

Higher Education Review of East Kent College

April 2014

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at East Kent College. The review took place from 1 to 3 April 2014 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Danny Saunders
- Lucy Bannister (student reviewer).

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 7.

In reviewing East Kent College the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The [themes](#) for the academic year 2013-14 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,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/qualitycode.

² Higher Education Review themes: www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/higher-education-review-themes.aspx.

³ QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus.

⁴ Higher Education Review web pages: www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/higher-education-review.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about East Kent College

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

- The maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information produced about its provision **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at East Kent College.

- The strategic approach that enables students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential through the transition from further to higher education and through subsequent higher education levels (Expectation B4).
- The rigorous, robust and self-critical approach to programme monitoring and review demonstrated through the process of the Programme Quality Self-Assessment Reports (Expectation B8).
- The deliberate improvement of the quality of students' learning opportunities through the strategic use of curriculum walks (Enhancement).

Recommendations

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

- Before any further enrolment, ensure that relevant contractual documentation with the awarding body is signed by all partners prior to the enrolment of students (Expectation A4).

From September 2014:

- Higher education students should receive information about the results of surveys they complete (Expectation C).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The action being taken to formalise the consistency of practice for the operation of Programme Management Committees (Expectation A4).
- The action being taken to ensure a more even distribution of assessment deadlines throughout the academic year (Expectation B6).
- The action being taken to include an overall assessment schedule covering all modules to be included in all programme handbooks (Expectation C).
- The implementation of end-of-module surveys for all programmes (Expectation C).

Theme: Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement

East Kent College (the College) formally involves students within its quality assurance framework through the terms of reference for the Higher Education Committee where membership includes one Canterbury Christ Church University and one College students' union representative, and the Higher Education student ambassador. The annual higher education Programme Quality Self-Assessment Report (PQSAR) includes an expectation about reflection being directly informed by students.

The review team recognised a wide range of evidence supporting the systematic and deliberate empowerment of students in quality assurance processes. The review team also noted the success of the College in winning a national Leading the Learning Voice Award in 2011. The student involvement strategy uses focus groups led by the Student Enrichment & Support Team in addition to surveys. The College's Student Council includes higher education student representation. Student involvement within quality assurance processes is also achieved through biannual curriculum walks involving students and management, with subsequent action planning.

The thematic element demonstrates that the College has successfully introduced systems and procedures for the involvement of higher education students in quality assurance and enhancement.

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

About East Kent College

On 31 August 2012 the name of the College changed from Thanet College to East Kent College to recognise both the wider geographic reach of the College and the new institutional culture. East Kent College, with its new mission and supporting values, aspires to achieve a strong sense of itself as a learning community comprising students, staff, governors, employers and partners. The College has 2,514 full-time students, of whom 1,482 are aged 16-18 and 1,032 are adult students; the part-time head count is 4,346 students, the majority of whom are on short courses. A further feature of the College is that it has a high number of young people and adults with learning difficulties and disabilities, with 30 per cent of students within this category in 2012-13.

The College's mission is supported by a shared set of values as follows.

- Excellence: professionalism that places the students at the heart.
- Respect: a welcoming culture that celebrates diversity.
- Creativity: continuous enhancement through innovation and enterprise.
- Responsibility: to each other and the communities we serve.
- Ambition: inspiring and empowering all to achieve their potential.

Following the QAA Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) in 2009, the College established a revised process of Support and Development of Teaching and Learning in 2011. There has also been a major enhancement of facilities and learning resources at the College's campus in Broadstairs for the benefit of all students, including those studying on the College's expanded range of higher education programmes. Since the 2009 IQER there has been a renewed focus on the quality of higher education students' learning opportunities requiring the College to invest in additional senior management to provide strategic and operational oversight of the higher education provision at the institutional level. A Vice Principal, responsible for Curriculum (including higher education curriculum), was appointed in April 2011, and an Assistant Principal (Curriculum) in May 2013. The Vice Principal is the Senior Manager responsible for higher education as Chair of the College's Higher Education Committee, with the Assistant Principal (Curriculum) responsible for curriculum delivery and Deputy Chair of the Higher Education Committee.

The key operational challenges facing the College primarily relate to issues associated with encouraging student progression to higher education, particularly for students who, for a range of often complex reasons, may not have confidence in their academic ability and who may therefore not have previously anticipated the opportunity to progress. In addition, parents and guardians of students may not have benefited from a higher education experience themselves, and so current students at the College are likely to be within their family's first generation to progress to higher education. The challenge for the College is to raise awareness of higher education across the learning community at all levels of studies; to raise academic attainment; to 'demystify' the process of application; and to create seamless pathways of progression that support each student's academic success and onward progression to university and/or employment.

The College maintains a singular partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University (the University) as the only awarding body of the College's higher education programmes. In 2012, a portfolio of ten one-year, full-time higher national certificates (HNCs) - level 4 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) - was validated by the University for delivery by the College. In 2013, the range of validated programmes was increased to include two two-year, full-time (levels 4 and 5 of the QCF/FHEQ) higher national diplomas (HNDs) in General Engineering and Construction and the Built

Environment, with the addition of a further HNC in Performing Arts. Validation was also approved by the University in 2013 for the launch of an HNC in Sport and Exercise Science, which will be available from September 2014. From 2014 through partnership with the University, the College's higher education portfolio will comprise 12 HNCs and two HNDs, as well as continuing delivery of Teacher Education (Certificate and Diploma) - levels 4 and 5 of the QCF/FHEQ. The College's partnership with the University is set to develop further through the recently formed 'East Kent Partnership'.

