.53 The processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.54 To test the effectiveness of these processes, the review team examined programme review documentation and discussed the processes of maintaining academic standards with senior management, teaching staff and link tutors from the awarding bodies.

1.55 The review team confirmed that annual monitoring enables the Academic Board at LCC, Academic Council at LCoM and the awarding bodies to assure themselves that threshold academic standards are being maintained in relation to Teesside University and University of Hull. There is evidence of the annual review processes in both LCC and LCoM identifying and addressing issues relating to academic standards. Action in relation to identified areas for improvement is monitored through a comprehensively deployed action planning process and tracking system. A summary of key information focusing on student retention and success and the NSS is received by the College Board of Governors.

1.56 Review and monitoring processes for Pearson programmes at LCC differ in terms of the involvement of the awarding organisation, with external scrutiny primarily through external examiners. The internal LCC review handbook and processes do not make this difference explicit. There are opportunities to strengthen scrutiny of Pearson programmes to ensure oversight of academic standards and that review processes are consistently delivered as for other programmes within the College, for example through online provision of external verifier reports. This has led to a recommendation under Expectation B8.

1.57 Overall, the evidence seen by the review team indicates that the College operates effective processes to fulfil its responsibilities for monitoring and review of programmes. The recent changes in awarding bodies mean that the current programmes have not yet been subject to periodic review, but there is clear provision for this in the requirements of the awarding bodies. While there is a lack of clear articulation of the application of processes to Pearson programmes, this does not present a significant risk to the maintenance of academic standards. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

1.58 Ultimate responsibility for ensuring external expertise in the setting and maintenance of academic standards rests with the College's awarding bodies and Pearson. The College fulfils its responsibilities through the use of external examiners (appointed by the awarding bodies) and compliance with the programme approval and periodic review processes of the awarding bodies, which involve external panel members. Programme teams at LCC and LCoM also draw on external expertise from professional bodies, employers and academic subject experts through their involvement in the programme design and approval process. The LCC Guide to Quality Assurance describes independent scrutiny as being fundamental in providing confidence regarding academic quality and standards.

1.59 These mechanisms would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.60 The effectiveness of the processes was tested by the team through the review of records from programme approval events, external examiner reports, and minutes from boards of examiners. The team also met senior and academic staff and link tutors from the awarding bodies.

1.61 The review team saw evidence that the programme approval processes of the awarding bodies require programme teams to confirm that the programme has been designed in accordance with external reference points and has taken into account input from external examiners, professional bodies and employers. In programme design, modules and programmes are developed based upon skill needs identified through links with employers, subject specialists and professional bodies, and independent external academic experts and industry-facing advisers also have input to the process.

1.62 To assist programme teams in their preparation for the awarding body formal approval events, LCC has introduced an internal critical review process to consider the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities on the programme. The critical review is a peer-led process that involves academic staff, external subject specialists, and employers.

1.63 The review team confirmed that the College makes effective use of feedback from external examiners regarding the comparability and appropriateness of academic standards within programmes. Programme teams consider external examiners' reports annually and formulate responses and action plans.

1.64 The boards of examiners at LCC and LCoM are also used to provide an external view in the maintenance of academic standards through the attendance of external examiners and link tutors from the awarding bodies. Both awarding body and external examiner reports compliment the College on how boards of examiners are conducted and managed.

1.65 The review team saw evidence that the College is taking appropriate steps to engage directly with external stakeholders in order to fulfil its responsibilities for making use of external expertise in the maintenance of academic standards. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.67 All the Expectations in this area are met and have low risk. There are no recommendations, although aspects of A3.1 and A3.3 contribute to the recommendation made under Expectation B8. However, this refers to a small part of the College's provision and the team did not consider it to present a serious risk to the management of academic standards. There is one affirmation in A2.1.

1.68 The review team therefore concludes that the maintenance of academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and the awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval

Findings

2.1 The College is required to comply with the academic and quality assurance frameworks of its respective awarding bodies in relation to the design and approval of programmes. At both LCC and LCoM there is senior management consideration of new programmes and changes to programmes prior to submission to the awarding bodies, albeit through different processes. For the initial design and content of Higher National programmes, LCC relied upon Pearson but worked with local employers to map the precise content.

2.2 Student participation in programme development is mandatory from an early stage in programmes awarded by Teesside University, and for University of Hull programmes students are involved in the formal stages of the process. There have not yet been changes to the Pearson programmes, but LCC anticipates applying the same process to manage changes as currently used in relation to Teesside University programmes.

2.3 These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.4 To test the effectiveness of the arrangements the review team examined approval and programme documentation and discussed the processes of maintaining academic quality with students, senior management, teaching staff, and link tutors from the awarding bodies.

2.5 The review team confirmed that staff are made aware of the external requirements in relation to academic standards and quality of learning opportunities, including the Quality Code, through staff development activities held by LCC and LCoM, through the requirements of the Quality Code being cross-referenced in the College's higher education policies and procedures, and through support from the awarding bodies as an integral part of the programme design and approval process. Designated staff are responsible for oversight of quality in each part of the College (HEDO at LCC and the Director of Curriculum at LCoM).

2.6 In different ways both LCC and LCoM engage with employers to ensure that programmes meet current curriculum expectations, and ensure alignment with academic and professional benchmarks through awarding body processes.

2.7 There is evidence of student engagement in programme modification, both indirectly through recruitment and retention data and directly. Students are involved in the formal stages of programme approval and modification through the awarding bodies' processes, but not necessarily in the formative development stages. The College is developing a new student engagement policy in partnership with students from both LCC and LCoM, which will enable the College to articulate its own approach to student participation in programme design.

2.8 LCoM programmes are structured to provide considerable flexibility within modules to enable students to follow their own creative pathways, while still ensuring that programme

and module intended learning outcomes are met. This is valued by students, but there is a lack of formal processes for modification of module content to ensure curriculum change is strategically managed. The potential for information for potential students to be misleading as a result of such changes is discussed further under Expectation C.