The College has systematically addressed issues and recommendations arising from the previous QAA visit in 2009.

In the previous QAA visit there was a good practice observation about the use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) in HNC Computing. The College has now extended the use of the VLE, called CLIC Learn, to all programmes. Essential information is provided to students through this VLE with students also usually submitting assignments electronically. Difficulties were noted with initial access to key documentation on the VLE, including handbooks and programme specifications, by staff, students and external examiners, but these issues have now been resolved. The positive development noted in the previous QAA visit about the reflective portfolio for HNC Computing is now in the form of a personal development planning (PDP) journal, also via CLIC Learn, located within a dedicated module.

In meeting another recommendation from the previous QAA visit, the College has a new Support and Development Process in operation with each programme area having a Teaching and Learning Facilitator who coordinates the peer reviews. The Self-Evaluation Document (SED) and student submission note very high levels of student satisfaction with teaching, reinforced to the Higher Education Review team through discussions with staff and students. The College is seeking further enhancement of the development of teaching through the use of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) for teaching and supporting learning in higher education with all higher education lecturers being regularly observed; in 2012-13, 77 per cent of the 26 higher education staff were judged as good or better on the third observation of the year.

In addition, there were very high levels of student awareness about the kinds of support available to them and the roles and responsibilities of the management of learning support, including the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

The College is aware of a small number of ongoing difficulties indicated at the previous QAA review and through the appropriate use of monitoring and review processes. Programme directors have made some response to the previous QAA review recommendation about external examiner feedback and the need for more explicit information to students to make them more aware of opportunities. A standardised student programme handbook has been issued including name and email contacts, planned format for tutorials and time allocations per week. The College Higher Education Committee has discussed the Quality Code and signposted it to programme directors, in particular *Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others*. There remain difficulties with accessing College-specific external examiner feedback for the HND and HNC in Lifelong Learning programmes. This has been followed up by the College but, as the external's report refers to more than one College, the programme director and University link coordinator are currently exploring methods for gaining College-specific information.

Explanation of the findings about East Kent College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

1 Judgement: Maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards

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

Quality Code, Chapter A1: The national level

Findings

1.1 Canterbury Christ Church University, as the awarding body, is responsible for the validation, approval and review of programmes delivered at the College.

1.2 The Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the University and the College details responsibilities for standards, including the validation and review of programme learning outcomes. The review team noted that prospectus information details contact time for all courses, as does an example validation document for HNC Business seen by the review team. The review team looked at a sample of external examiner reports, which provided consistent evidence for the definition and achievement of learning outcomes. The review team also sampled PQSARs and annual review information from the University and the College, and could find no difficulties with the setting of volume of study associated with the achievement of learning outcomes.

1.3 The College refers to QCF/FHEQ levels 4 and 5 with examples of a planning form and validation document being provided to the review team for HNC Business, specifying level 4 provision. In discussions with senior and teaching staff the review team confirmed awareness of level 4 and 5 descriptors used for the University awards.

1.4 In reviewing the documentation provided and meeting with staff and students, the review team concluded that the College, in partnership with the awarding body, matches programme outcomes and volumes of study to appropriate levels in the FHEQ and therefore the Expectation has been met.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter A2: The subject and qualification level

Findings

1.5 The University has responsibility for the standards, validation, approval and review of programmes awarded in its name, and this point is made clearly in the MoA between the University and the College for all programmes. The College's HNCs and HNDs are validated under license from Pearson. These awards map occupational standards based on consultation with professional bodies by the University, with the College being named as a provider partner. In meetings with senior and teaching staff the review team explored links between the College and Edexcel and Pearson, with the review team recognising that subject benchmark and qualification statements have been used consistently for design delivery and guidance purposes when setting learning outcomes. The review team referred to student handbooks for Biology, Interactive Media and Construction, noting the clear statements about academic standards and the use of subject benchmark statements.

1.6 The College provided the review team with an example of professional, statutory and regulatory body (PRSB) involvement from the HNC Business, which is mapped to standards in the Business Administration and Law sector and the QAA subject benchmark statement for Business and Management. The College notes that the University Certificate and Diploma qualifications in Education and Training will be aligned with the relevant lifelong learning professional body once details emerge from the transition of the Institute of Learning to the Education and Training Foundation. The review team noted that where appropriate the College considers the relationship between standards in subject benchmark statement and PSRB requirements, including plans for further exploration of statements related to standards for Education and Training when these become available.

1.7 Following consideration of the documents provided and after meeting with staff and students, the review team concluded that higher education programmes of study provided by the College in partnership with the awarding body take account of relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements and that this Expectation had been met.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter A3: The programme level

Findings

1.8 The College notes that the University has responsibility for the standards, validation, approval and review of programmes awarded in its name. The review team referred to the HNC Business planning form and validation document containing the University rationale for designing a level 4 award for delivery at the College - thereby allowing progression to level 5 at the University. The College provided the review team with evidence for its adherence to the University Programme Design and Approval procedures when considering new programmes, setting out a detailed and thorough process, and therefore provided the review team with evidence of the use of definitive information for programme design and approval.