2.9 The review team saw evidence that the College processes and the close working relationship with the awarding bodies are effective in ensuring appropriate student learning opportunities in programme design, development and approval. The risks related to the flexibility of the curriculum at LCoM relate to information for students and are addressed under Expectation C. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education*

Findings

2.10 LCC and LCoM each have their own Admissions Policy, which has been mapped against *Chapter B2* of the Quality Code. The LCC policy was introduced in 2015 for the 2015-16 academic year. The College is working towards a shared higher education admissions policy. Currently the two separate policies are overseen by Academic Board and Academic Council respectively.

2.11 Applications for study at LCC and LCoM are made through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) or UCAS Conservatoires. In some cases, LCoM will accept non-standard applications. Requirements are made clear through the website and prospectus. Dedicated staff are involved in the process from application to enrolment. Pre-enrolment information is sent to new students and information is also available during an induction week.

2.12 Staff involved in recruitment, selection and admissions are trained and briefed to enable them to fulfil their role as appropriate to the nature of admissions in the different parts of the College. LCC has a Higher Education Admissions Officer and centralised system for higher education applications. LCoM has devolved authority from its awarding body to make non-standard admissions decisions.

2.13 LCC's appeals policy includes provision for prospective students to appeal against an admission decision. LCoM has a specific Admissions Appeals policy.

2.14 While there are differences in the way that admissions are dealt with, due to the nature of provision in each part of the College, the procedures and processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.15 To test the effectiveness of the procedures and processes the team viewed documentation pertaining to admissions, including evidence that demonstrated LCC and LCoM's management of data and of personnel involved in the admissions process, as well as the respective admissions policies. The team met students and staff from the College who discussed their experience of, respectively, applying and managing the admissions process.

2.16 The team heard that staff and students had found that the admissions process is clear and well understood. This is helped by the admissions policy for each part of the College, which is clear and succinct. Staff confirmed that they have training in advance of all applications and auditions and feel prepared to make informed decisions about applicants. At LCoM, there is currently no evaluation of auditions in terms of considering feedback from applicants; however, there is a review of induction.

2.17 Students at LCC whom the team met were happy with the information they received in advance of starting at the College. They feel that it has reflected their experience. At LCoM, students thought the information they received in advance relating to induction was

helpful. They also agreed that the audition process was a positive experience that echoed the experience that they now enjoy as enrolled students.

2.18 Information on admissions is available on LCC and LCoM websites, on UCAS and for LCoM on UCAS Conservatoires, with programmes that have yet to be formally approved being clearly signposted on the website as subject to awarding body approval. In the case of LCC, accuracy of the website information for prospective students is ensured through the Published Information Policy. Students whom the team met indicated that as module content in programmes at LCoM can be adjusted to meet the interests of students, the information available to prospective students does not always reflect their experience once they enrol on the programme. This has led to a recommendation under Expectation C.

2.19 Applications are monitored annually by HEQEC and Academic Board at LCC and Academic Council at LCoM. Students with additional needs are identified through the application process and their needs assessed so that early intervention can be put in place if required. Admissions policies are reviewed on a regular basis.

2.20 Based on the evidence considered, the review team concludes that the College's 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. While there is potential for information for prospective students about programmes at LCoM to be misleading, this matter relates to the provision of information and is therefore addressed under Expectation C. Consequently, the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.21 The College's strategic approach to learning and teaching is described in the LCoM Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and the LCC Higher Education Learning and Teaching Policy. The LCC Higher Education Teaching and Learning Policy is based on the overall LCC Learning First Policy for all students and is mapped to the Quality Code.

2.22 There is a new higher education staff induction programme and new to higher education training procedure at LCC. All new LCoM tutors participate in the University of Hull Recognised Teacher Programme prior to starting teaching. There is an informal mentor programme for new higher education tutors at LCC and at LCoM for both full-time and part-time tutors.

2.23 A common higher education peer observation process is in place for LCC and LCoM and is mapped to the UK Professional Standards Framework. LCC and LCoM operate and track outcomes from the peer observation process separately within each part of the College. Themes emerging from peer observations are taken forward through AMRs for LCC and through the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group for LCoM.

2.24 LCC and LCoM promote engagement with learning opportunities and independent learning in the Student Charter and programme and student handbooks. Students are able to monitor their progress through seminars and tutorials, and at LCC personal tutorials are recorded through an online system.

2.25 These strategies and arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.26 The review team tested the application of the policy and procedures by scrutinising a range of evidence relating to teaching and learning and the way in which teaching and learning issues and outcomes were considered by the College committees. The team also discussed teaching and learning activities in meetings with staff and students.

2.27 Scholarly activity is promoted and facilitated through the Staff Workload Guidelines. The team found evidence of an extensive range of scholarly activity outcomes for staff at LCC and LCoM. LCC has introduced a Higher Education Teaching and Learning Officer post to promote and monitor scholarly activity. LCC has developed higher education Communities of Professional Practice and a Teaching Essentials programme that provide opportunity for scholarly discussion and sharing of good practice. A continuing professional development scheme for higher education tutors, Developing Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Research (DELTA), has been developed and recently accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) to enable tutors and support staff to achieve Fellowship of the HEA. The students whom the team met confirmed that there was evidence that tutors had undertaken research to support their lectures and were up to date on current trends and policies. The strategic approach to supporting and facilitating scholarly activity, which is firmly embedded across the LCC and LCoM, and the consequent enrichment of the student learning experience, is **good practice**.

2.28 LCC and LCoM use separate VLEs to support learning and teaching. LCC currently uses two VLE platforms but is moving towards a single one. LCC has purchased laptop computers for new higher education students which integrate with the new VLE platform for learning and teaching activities. Minimum requirements are set for the VLE and audited by HEDO and in the annual peer review process. LCC students have been consulted on developments to improve the VLE. The LCC students whom the team met praised the use of laptops and mobile devices and commented that they found the new VLE platform efficient and easy to navigate. The implementation of the new VLE platform and its integration with specific mobile hardware at LCC to support student learning is **good practice**.

2.29 Minimum requirements for use of the LCoM VLE, Space, are outlined in the Virtual Learning Environment Site Policy. Central course information is checked and uploaded by Course Administrators. LCoM students commented that learning information on Space was difficult to navigate and requested continued access to previous years' learning information. LCoM have made available additional drop-in sessions for students and the LCoM VLE Working Group has initiated the Student Journey Project to review how students access information about their learning, and this has led to an affirmation under Expectation C.

2.30 The team heard that LCoM and LCC ensure that resources meet industry standards through use of practitioners delivering on programmes, through consultation during design of programmes, and through feedback from part-time tutors and students who are employed in the industry. The College has discussed at Academic Board initial plans to create a new Higher Education Centre to provide a dedicated space and enhance the learning experience for higher education students at LCC. Feedback from students confirmed that resources to support teaching and learning were appropriate at both LCC and LCoM; this was confirmed by students whom the team met. LCoM students commented that resources had not been expanded to match the increase in recruitment although positive changes had been made to increase the availability of practice rooms.

2.31 Overall, the review team considers the College's processes to support learning and teaching as effective. The team concludes, therefore, that the Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.32 The College's strategic approach to student development and achievement is described in the LCoM Strategic Plan and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and in the LCC Higher Education Strategy and Learning and Teaching Policy. Separate support services are provided by LCC and LCoM to support student development and achievement. LCoM also has a wellbeing service for international students.

2.33 NSS outcomes are used to monitor student satisfaction for academic support and personal development. LCoM also monitors and reviews student support services activities through end-of-year summary reports.

2.34 Arrangements for student attendance, retention, development and achievement at LCC are reported and monitored through HEQEC, and at LCoM are reported at Academic Council. Attendance and retention updates from LCC and LCoM feed into Academic Board.

2.35 These strategies would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.36 The review team tested the application of the policy and procedures by scrutinising a range of evidence relating to student development and achievement and the way in which student development and achievement is considered by the College committees. The team also discussed student development and achievement activities in meetings with staff and students.

2.37 LCC and LCoM promote support arrangements in the Student Charter and programme and student handbooks. The team confirmed that students are informed about support services available to them through the website and during induction. LCC has a suggested induction programme to support new students in their transition to higher education. The suggested induction programme is contextualised by subject areas and an induction checklist is completed by tutors. Enrolment packs are provided for new and returning students at LCoM, but students whom the team met were unclear about what induction activities they had undertaken. Feedback from induction is discussed at Academic Council.

2.38 Individual student support needs are identified, allocated and reviewed. LCC students whom the team met commented that support for students with disabilities is good. LCoM students reported satisfaction with learning support arrangements and stated that the standard of information and advice provided by Student Services is excellent and that the staff are very friendly, approachable and knowledgeable.

2.39 Students are allocated a personal tutor at LCC and LCoM to discuss academic progress and personal development. An online system is used to record personal tutorials at LCC. Female students at LCoM can request a female personal tutor.

2.40 The development of employability skills is embedded in programme delivery and through placements or work-based learning opportunities at LCC and LCoM. LCoM also offers workshops, masterclasses and opportunities to incorporate learning in live external venues. Students have access to separate careers offices at LCC and LCoM. Some LCC students commented that the careers service is focused on further education. LCoM students are mostly unaware of the careers service, while in their written submission,

students who had used it commented that they find it unhelpful and not specific to their industry. LCoM has begun a review of the careers service as part of a wider review of enterprise services and has produced an initial report and plan. The review team **affirms** the steps taken by LCoM to review the careers service as part of the wider review of the enterprise services, to further enrich the development of enterprise and entrepreneurial skills of students.

2.41 Overall, the review team considers the College's processes to enable student development and achievement as effective. The team concludes, therefore, that the Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.42 There are separate student charters for LCC and LCoM that explain the responsibilities and expectation of students at the College. The charters are introduced to students during the general induction programme, where current representatives at LCC and members of the Students' Union at LCoM provide information about student engagement. Programme-specific inductions provide further details of opportunities for involvement. The student charters and programme or student handbooks are available on the VLEs, providing students with accessible information on engagement on demand.

2.43 Student representatives are members of Academic Board and Academic Council to ensure that the student voice is heard at a strategic level. LCC holds Student Pathway meetings, providing student representatives across the provision with a platform to discuss quality assurance in detail with members of HEDO. The annual peer review process incorporates student opinion about their experience at LCC, and their understanding of quality processes, feedback from which is actioned by HEDO and curriculum area managers. LCoM holds student-staff forums once a term, a student-led initiative discussing areas of quality and enhancement, the results of which are brought to Academic Council and actions are then disseminated.

2.44 AMRs are considered at HEQEC at LCC and the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group at LCoM, where Higher Education Group Representatives from LCC and the Student Engagement Coordinator from LCoM sit alongside senior staff. This information is communicated back to the student body through the 'You Said, We Did' presentations held by curriculum leaders and discussions at the student-staff forum at LCoM, and through consultation between Group representatives and students at LCC. These processes ensure that the student body is aware of engagement initiatives being actioned and implemented at the College, and that the feedback loop is closed.

2.45 The policies and strategies for student engagement that the College has in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.46 The review team tested the effectiveness of mechanisms and strategies in place to engage students at the College, by considering documents including policies, handbooks for student representatives, and minutes of meetings. The team also had meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, and students, including representatives.

2.47 The review team learnt that the development of a College-wide Higher Education Student Engagement Strategy is being taken forward through the process of policy harmonisation. LCC reviewed the current Student Engagement Strategy in 2014-15, taking areas of good practice from both parts of the College forward into a new common policy. This was proposed to Academic Council, which has been invited to comment on the harmonised policy. Students have been consulted on the effectiveness of current engagement strategies at LCC in the peer review process, and at the staff-student forum at LCoM, the results of which helped to inform the selection of current engagement strategies to be brought forward. Student representatives, the Students' Union and the Student Engagement Team have been identified as key stakeholders in this process.

2.48 Following student feedback during the 2013-14 peer review, HEDO actioned and implemented the development of higher education-specific training for student representatives at LCC. A Students' Union service is also available at LCC for further and higher education students, offering further support and guidance. LCC's Learner Involvement Strategy and Development Plan sets out how HEDO is working in partnership with the Students' Union to improve student engagement and learning opportunities across the College. LCoM's Students' Union, which is supported by the Student Engagement Coordinator, holds training sessions for student representatives and provides handbooks to support and encourage personal development. Training for representatives at LCoM and LCC is separate, but is considered by students to be equally useful and accessible.