1.9 The College provided the review team with an example of programme specification and module outlines for the HNC in Business. The review team noted that this documentation is sent by the University to the College following validation and it is then posted on CLIC Learn. Discussions with staff and students revealed initial difficulties during 2012-13 with gaining access to such documentation via electronic systems, but there was agreement that systems were now in place for locating and accessing key information. Student handbooks also contain definitive information as evidenced by HNC Performing Arts documentation. The review team were provided with evidence supplied through the student submission survey, which demonstrated to the review team that students are (i) aware of programme learning outcomes, (ii) have received information about their modules including how and when they are assessed, and (iii) understand the grading criteria. It was concluded by the review team that, notwithstanding previous difficulties with CLIC Learn, appropriate systems and procedures are in place for the dissemination of definitive information.

1.10 Following consideration of the documents provided and through meetings with staff and students, the review team concluded that appropriate systems and procedures are in place for maintaining, reviewing and updating definitive information and that the Expectation is met.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter A4: Approval and review

Findings

1.11 Senior staff within the College have designated quality assurance functions covering further and higher education provision, operating within a quality assurance framework for 2013-14, which builds on the earlier quality assurance strategy for 2010-14. The College's higher education provision is addressed within the overall Strategic Plan for 2010-14, with the Higher Education Strategy detailing its partnership with the University. The College's governance body includes an Education Committee with clear terms of reference addressing general education provision.

1.12 The College's programme directors and curriculum officer work in partnership with the University when designing programmes for University validation and subsequent monitoring and review. HNC and HND awards are validated under license from Pearson as University awards. The external reference point is therefore the Pearson programme specifications. Discussions with the Principal and senior staff confirmed to the review team the College's plans for including other awards outside of the FHEQ (a portfolio of higher apprenticeships) within its current Higher Education Strategy and quality assurance framework.

1.13 A Higher Education Implementation Group has been replaced with the Higher Education Committee, chaired by the Vice Principal. Externality is achieved through University membership, with evidence of consistent and high levels of attendance at termly meetings by College and University representatives. The Committee's membership details all programme directors and key senior staff, as well as student representatives. The review team noted the College's ongoing awareness of the need for safeguarding academic standards and enhancing learning opportunities through revising its early terms of reference in September 2013 and again in January 2014, to include reviewing external examiner and student feedback.

1.14 In addition to seeing a signed copy of the MoA between the College and the University (see paragraphs 1.2 and 1.5) during the review visit, the team also saw signed copies of the MoA Operational Annexes. The review team noted that the Performing Arts Operational Annex (commencing in 2013) remained unsigned and the Construction and Engineering Operational Annexes were signed a year after the launch of the course in 2012. The review team discussed with senior staff the reasons for these late signatures. Reviewers saw evidence of the correspondence between the College and the University which confirmed that the College had communicated with the University to make progress with the signing-off process, but that this process was, as yet, incomplete. Enrolment of students on three of the higher education programmes proceeded before signed contractual documentation had been signed, and therefore the review team **recommends** that the College ensure that relevant contractual documents with the awarding body are signed by all partners prior to the enrolment of students.

1.15 The MoA and a sample of operational annexes for each programme detail the approval and monitoring roles of the programme director and the University link tutor, with all key contact information supplied for each specialist member of staff at the University and the College. An example that confirms the College's programme management arrangements and responsibilities is provided within the validation documentation for HNC Business.

1.16 The review team viewed examples of Programme Committee Minutes from Business, Interactive Media, and Computing. Variability was noted with the content and scope of agendas, the amount of detail recorded within the minutes, the discussion of external examiner reports, and the range of programmes covered (for example, Computing and Engineering being combined into a single committee). The College has, however, identified and is using an Action for Enhancement to ensure more consistency with the operation of Programme Management Committees, and progress was confirmed through discussions with senior and teaching staff, including programme directors. The review team **affirms** the current action being taken to formalise consistency of practice in the operation of Programme Management Committees.

1.17 The College notes that minor modifications following the conclusions and outcomes of the annual quality review for individual programmes are the responsibility of the College and the University link tutor, in tandem with the relevant University department and external examiner. Evidence was provided to the review team demonstrating that a minor modification to an assessment strategy was completed through consultation and agreement of the appropriate external examiner and link tutor. The College explained to the review team that any amendment to programmes follows procedures outlined in page 110 of the University Quality Manual.

1.18 The review team concluded that the College has developed appropriate systems and procedures for the exercise of authority and externality in periodically monitoring and reviewing the validity and relevance of its higher education programmes and that the Expectation was met.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter A5: Externality

Findings

1.19 The College's mission includes the value of outstanding engagement with external stakeholders. Externality within the College's Higher Education Committee is achieved via University representation. The revised terms of reference for the Higher Education Committee include the review of external examiner feedback to develop enhancement. The review team noted that although the terms of reference for 2012-13 did not include this function, minutes of meetings reflect consistent monitoring of information from externals.