2.49 LCC Pathway meetings and the annual peer review capture informal feedback between staff and students. These informal opportunities for discussion are valued by the student body; this has been noticed by HEDO, which is implementing an open-door drop in space for students in the new Education Centre due to open in September 2016. Student opinion is valued at the College, with ambassadors used in recruitment processes and at events throughout the year, having the opportunity to offer prospective students an insight into their programmes on Experience Days at LCoM and with Events Team and Progression Officers at LCC. The College values the contribution of the student voice in the development of learning opportunities and the student experience, collecting feedback through multiple mechanisms including module reviews, the NSS, internal surveys and course committees.

2.50 Based on the evidence seen by the review team of the mechanisms by which students are engaged in quality assurance and enhancement activity at the College, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.51 Assessment and feedback are priorities for the College. In the LCC Higher Education Strategy there is a strong emphasis on the provision of a high quality learning and assessment experience, with assessment that is rigorous, honest and improves outcomes for students. In the LCoM Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, there is a clear commitment to assessment design that is informed by pedagogic research and industry practice, with practical and professional skills developed through a wide range of assessment methods, such as performance, composition, production, group work, technical exercise and presentation.

2.52 The assessment of all higher education programmes is undertaken in accordance with awarding body requirements. LCC has an assessment and moderation policy while LCoM staff refer directly to the relevant awarding body procedure.

2.53 These regulations are made available to staff online and to students through programme handbooks, module handbooks and via the VLEs at both LCC and LCoM. For Pearson programmes, the awarding organisation sets out expectations for assessment, which LCC have interpreted through an assessment and internal moderation handbook. This ensures that there is a consistent approach in the design, approval, monitoring and review of assessment.

2.54 The processes and strategies in place for the assessment of student learning would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.55 To test the effectiveness of the assessment processes, the review team examined awarding body policies, the College's strategies and policies, examples of programme specifications and assignment briefs, programme handbooks and external examiner reports. The team also met senior and academic staff, professional services staff and students.

2.56 The College's awarding bodies provide clear and transparent guidance through their respective academic regulations for the management of assessment and assessment moderation. The review team heard that link tutors at Teesside University and the University of Hull support programme teams in assessment practice through support, advice and guidance. Pearson's BTEC Guide to Assessment Levels 4 to 7 provides the framework for the assessment and internal verification of the College's Higher National programmes. For Pearson programmes at LCC, staff are responsible for the design and contextualisation of assessment tasks based on the generic learning outcomes set by the awarding organisation. Oversight of all assessments is through external examiners appointed by the awarding bodies and Pearson. External examiner reports confirm that the College complies with its awarding bodies and Pearson requirements for assessment.

2.57 It is the responsibility of LCC and LCoM programme teams to set assessments within programmes. Programme and module assessment activities are mapped against learning outcomes that are approved as part of awarding body processes. The College works closely with its awarding bodies to ensure that students have the appropriate

opportunities to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes for their qualifications and where appropriate, assessment activity may be contextualised to work-based or work-related scenarios. During the review students expressed their satisfaction with the opportunity to complete assignment activities in a work-based environment or on an approved placement, where they are required to demonstrate the achievement of a range of skills and competencies, supported by a placement supervisor report.

2.58 College staff are responsible for drafting and internally moderating assignment briefs, and internally moderating all assessments, including for Pearson programmes. Assessment briefs provide students with information regarding the relevant learning outcomes and the criteria against which their performance is measured. Assessment grading criteria are designed and approved by the respective awarding bodies and Pearson. The grading criteria for each programme are set out in the programme handbook, and are also available to students on the VLEs. Students reported that they found the grading criteria clear and transparent.

2.59 LCC students were complimentary about the detail of programme handbooks, which contain a learning outcome map that illustrates to students where learning outcomes are being assessed within modules. In addition, students are provided with a detailed assessment grid and schedule that identifies the assessment weighting contribution and key dates for assessment submission. All this information at both LCC and LCoM is available to students on the virtual learning environment.

2.60 Staff whom the review team met confirmed that students receive written and, in some cases, audio feedback via the VLE. Overall, students at LCC and LCoM expressed satisfaction with the timeliness and constructive nature of the formative and summative feedback they receive, though students at LCoM indicated that they would benefit from tutors giving more indication of how they could improve further and by receiving feedback on performances more quickly. The review team identified a recurring theme in external examiner reports concerning the quality of feedback to students on assessment. The team saw evidence that this had been addressed in relation to individual programmes, but there was no indication of coordination of these initiatives in order to share practice and the benefits for students across the College. The team **recommends** that the College work at a strategic level to improve the quality, consistency and usefulness for students of feedback on assessment.

2.61 Assessment practices and strategies are reviewed annually as part of the annual monitoring process that takes into account comments from external examiners. In addition, LCC operates an annual process where programme teams critically evaluate curriculum and assessment plans for the coming year.

2.62 Students confirmed to the team that academic literacy is developed through information that is provided to them at induction and also by academic staff during tutorial and teaching sessions. At LCC, programme handbooks make explicit reference to the use of plagiarism software by students. At LCoM student handbooks highlight the awarding body good academic practice and procedure that indicate the expected standards from students within a conservatoire setting. Students confirmed that the rules on plagiarism and good academic practice are made clear to them at the beginning of their course. This is reinforced by contributions from staff from HEDO at LCC and Registry at LCoM.

2.63 The College operates module and examination boards that monitor the performance of students. These are chaired by representatives from HEDO at LCC. Module boards at LCoM are chaired by the Head of Undergraduate or Postgraduate Studies and programme boards are chaired by the Director of Curriculum. These boards are robust and make effective use of assessment data, enabling effective monitoring and review within

modules and programmes. External examiners and awarding body representatives are in attendance at these boards.

2.64 Staff awareness of assessment practices is maintained through staff development activities that underpin the relevant College policies and procedures. For example, a staff development session was held to raise an awareness of new assessment regulations being introduced by Teesside University.

2.65 The College has in place a higher education accreditation of prior learning procedure that ensures there is a consistent approach. At LCC this involves a five-stage process that students must follow and requires consultation with the relevant awarding bodies. All applications are submitted to HEDO and are formally confirmed by the board of examiners. At LCoM staff use the University of Hull's code of practice for Accreditation of Prior Certificated and Experiential Learning.