1.20 External examiner appointments are the sole responsibility of the University, guided by policy in the University Quality Manual. The Higher Education Committee minutes for September 2012 note that the University identified seven out of 10 HNCs aligned to University departments and serving externals, with the link tutors of the University having responsibility for submitting applications for new externals. The review team noted that two of the MoA operational annexes record 'TBA' for the names of externals. Furthermore, the Higher Education Committee minutes for May 2013 state that externals had not yet been appointed for Construction and the Built Environment and General Engineering, with a request to programme directors to supply externals' names. The minutes of the autumn 2013 Higher Education Committee include discussion of external examiners with the statement 'All higher education provision have external examiners in place' (page 6). Additional evidence lists external examiner dates for tenure, with senior and teaching staff confirming that where late appointments of externals took place, the College, together with the University, developed an 'enhanced' or 'super link tutor' role for independent expert academics in other universities, who ensure appropriate externality for relevant programmes. The team concluded that the College has demonstrated the effectiveness of systems and procedures for recognising difficulties with the later appointment of external examiners for two programmes within the 2012-13 academic session, and has proactively worked with its awarding body to develop alternative forms of externality during the time needed to arrange suitable appointments.

1.21 The College explained to the review team that external examiners visit annually, providing evidence indicating unanimous satisfaction with arrangements and procedures. Each programme director responds to external examiner reports as part of the PQSAR cycle with a clear example being provided to the review team for Engineering and Computing.

1.22 The College produces an annual summary of external examiner reports with examples of follow-through action points including: assessment feedback requirements being overly prescriptive; the need to use more formative assessment (as voiced by the external examiner for HNC Tourism Management); difficulties in accessing information via CLIC Learn; defining distinction criteria; internal verification of assignment briefs; and the provision of information. These issues have been listed and actioned within the College's annual summary and in responses to externals by the programme directors and link tutors.

1.23 The team concluded that the College has established appropriate systems and procedures for the use of external expertise in quality assurance processes and the Expectation has been met.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.24 The College notes that the University regulations, systems and procedures, alongside protocols from Pearson specifications, are used for all assessment arrangements. Evidence drawn from minutes of examination boards confirmed that meetings are chaired by a member of the University.

1.25 Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategies are included in validation documentation and assessment schedules are given to students at modular levels. The review team sampled annual review minutes and agreed that the monitoring of strategies is evident for second marking, re-sit policy and practice, and the use of CLIC Learn for uploading assignments (with the College noting difficulties with large files for Music and Construction and the Built Environment). The review team recognised follow-up assessment actions by the College within a sample of Programme Management Committee minutes from Engineering and Business Management. Additional evidence within external examiner reports does not indicate any serious concerns about standards related to marking practices.

1.26 The review team recognised the College's awareness of two issues emerging from initial commentary in the SED regarding programme assessment, reinforced by the University annual review minutes, the PQSAR Summary Report and the Annual Review Data Pack. These issues are trailed in Expectation B6 and Expectation C of this report. The team concluded that the College has used its monitoring and review systems to become aware of the need for refining assessment procedures, and appropriate actions have been implemented to provide students with programme assessment schedules and deadlines throughout the year.

1.27 The review team further noted the College's awareness of internal verification problems, the possibility of over-assessment and the need for more guidance on criteria for merit and distinction grades, with follow-up actions being noted through external examiner reports and Programme Management Committee minutes for Engineering and Construction. The team recognised examples of the use of assessment criteria and grading details in HNC Interactive Media and Performing Arts documentation. The review team recognised that the College has made rapid progress with its Action for Enhancement objective surrounding the clarification of assessment criteria for students.

1.28 Accreditation of prior experiential learning is in accordance with the University regulations, with the College informing the review team that no formal applications have been received since the 2009 IQER.

1.29 The review team concluded that the College has appropriate systems and procedures in place for the design, approval, monitoring and review of assessment strategies and uses consistent and appropriate academic and regulatory frameworks for its higher education provision. The Expectation has been met.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.30 The College's responsibilities relating to the UK expectations about academic standards as detailed in *Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards* of the Quality Code have all been met.

1.31 The review team confirmed that the College, in partnership with the awarding body, matches programme outcomes and volumes of study to appropriate levels in the FHEQ. The team concluded that all higher education programmes of study provided by the College in partnership with the awarding body take account of relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements. The team also concluded that appropriate systems and procedures are in place for maintaining, reviewing and updating definitive information; the College has developed appropriate systems and procedures for the exercise of authority and externality in periodically monitoring and reviewing the validity and relevance of its higher education programmes; the College has established appropriate systems and procedures for the use of external expertise in quality assurance processes; and the College has appropriate systems and procedures in place for the design, approval, monitoring and review of assessment strategies and uses consistent and appropriate academic and regulatory frameworks for its higher education provision.

1.32 There was one recommendation that before any further enrolment the College should ensure that relevant contractual documentation with the awarding body is signed by all partners prior to the enrolment of students.

1.33 There was also an affirmation of the action being taken to formalise the consistency of practice for the operation of Programme Management Committees.

1.34 On the basis of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the review team made the judgement that the maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards at the College **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: Quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 The University is responsible for the validation, approval and review of programmes delivered at the College. The University's validation programme is usually for five years, therefore the HND and HNC programmes at the College will be due for revalidation in the academic year 2016-17.

2.2 The College demonstrated to the review team how it uses University planning forms and documents to inform the curriculum. Both students and staff explained to the review team how their individual involvement with external examiner reports and discussions about the reports had informed the design of the modules that make up the programme.

2.3 The review team concluded that the College has effective processes for the design and approval of programmes and the Expectation has been met.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Admissions*

Findings

2.4 The recruitment of prospective students is the responsibility of the College, working within the University's policy and procedures. All applications are considered individually with the opportunity for an interview with the respective higher education programme director. Students confirmed to the review team that they found the application process simple and had been advised correctly upon enquiry.