2.66 Overall, the review team finds that the arrangements for the design, conduct and review of assessment at LCC and LCoM are effective and undertaken in accordance with awarding body requirements, although a more strategic approach to the quality of feedback for students will enable the College to meet the Expectation more fully. Therefore the Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.67 The College considers external examiners as a fundamental aspect of quality assurance in relation to setting and maintaining academic standards that are comparable across other UK higher education providers. The awarding bodies of the College are responsible for appointing external examiners in accordance with their procedures. The College identifies suitable candidates for the external examination role and makes recommendations to the University awarding bodies, who approve and appoint suitable candidates.

2.68 It is the responsibility of the College to induct external examiners for Teesside University programmes, using guidance provided by the awarding body. To accommodate the limited availability of external examiners, an online induction programme has been developed that enables external examiners to participate in training via the VLE. For LCoM programmes, the University of Hull is responsible for induction.

2.69 The mechanisms the College has in place for external examining would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.70 The team tested the effectiveness of these processes by considering reports from external examiners, minutes of boards of examiners meetings, AMRs, action plans as tracked through the online system and through meetings with staff and students.

2.71 The review team confirmed that the College operates a robust external examining process that fulfils awarding body requirements. This process clearly outlines the main points where intervention by external examiners ensures academic standards are being maintained. External examiners review and moderate assessment briefs, moderate student work, provide reports and attend board of examiners' meetings.

2.72 LCoM makes available through the VLE access to student assessments, including videos of performance and the marking and records of internal moderation by LCoM staff, which the external examiner needs to consider. This is available to all external examiners, but particularly support those who are based outside the UK.

2.73 At LCC and LCoM, programme teams respond in their annual reports to any actions raised by external examiners. There is a well established system for handling external examiner reports, which are submitted to the awarding bodies who subsequently forward to the College for comment and consideration via HEDO at LCC and Registry at LCoM. It is the responsibility of programme leaders, including for Pearson programmes, to respond formally to external examiners' reports in consultation with the appropriate Head of Department. An action plan is produced based upon external examiner comments. The Dean of Higher Education at LCC and the Director of Curriculum at LCoM produce annual overview reports, which identify common themes that can be shared as good practice or that are an area for development.

2.74 Action in response to external examiner reports at both LCC and LCoM is monitored at a strategic level by Academic Board and operationally through the online tracking system.

2.75 Staff whom the team met value the role of external examiners and gave examples of how they work with them in a developmental way as well as to secure academic

standards. External examiners are consulted by programme teams regarding proposed changes to programmes, modules and assessment. The annual feedback they provide contributes to the enhancement of the assessment process at both LCC and LCoM. Programme teams provide external examiners with an appropriate range of assessment material that enables them to confirm that academic standards are being met.

2.76 Students whom the team met at both LCC and LCoM were aware of the role of the external examiner and acknowledged that their reports are available on the VLE. LCC students confirmed they had met or were due to meet external examiners.

2.77 The team concludes that the College engages in a positive way with external examiners and has a well established system in place to respond to comments made in their reports. Therefore the Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.78 LCC and LCoM operate different, but extensive, processes for monitoring and reviewing their higher education provision. Programme monitoring and review is overseen by Academic Board, Academic Council and Board of Governors. The College has a system of key performance indicators and a new Business Plan process is being implemented that will require quarterly performance monitoring. At present these are only applied at LCC. Overall statistics relating to student performance and the learning experience from LCC and LCoM are reported to the College Board of Governors.

2.79 The standards and quality of programmes are monitored on an annual basis at both LCC and LCoM. The precise process for gathering evidence varies between LCC and LCoM, but in both cases evidence feeds into an annual report. Monitoring at LCC takes place through a Higher Education Annual Review that brings together evidence from student surveys, programme annual reviews, award meetings, pathway meetings, annual peer review, peer observations and external examiner reports, prior to submission to Teesside University. In addition to these processes, Teesside University conducts annual quality enhancement visits. The annual review of Pearson programmes is conducted entirely by LCC using the same processes.

2.80 At LCoM, the annual review is considered by the Joint Board of Studies and using University of Hull processes, which involve a Higher Education Annual Review and Partner Quality Enhancement Report process. These are submitted annually to the awarding body but are also considered by LCoM Academic Council with headlines included in a report to Academic Board.

2.81 The College focuses upon the process of annual monitoring. As a result of recent changes in awarding body, neither LCC nor LCoM has undergone recent periodic review. The College stated that periodic review will take place in accordance with the requirements of the awarding bodies, usually on a six-yearly basis. For Pearson programmes, LCC currently relies on the internal annual report process and indicated they have not yet reached the stage of articulating the periodic review process for these programmes.

2.82 The processes that the College has in place for annual monitoring, and their intentions for periodic review, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.83 To test the effectiveness of the processes, the review team examined programme review documentation and discussed the processes of maintaining academic quality with students, senior management, teaching staff, and link tutors from the awarding bodies.

2.84 The team saw evidence that programme-level annual reports are central to the process of monitoring academic quality and standards across the College. These are primarily driven by data on student numbers, progression and retention, but also contain sections on student feedback, actions arising, and plans for the coming year leading to action plan points. The peer review process in LCC provides a triangulation of this data, and includes additional student feedback opportunities often complementary to the other annual report processes.

2.85 The monitoring processes are effective and result in actions to improve and enhance learning opportunities, the implementation of which is managed through the online tracking system and actions monitored. LCC has a 'special measures' process for programmes whose performance is causing concern. There is evidence of major programme change coming from annual monitoring and review processes, but there is less evidence of the College systematically making use of the data from these monitoring processes to identify cross-College themes for action and enhancement, such as the quality of feedback to students (as discussed further under Expectation B6).

2.86 Staff are made aware of the monitoring and review processes through the development activities described in relation to programme design, approval and modification.

2.87 There is some evidence of concerns raised by external examiners about alignment with the Quality Code in relation to the Pearson programmes. Given the nature of the relationship with the awarding organisation in relation to Pearson programmes there is an onus on the College to ensure that internal review and quality assurances processes are sufficiently robust in considering these programmes. There are opportunities to strengthen the review and oversight of Pearson programmes at LCC to ensure that academic quality and standards are maintained through full engagement with the processes for annual monitoring and review. The review team therefore **recommends** that LCC evaluates its processes for programme change, monitoring and review to ensure that it explicitly articulates the relationship between internal processes and Pearson processes, and promotes staff engagement with them.

2.88 Overall, the review team concludes that the processes for annual monitoring are effective in assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The current programmes have not yet been subject to periodic review processes because of the recent changes of awarding body, but processes are in place to enable this to happen with appropriate scrutiny, although this has not been articulated in relation to Pearson programmes. Therefore the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.89 The College has developed and reviewed its complaints policies and procedures for both LCC and LCoM to ensure alignment with the requirements of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and the Quality Code. They are exploring the development of a single policy for all their higher education provision. LCC and LCoM are both members of the OIA but independently so. In the past LCC had an overarching complaints policy for all students but decided that it did not address higher education students effectively, so developed a separate policy. The LCoM complaints policy applies to all of its students. LCC follows the academic appeals policy of its awarding body, while LCoM has its own academic appeals policy. All these documents are available to students through the VLE. At LCoM there is also a separate Admission Appeals Policy. Records of student appeals and complaints are kept on file.

2.90 The LCC complaints policy, which is brief, covers complaints from all higher education stakeholders and makes clear that this policy is distinct from academic appeals. The separate complaints procedure provides details of the stages involved, with timescales for when the complainant will be contacted and the likely timescale of them receiving an outcome. The role of the OIA is highlighted. The LCoM complaints policy is based on the OIA Good Practice Framework.

2.91 The student complaint policies for both LCC and LCoM make provision for complaints to be dealt with at the informal stage. This includes meeting with staff to discuss issues as they arise. The College offers staff guidance to help them best handle each situation.

2.92 At LCC an annual report of appeals and complaints is part of the Higher Education Annual Review.

2.93 The processes for student complaints and academic appeals in place at the College would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.94 The team reviewed documentation relating to academic appeals and student complaints, including the agreements setting out roles and responsibilities between the awarding body and the College and evidence of how the processes and procedures are monitored internally. The team also met students and staff to discuss how well the process is known, understood and dealt with in practice.

2.95 LCC students who met the review team were aware of both the complaints and appeals procedures. At induction, they were directed to the section in their programme handbook regarding complaints and appeals. The students also took part in a special session with the Academic Registrar. Staff at LCC confirmed this approach.

2.96 At LCoM, students met by the team were unaware of both the complaints and appeals policies, but did not express concern that they would not be able obtain guidance on the matter if they needed to. Staff met by the team clearly articulated how the policies work in practice. The team was also told that students are made aware of the policies and their location at induction. The review team found it difficult to locate the relevant information on

the LCoM VLE, though was able to confirm that it was present. The accessibility of information that students need to support their learning is being addressed through the Student Journey Project, which has led to an affirmation under Expectation C.

2.97 Overall, the team concludes that the processes relating to academic appeals and student complaints at the College are fit for purpose, and while the policies for LCoM were not easily accessible, this matter related to the provision of information and is therefore addressed under Expectation C. Therefore the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.98 Placement and/or work-related learning is a feature of many programmes at both LCC and LCoM. The College has recently reviewed its processes for managing work-related learning, taking into account *Chapter B10* of the Quality Code. It has processes for managing, monitoring and reviewing work-related and placement learning and associated documentation for students, staff and employers or placement providers. Students are monitored while on work-related learning and placement through a variety of mechanisms, with feedback being sought on the student experience and also from employers.

2.99 These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.100 The review team tested the effectiveness of these arrangements by meeting senior staff and staff with specific responsibilities for placements and work-related learning from both LCC and LCoM, as well as students who had undertaken a placement. The review team reviewed the handbooks provided for students, mentors and employers and other documents supporting those involved in placements and work-related learning, as well as information on the VLE.

2.101 The review team confirmed that work-based learning or work-related experience is a feature of all foundation degrees at LCC and the Bachelor of Arts Music and Foundation Degree in Music Production at LCoM. Details of work-related or placement learning within a programme are contained in the programme approval proposal form for Teesside University awards, which requires the College to articulate how the proposed programme will develop students' employability skills.

2.102 The work-related and placement learning policies for LCC and LCoM provide details of the respective responsibilities of students, the College and placement providers. LCC has a comprehensive range of handbooks and guidance documents to support students, tutors and placement providers, including a mentor handbook, handbook for employers, student handbook, guidance for tutors, an employer agreement, risk assessment, and employer feedback form. The review team noted that LCoM does not have the same range of handbooks and guidance for its work-related learning provision, but has a Student Placement Policy and Work Placement Mentor Information Handbook that contains an employer agreement form. Students at LCoM receive details of placement requirements through extensive module-specific information on the VLE. Both LCC and LCoM seek feedback from employers/placement providers and students on the placement experience from their relative perspectives, using this to identify areas for enhancement.

2.103 The monitoring of students while on placement is achieved through mentoring undertaken by their tutor, the employer or a dedicated workplace mentor, with guidance being provided by LCC and LCoM for those fulfilling the role of a workplace mentor. Students who undertake placements abroad are fully supported by their tutor. LCC and LCoM have mechanisms in place to address difficulties in placements should they occur. Students whom the review team met confirmed the value of placements in enhancing the professional and employability skills of students.

2.104 For work-related learning, LCC and LCoM maintain a portfolio of opportunities from which students can choose, details of which are available online for students. Credit-bearing work placements at LCC are approved by the programme leader. Foundation degree students at LCoM are required to find their own work placement with support being provided online. A risk assessment is normally undertaken prior to the start of a work placement or period of work-related learning unless the placement is arranged at very short notice, and in some cases is undertaken by the students as part of the learning experience.

2.105 The review team concludes that the arrangements for managing work-based and placement learning are effective. Therefore the Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.106 The College does not offer research degrees and therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.107 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.