2.5 The review team saw the College's comprehensive admissions complaints procedure document that clearly outlines the process. The College solicitor handles investigations and responses, although the review team noted that no admissions complaints have been received since the previous QAA review in 2009.

2.6 The review team concluded that the College has policies and procedures used to admit students that are clear, fair, explicit and consistently applied and the Expectation has been met.

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

2.7 The College uses the University's VLE, CLIC Learn, to facilitate and maintain 'all information required by the university for the students to complete their programme'. Students are introduced to CLIC Learn at the start of their course and are aware of the programme area with associated information. Students also informed the review team that their assignments are set and due dates published on CLIC Learn. Students are also able to become full members of the University library for the period of registration of the award.

2.8 The College collects and analyses appropriate information and feedback from students to enable full engagement in the process Annual and Periodic Review. The University is responsible for enabling College student engagement with the University's Student Survey (level 4 students) and the National Student Survey (NSS) and reporting the results as appropriate.

2.9 The College is implementing plans to use a data collection sequence similar to the University which includes a pre-registration questionnaire, induction questionnaire, University Student Survey (April level 4), NSS (level 5), end-of-module evaluations, and exit interviews to develop the structure and formalisation of student evaluation data. The student submission reports a high level of awareness of support that is available and high levels of satisfaction with learning facilities and resources including provision of specific study areas for higher education (the Common Room).

2.10 The review team concluded that the College, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulates and systematically reviews and enhances 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; the Expectation has been met.

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

2.11 The College's Higher Education Committee remit is to implement strategic objectives defined in the Strategic Plan and sub-strategies for Higher Education and Learning and Teaching.

2.12 The student submission demonstrated to the review team high satisfaction levels with the College's induction process that includes the introduction of CLIC Learn, plagiarism and academic misconduct awareness and introduction to their personal tutors. This was also reiterated to the review team through discussion with students who talked about the particular emphasis on how personal tutors aid the transition from further education to higher education, and from HND to degree top-up or into employment. Further examples of support for the transitions were demonstrated to the review team through the detailing of the student finance advice and UCAS application advice services, as well as the College's proactive help in making students aware of employment prospects. The review team considered the strategic approach that enables students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential through the transition from further to higher education and through subsequent higher education levels to be **good practice**.

2.13 Students confirmed to the review team that they were introduced to the CLIC Learn site at the start of their course during induction and were made aware of the relevant programme area with the associated information, including the deadlines for their assignments that are made available there.

2.14 The College is currently engaging with the University to extend the higher education curriculum provision to meet the needs of the local community. This includes a hospitality programme which will use the College's new training hotel to provide a setting for vocationally relevant education and training.

2.15 The review team concluded that the College has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential and the Expectation has been met.

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

2.16 The higher education student representative is a full member of the College's Higher Education Committee. At the programme level, each higher education programme has two elected student representatives who represent the views of students within student-staff liaison meetings as the first part of the Programme Management Committee, which is held once a term, three times a year, to coincide with the three in-year reflections required of the higher education PQSAR. Training for the role of student representative is provided by the College's Enrichment Officer, with use of the Class Representative Handbook.

2.17 It was demonstrated to the review team that students across all levels of the College take a critical role in the evaluation of College resources and facilities by participating and interacting with curriculum walks. These prove effective in identifying areas of improvement in respective curriculum areas. Following this, an action plan is agreed with follow-up walks being undertaken to check progress and ensure agreed actions are implemented. This successfully contributes to the enhancement of learning opportunities at the College (see section on Enhancement).

2.18 The College does not have its own Student Charter, and because of its singular relationship with an awarding body it has made a conscious decision to use the University version, which is included consistently within programme handbooks. Students are familiar with the University's Student Charter which can be found in their College handbooks.

2.19 The review team concluded that the College takes deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience and the Expectation has been met.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.20 The College and the University recognise within their annual review and PQSARs previous difficulties with student workloads caused through the timing of assessment. During its end-of-year University Annual Programme Partnership Review, the University noted the need for changing assessment strategies, for example in Applied Biology where assignments were clustered later on in the academic year. The PQSAR summary reports further noted difficulties and the need for rebalancing deadlines throughout the year for the Music and Business HNCs. The College has responded to these observations as evidenced to the review team in a sample of Programme Management Committee minutes for Business and Interactive Media, and through discussions with teaching staff which indicate consistent use of revised assessment schedules during 2013-14. The College has also provided feedback to external examiners in response to their comments about the need for a more even distribution of coursework deadlines. Discussions with student representatives noted that there was student awareness of difficulties with clustered assessment deadlines towards the end of the last academic session, but that this year coursework was more evenly distributed over three terms. The team also noted that there is a high level of student satisfaction about the learning challenges set by assessment content, with assessments being perceived as more challenging as students progress through their studies. The team **affirms** the current action being taken to ensure a more even distribution of assessment deadlines throughout the academic year.

2.21 Through consideration of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the review team concluded that the College ensures that students have appropriate opportunities to show they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the award of a qualification or credit and the Expectation has been met.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External examining

Findings

2.22 The College summarises recommendations arising from external examiners' reports as part of updating the Actions for Enhancement document overseen by the College's Higher Education Committee. The review team saw evidence that demonstrated that the arrangements for assessment panels and examination boards correspond with the University's procedures and regulations.

2.23 External examiner reports are made available to students through the CLIC Learn site, thereby enabling students to have an informed dialogue with their course staff to effectively inform the curriculum design of their course (see Expectation B1). Information regarding marking and grading is made available to students via their programme handbooks and within their module guides. Students confirmed to the review team that they received timely feedback for their submitted work.

2.24 Through consideration of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the review team concluded that the Expectation has been met.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review

Findings

2.25 There is extensive evidence of frequent and detailed programme monitoring and review using the PQSAR system, which is also specified in the MoA. This procedure is overseen by the Higher Education Committee which has a specific PQSAR objective in its revised terms of reference. The College requires use of a PQSAR template which has now been revised following discussion at Higher Education Committee level. The team noted detailed examples of PQSAR monitoring and review for the HNC Computing, Interactive Media and Construction, in addition to the College's completion of an overall summary report for all PQSARs.

2.26 The review team also explored the PQSAR annual review cycle through discussions with senior staff, with an overview of a sample of reports from programme directors. The review team noted in discussions with teaching and support staff that student achievement and progression data is used as statistical evidence for monitoring and action planning, including the use of data dashboards linked not just to PQSARs, but also to quarterly Programme Area Performance Reviews completed by the senior management team within the College. This self-assessment process includes retention and achievement data; evaluation of progress from the last action plan with targets and updates; two reflective updates during the year; peer review of interim and end-of-year monitoring conclusions; responses to external examiner feedback; and a new action plan. The team concluded that the PQSAR process is a rigorous, robust and self-critical approach to programme monitoring and review and considers this to be **good practice**.

2.27 Through consideration of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the review team concluded that the College has effective procedures in place to routinely monitor and periodically review programmes and that the Expectation has been met.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic complaints and student appeals

Findings

2.28 The College demonstrated to the review team that it has a robust complaints procedure in place which values fairness, clear communication, confidentiality and timely responsiveness. The procedure encompasses three internal stages before progressing to the University and details about the process are made available to students through their programme handbooks. The student submission demonstrated to the review team that there is high agreement from students about knowing how to make a complaint and satisfaction with the timescale of the response. This was reiterated to the review team by students they met at the review visit.

2.29 The College uses the University's Academic Appeals procedure which is also made available to students through their programme handbooks.

2.30 Through consideration of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the review team concluded that the College has fair, effective and timely procedures for handling students' complaints and academic appeals and the Expectation has been met.

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

2.31 The College has a singular validation relationship with Canterbury Christ Church University which is overseen by senior staff within the College to carry out the relationship in accordance with the University's regulations. This was demonstrated to the review team as detailed in Expectation A.

2.32 Through consideration of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the review team concluded that the Expectation has been met.

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

2.33 The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

Quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.34 The College's responsibilities relating to the UK expectations about the quality of student learning opportunities as detailed in *Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality* of the Quality Code have all been met.

2.35 The review team confirmed that the College has effective processes for the design and approval of programmes, and has policies and procedures used to admit students that are clear, fair, explicit and consistently applied. The team concluded that the College, working with its staff, students and other stakeholders, articulates and systematically reviews and enhances 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. The College has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential, and takes deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. The team also concluded that the College has effective procedures in place to routinely monitor and periodically review programmes, and has fair, effective and timely procedures for handling students' complaints and academic appeals. The College has a singular validation relationship with Canterbury Christ Church University which is overseen by senior staff within the College to carry out the relationship in accordance with the University's regulations.

2.36 There were two features of good practice - the strategic approach that enables students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential through the transition from further to higher education and through subsequent higher education levels (Expectation B4), and the rigorous, robust and self-critical approach to programme monitoring and review demonstrated through the process of the PQSARs (Expectation B8).

2.37 There was one affirmation of the action being taken to ensure a more even distribution of assessment deadlines throughout the academic year (Expectation B6).

2.38 On the basis of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the review team made the judgement that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: Quality of the information produced about its provision

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about higher education provision

Findings

3.1 The College's higher education prospectus provides accessible information for the public about the College's higher education portfolio and consistently identifies the University as the awarding body. Higher education is linked closely to widening participation themes within the Principal's introduction to the Prospectus 2014-15 and the Higher Education Strategy for the College. Prospectus and strategy information is made publicly accessible via the College website.

3.2 The review team confirmed that for new student enquiries and applications there is a clear progression statement in the 2014 prospectus and the College has an ambition to 'demystify' the process of application. The prospectus contains clear statements about courses, applications and support, including access to resources at the College and the University campus. Programme specification documents for all higher education programmes are made available to applicants via the website. The review team cross-referenced these to the student submission and students confirmed that information provided when they were applying for courses was accurate and accessible.

3.3 The College has developed a detailed progression strategy targeting their current level 2 and 3 students, spearheaded by programme directors who focus on careers fairs, tutorial support, visits to lectures, taster sessions, UCAS guidance and late applicant guidance. The College's marketing teams use digital signage and poster sites, all reinforced by the Higher Education Strategy 2010-14. The strategy went to the May 2013 Higher Education Committee with clear actions being listed for the 2013-14 academic session.