2.108 All the Expectations in this area are met and have low risk. There are two features of good practice in Expectation B3. There are two recommendations, in Expectations B6 and B8, which relate to minor omissions that will not result in major operational or procedural change and will enable the College to meet the relevant Expectations more fully. Aspects of B1, B2 and B9 contribute to the recommendations made under Expectation C, but the team did not consider there to be a serious risk to the quality of student learning opportunities in these areas. There is one affirmation in B4.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College mission and values outline the approach to higher education. Strategic plans are available on the websites of both LCC and LCoM. LCC has a Published Information Policy for Higher Education, which lays out the responsibilities of HEDO, programme leaders and programme teams for updating information. These include mechanisms for preparation and signing off information. The Published Information Policy is one of the policies intended for harmonisation between LCC and LCoM for implementation by September 2016. At LCoM, individual department heads have responsibility for information about their curriculum areas. Ultimate responsibility for published materials sits with the Director of Curriculum.

3.2 Students at both LCoM and LCC receive programme-specific information via the respective websites and handbooks. There are different VLEs for LCC and LCoM. LCC and LCoM each have a Student Charter that articulates the responsibilities of students and what students can expect from their part of the College. Taken together, these documents make clear the expectations that the College has of students in relation to their higher education studies.

3.3 Students are issued with transcripts of their marks for each year. The relevant awarding body is responsible for issuing a certificate at the end of their studies.

3.4 The processes in place at LCC would enable the Expectation to be met. At LCoM, because of the lack of clear articulation of the responsibilities for managing information about higher education provision, it is not possible to determine whether the Expectation is met. It is also unclear where responsibility lies for oversight of information at a College-wide level.

3.5 To test the effectiveness of the process for ensuring that information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, the team reviewed policy documents and the materials available on the LCC and LCoM websites. The team investigated the two VLEs to ascertain their effectiveness as tools for learning and as a repository of information. The team met students to discuss their use of information sources at the College, and with staff to discuss their roles in the production, management and oversight of information.

3.6 LCC has a robust system in place for the management of published information. Staff met by the team clearly understand where responsibility lies and its Published Information Policy underpins this. Information about the programmes awarded by Teesside University is discussed and signed off by HEDO before final approval by the awarding body. The team found that some important public-facing documents, such as the LCC Strategic Plan, are not easily accessible on the website.

3.7 Students' enthusiasm for the VLE confirmed that they are able to access information that is fit for purpose and trustworthy. However, the amount of information available to students about their programmes is inconsistent, with some programmes having a considerable online resource and others only meeting the minimum requirements set out by LCC. LCC has identified this in its most recent Annual Monitoring and Enhancement

Report to Teesside University. Students whom the team met were happy with the amount of information that was available to them and its accessibility. LCC noted in the Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Report that there were some cases of the approved module specification not being used on the VLE, but the team found no evidence that this had not been resolved.

3.8 At LCoM, the team found that there was not a clear articulation of the arrangements for managing published information, which makes it difficult for the College to assure itself that it is being managed effectively. Under the Collaborative Provision Agreement with the University of Hull, LCoM has delegated operational responsibility for the production of publicity and marketing information and this is monitored by the University through the Joint Board of Studies.

3.9 Students whom the team met said that information was not always consistent or clear. The way in which learning outcomes are defined in the programme specifications for LCoM programmes means that the focus of some modules, particularly performance modules, can easily change without needing approval from the awarding body, as discussed under Expectations B1 and B2. The team heard from students that LCoM has responded to the interests of students on the programme but that has meant that new students sometimes find that the programme is significantly different in focus from what they had expected. Staff whom the team met were unclear about the processes for signing off marketing materials and policies. The team saw evidence of external information being signed off through the agreed process, with ultimate responsibility sitting with the Director of Curriculum, and of policies being agreed through the committee structure. However, internal correspondence provided to the team demonstrates that there is potential for breakdown in communication with necessary staff being overlooked, and the evidence of committee minutes indicates that there is limited discussion of whether information is fit for purpose. The team **recommends** that the College increases the transparency and thoroughness of the mechanisms within LCoM for formal approval and oversight of published information.

3.10 Responsibility for information about programmes on the VLE lies with the Head of Undergraduate Studies and Head of Postgraduate Studies. Staff whom the team met said that the requirements for what is to be uploaded to their respective sections on the VLE are clearly laid out. Students confirmed that they are able to access programme-specific information including programme specifications and module handbooks, but commented that this was not always easy to navigate, as discussed under Expectation B3.

3.11 For information that supports their learning experience, such as policies and procedures, students are largely directed toward the VLE, Space. However, the team found that it was difficult to locate specific information on Space, because it is poorly organised and the search tool is ineffective. Students whom the team met confirmed that they do not find Space to be logical or easy to use. The team did not find any examples of incorrect information, but did identify inconsistencies in how information was presented, which also indicates a lack of a common approach to the production and management of information. The Student Journey Project initiated by the LCoM VLE Working Group is reviewing how student access information about their learning to address this. The team **affirms** the work undertaken at LCoM in the Student Journey Project to improve the organisation of programme information for students, to make it easily accessible and fit for purpose.

3.12 The team learned that oversight of the accuracy or currency of published information for staff, students and external stakeholders does not form part of the terms of reference of any senior College committee, as discussed under Expectation A2.1. Minutes of committee meetings (Academic Board, HEQEC and Academic Council) and of the Leeds City College Group Governing Body examined by the team did not show evidence of any discussion of the quality of or sign off of information for internal and external audiences.

This was verified in discussion with staff. The lack of strategic oversight of published information, or consideration of its quality within the deliberative structures, is a gap in the College's structures for quality assurance, which poses a risk to the management of the quality of information about higher education provision and hence to the reputation of the whole Leeds City College Group. The team **recommends** that the College ensures that there is oversight at the highest level of the College that the information produced for staff, students and external stakeholders is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.13 The team concluded that the information produced by the College is, overall, fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. There are weaknesses in operation of parts of the College's governance structure, with insufficient emphasis given to the quality assurance of this area, and shortcomings in the application of policy and procedure. Therefore, the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

3.15 The Expectation in this area is met and has moderate risk. There are two recommendations that relate to weaknesses in operation of parts of the College's governance structure and gaps in the application of policy and procedures relating to quality assurance, but the actions required to address these will not require major structural, operational or procedural change.