3.4 The University MoA states that the Head of Marketing should agree all publicity from the College. The review team noted that this procedure was emphasised within the minutes of the Higher Education Committee for September 2012 when planning the College's 2013-14 Prospectus. Further evidence was noted by the review team in consideration of the HNC Business planning form, confirming to the review team that marketing involves the College in close coordination with the University. Subsequent validation documents contain clear and comprehensive information for future students. The College notes that there is no Key Information Set requirement for an HNC and sends public information about the HNDs to the University, while also participating in the NSS. The operational annexes for the MoA for the HNC Business and the HND Education and Training state that information within the student handbooks is to be refreshed annually. The annual University review minutes confirm this action point for the College. Discussions with senior and teaching staff confirmed that handbooks are updated annually by programme directors, with oversight by the Higher Education Committee.

3.5 The College's programme directors have responsibility for checking UCAS course profiles and this process was confirmed by the review team in discussions with senior and teaching staff. Higher Education Committee minutes for May 2013 note that four new courses (HNC Performing Arts and Sport and Exercise Science; HND Construction and Built Environment and General Education) are to be offered in 2014-15. The team noted that the

prospectus for next year contains clear statements that they are all subject to validation. Induction survey data for current students shows that 97.6 per cent of respondents agree that they feel they are on the right programme and the review team concluded the accuracy and validity of information provided for prospective students.

3.6 Current students receive programme specification information within handbooks located on the CLIC Learn website. The review team also explored the use of the CLIC Learn website for locating 'reserved' (for staff only) and 'unreserved' (for students and staff) minutes from Programme Management Committees. Discussions with senior and teaching staff, as well as students, demonstrated that the College has debated this matter in depth and that students were content with the current arrangements based on their recognition of the need for discussion of more confidential matters by staff in a closed section of Programme Management Committee meetings, where student representatives were not present.

3.7 The MoA states that all external examiner reports will be made available to students once released by the University. The 2012-13 summary of all examiner reports states that discussion takes place with student representatives at the first meeting of the Programme Management Committees. The review team discussed this matter with students and staff with consistent and unanimous support for sharing information via CLIC Learn for locating and accessing external examiner reports.

3.8 The external examiner summary report for 2012-13 notes comments about the need for providing more detail for merit and distinction criteria within each assignment brief. The team noted that there was variable practice with the provision of information about assessment criteria in a sample of student handbooks, with Interactive Media providing more detail compared with, for example, Biology and Construction. Discussions with staff and students confirmed the College's awareness of previous inconsistencies for the provision of information, with a specific Action for Enhancement being completed for the provision of indicative guidance on the requirements of higher grades within each published module guide.

3.9 The review team sampled student handbooks from the HNC Performing Arts, Biology, Interactive Media and Construction and confirmed that the College consistently includes the University Student Charter.

3.10 The Computing PQSAR included an action point for providing an overall assessment schedule covering all modules within programme handbooks by October 2013. The Programme Management Committees for Business and Interactive Media further noted the need to generate over-arching assessment schedules at programme levels. The review team discussed progress with students and teaching staff and sampled student handbooks, confirming consistency with the use of assessment schedule information during the 2013-14 academic session. The review team **affirms** the action being taken to include an overall assessment schedule covering all modules to be included in all programme handbooks.

3.11 The review team noted that during previous academic sessions there had been difficulties with student access to CLIC Learn and the University information to read key documentation, as recorded in Programme Management Committee action points for Interactive Media and Computing and Engineering, with annual review minutes recommending more training for students. The review team also noted that the external examiner for Construction had experienced difficulties accessing documentation via CLIC Learn, and was referred to the link tutor who also experienced difficulties. The team recognised that when this happened the College responded by issuing pen-drives on occasion, especially for the provision of induction and programme documentation. The review team discussed these access difficulties with students and staff and sampled

more recent Programme Management Committee minutes, confirming that there had been no repeat of difficulties this year.

3.12 The team could find no detailed information about methods or procedures for informing current students about the outcomes of previous surveys, with the student submission indicating that 36.1 per cent of the student sample were not aware of a situation where the College has made changes following feedback from students. The team was informed during the review visit about a new proposal that is to be submitted to the May 2014 Higher Education Committee, where an annual forum is to be convened for all higher education student representatives, all programme directors and the Chair of the Higher Education Committee to discuss student survey data from the previous academic session. The review team **recommends** that from September 2014 the College ensure that higher education students receive information about the results of surveys they complete.

3.13 With reference to the provision of information for students on completion of their studies, and in accordance with the MoA, the University issues student transcripts and award certificates with the College named as the place of completion. Examples of letters to completing students with accompanying Higher Education Achievement Records and Diploma Supplements, plus certificates seen by the review team, confirmed that procedures are being followed consistently and accurately. The review team further noted that external examiners visit the College annually with reports noting satisfaction with the provision of appropriate information.

3.14 The review team noted that the College recognises the need for more structured student evaluation and has formalised a series of information-gathering exercises involving pre-registration and induction questionnaires, the University Student Survey (for level 4), the NSS (for level 5), end-of-module evaluations and exit interviews. This sequence is summarised in an Action for Enhancement and the Higher Education Committee's revised terms of reference now include a specific objective for reviewing summaries of student evaluation data. There is, in particular, detailed reference for the need to gather more informative feedback for individual modules with clear action points being listed in the Higher Education Committee minutes for October 2013 and in Programme Management Committee minutes. The review team **affirms** the implementation of end-of-module surveys for all programmes.

3.15 Through consideration of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the review team concluded that the College produces fit-for-purpose, accessible and trustworthy information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer, and therefore the Expectation has been met.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.16 The College's responsibilities relating to the UK expectations about information about higher education provision as detailed in *Part C: Information about higher education provision* of the Quality Code have been met.