3.16 There is also one affirmation in this area, which relates to activity the College has started to address some of the issues with the accessibility of information on the VLE in order to make it more accessible and fit for purpose for students. The completion of this activity, which is already underway, will enable the College to meet the Expectation more fully. The review team therefore concludes that the quality of information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 LCC's mission to provide 'exceptional skills and experience' for students and the greater College community reflects the way in which the student experience is the core motivation of LCC's approach to enhancement. The Higher Education Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework sets out LCC's approach to taking deliberate steps to engaging students as true partners when evaluating higher education provision through module surveys, annual peer review and feedback gathered through the student representation system. The HEQEC, reporting to Academic Board, reviews the performance of programmes throughout the year and actions areas of development at a strategic level. At LCoM, the Quality and Enhancement Group, reporting to Academic Council, meets once a term to discuss, develop and monitor opportunities for curriculum enhancement, staff development and the sharing of good practice. Minutes from meetings are shared on the VLE for students to access.

4.2 The structures in place at the College to support enhancement would enable the Expectation to be met.

4.3 To test the effectiveness of the College's approach to enhancement, the team considered relevant policies, the minutes of meetings of College committees and evidence of the implementation of specific initiatives identified in the College's self-evaluation and student submissions. The team met senior, academic and professional services staff and students to discuss how learning opportunities are developed, including in response to student feedback.

4.4 The team saw evidence that strategic oversight of the College's approach to enhancement is maintained through the committee structure up to Academic Board, which has members from both LCC and LCoM. The other committees also have membership from the two parts of the College, which enables good practice to be identified and shared across the higher education provision.

4.5 Within LCC, the continuing professional development of staff is identified as essential in providing effective teaching and learning. The College supports staff in further studies of their own that integrate directly into their subject area, enhancing the learning opportunities of students. The DELTAR scheme, which has been accredited by the HEA, enables staff to develop an awareness of how they as independent practitioners can respond to the changing demands of learning and teaching within higher education. The programme promotes a research culture that deliberately effects the development of teaching and learning, and the quality of learning opportunities. Opportunities for enhancement are taken forward through Teaching and Learning Committees, such as the review of the trial introduction of laptops to integrate with the VLE, which led to them being provided for all higher education students at LCC, identified as good practice under Expectation B3. The peer review scheme, where programmes are reviewed in relation to a set theme, allows both staff and students to engage with an evaluative process aiming to develop the higher education provision, with the improvement of the quality of learning opportunities being the central objective.

4.6 At LCoM staff are supported to undertake a range of scholarly activity, including a number of examples of research into the use of technology to support learning in a

conservatoire environment. The Partner Quality Enhancement Report, produced annually for the University of Hull, has a substantial focus on enhancement, with recent examples of good practice including the introduction of new pathways, staff training events and the implementation of key industry links. The document also identifies intended actions for any areas requiring development, aiming to improve learning opportunities. The awarding body identifies a theme for this annual report, requiring LCoM to interrogate a particular area requiring investigation. The 2014-15 report focused on managing the challenges within quality and standards in higher education. LCoM discussed the relationship between LCoM and LCC and the approach to identifying appropriate policies and procedures for harmonisation.

4.7 The work underway to harmonise College policies and procedures is in itself a deliberate step by the College to improve the quality of student learning opportunities and the student experience across the provision, as it offers opportunities for joint working and the sharing of good practice. This is recognised in the affirmation under Expectation A2.1. The opportunity to work at a College-wide strategic level to improve the quality, consistency and usefulness for students of feedback on assessment, which has led to a recommendation under Expectation B6, is one example of this. The team noted that the adoption of a more consistent approach to quality and enhancement across the College has potential to bring significant benefits for students where common areas for development can be identified. The team **recommends** that the College consistently applies the strategic approach to enhancement in order to improve the quality of learning opportunities for students across the College.

4.8 Overall, the team concludes that the College takes deliberate steps to improve the learning opportunities for students. There is scope for further joint working and sharing of good practice in the adoption of a more consistent approach to enhancement, which would enable the College to meet the Expectation more fully. Therefore the Expectation is met and the level of associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.10 The Expectation in this area is met and has low risk. Aspects of one of the features of good practice identified under Expectation B3 relate to this area. There is one recommendation, which relates to a broadening of approach to activity that is already underway and which will enable the College to meet the Expectation more fully. Aspects of the recommendation under Expectation B6 relate to this area but do not present any serious risks to the quality of student learning opportunities.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The development of professional, transferable and employability skills are embedded across the College's higher education programmes. This is articulated in the LCoM Strategic Plan and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and the Learning and Teaching Policy for LCC. The College offers vocational programmes, with industry-relevant career skills embedded in the curriculum. There is a strong emphasis on work-based learning, with the College supporting students in finding appropriate work placements to further their professional experience and establish links with industry.

5.2 Students are encouraged to seek work placements independently as part of the learning experience. Some students have gained employment or promotion as a direct result. Extensive guidance handbooks are supplied to students, mentors, employers or placement providers and staff, which ensure that objectives and responsibilities for placements are communicated and understood. Employers submit feedback to the College, which may be taken into account in student assessment.

5.3 To ensure that programmes at the College are industry-relevant and that students are engaging with learning and assessment that will enhance their opportunities of finding appropriate work after graduation, employers are consulted with on-programme design. Through the work placements students undertake and relationships the College has built with employers, the College is able to confirm with industry professionals that programme content is appropriate to students wishing to develop in their chosen industry. On many programmes, students have the opportunity to complete real-world assessments. External examiners confirm that the content of modules is relevant to sector and industry requirements.

5.4 LCC's 'Learning First' Policy aims to improve links with employers, commits to embedding employability skills into curriculum, and improves the nature and organisation of work placement experiences. LCoM's Strategic Plan aims to connect students to employers, which is realised through extensive use of specialist industry partners and creative practitioners who are active in the creative industries in the delivery of its programmes, alongside a programme of visiting speakers, workshops and masterclasses.

5.5 The College aims to produce graduates with a transferable skillset, who are able to use relevant theory in practical projects in workplace experience. Students are confident that their programmes are enhancing their employability and providing a balance of specialist knowledge and practical skills.

5.6 The College is implementing a new Employability Policy/Strategy to take effect from 2016-17, as part of the process of moving towards harmonised College-wide policies.

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 30 to 33 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#).

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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