3.17 The team concluded that the College provides accessible information for the public about their higher education portfolio, and consistently identifies the University as the awarding body. The team confirmed that the College succeeds in providing clear and appropriate information to prospective students using a variety of formats. The review team agreed that information for current students is fit for purpose, trustworthy and accessible.

3.18 The review team made one recommendation in this area: that from September 2014 higher education students should receive information about the results of surveys they complete.

3.19 The review team also affirmed the action being taken to include an overall assessment schedule covering all modules to be included in all programme handbooks; and the implementation of end-of-module surveys for all programmes.

3.20 On the basis of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the review team made the judgement that the quality of the information about higher education provision at the College **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: Enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College has a strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities. Its mission statement emphasises creativity through continuous enhancement based on innovation and enterprise and commitment to entrepreneurship via the Peter Jones Enterprise Academy. The College's identification of the Actions for Enhancement document indicates the way in which the work of the College's Higher Education Committee integrates enhancement initiatives in a systematic and planned manner.

4.2 The Higher Education Committee has responsibility for enhancement. Representatives attend these meetings including the Head of Learning Support and Enrichment, the Student Progression Manager, the College's Senior Teaching and Learning Facilitator, the College's Support Services Manager and the University Broadstairs campus students' union coordinator. The Higher Education Committee responds to external examiner feedback and annual programme reviews and is increasingly including student evaluation evidence when updating the Actions for Enhancement document. The review team considered that the College is self-critical about the quality of information that is used as the evidence base for quality assurance and enhancement, noting this to be 'an area for development', but includes cohort monitoring as included in annual programme reviews, the University Annual Partnership Review and destination data.

4.3 The review team were provided with extensive evidence of frequent and detailed programme monitoring and review using the system of annual higher education PQSARs. Information for those with responsibility for maintaining standards and assuring quality includes the use of a detailed Annual Review Data Pack for supporting the University annual review of programmes, providing higher education-specific information on attendance, retention and achievement, as well as student feedback data covering induction surveys and exit interviews. The review team were also informed about the use of data summaries at the QPRs, in addition to the termly PQSAR reflections. As detailed under Expectation B8, the review team concluded that the PQSAR process is a rigorous, robust and self-critical approach to programme monitoring and review and considers this to be good practice.

4.4 The minutes of the Higher Education Committee note that recent membership of the Kent and Medway Progression Federation is leading the College to more actively promote itself as a higher education provider. This matter was discussed with the Principal and senior staff, with the review team noting that the Progression Board was more concerned with planning progression and transfer arrangements between higher and further education institutions within the region than providing a completely new marketing strategy in parallel with current materials and strategies involving the partnership between the College and the University. As detailed under Expectation B4, the review team noted as good practice the strategic approach that enables students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential through the transition from further to higher education and through subsequent higher education levels.

4.5 The Student Enrichment and Support Team is involved in developing the East Kent College Student Voice. This includes an annual conference and meetings with class and programme representatives and the students' union. Calendars, agendas, minutes and feedback from all meetings are uploaded to the Student Life area of the VLE, with each

programme having its own CLIC Learn pages. Student involvement strategy objectives concerning inclusivity and personalised student experience lead to approaches and supporting structures that are accessible, clear and direct. The College makes use of personal tutors who support student transition. Personal tutors help students with a variety of issues including UCAS, student finance applications, careers advice, plagiarism and academic misconduct presentations.

4.6 The College carries out curriculum walks which straddle higher education and further education provision successfully by looking at entire programme areas with a mindful approach to transition. The curriculum walks are an effective mechanism for highlighting areas for targeted focus and development. The formation of a higher education common room, new stools for the biology laboratories and moving the dates of the freshers' fair were all given as examples of the effectiveness of this mechanism. The outcomes of the curriculum walks are fed back to the wider College by the VLE and the 'You said, We did' area. The review team concluded that the deliberate improvement of the quality of students' learning opportunities through the strategic use of curriculum walks was **good practice**.

4.7 Through consideration of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the review team concluded that the College promotes an ethos which expects and encourages enhancement of student learning opportunities, and that it takes deliberate steps to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. Therefore, the Expectation has been met.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.8 The College's responsibilities relating to the UK expectations about the enhancement of student learning opportunities have been met.

4.9 The team concluded that the College takes deliberate steps to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. There was one feature of good practice in the deliberate improvement of the quality of students' learning opportunities through the strategic use of curriculum walks.

4.10 On the basis of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the review team made the judgement that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Findings

5.1 The College formally involves students within its quality assurance framework through the terms of reference for the Higher Education Committee, where membership includes one University and one College students' union representative, and the higher education student ambassador. The annual PQSARs include an expectation about reflection being directly informed by students.

5.2 The Higher Education Committee discussed specific aspects of the student involvement at its meeting on 3 October 2013, emphasising the relevance of this theme to the planned introduction of pre-registration and induction, end-of-module, exit and NSS/USS surveys. The Committee also noted the College's plans for promoting more actively the role of the student representative in Programme Management Committees, with minutes from a sample of meetings confirming the involvement of students.

5.3 The role of the student representative is defined in the student submission, noting that each higher education course seeks the election of two volunteer representatives. These representatives then join the College-wide student voice system and engage in programme management meetings with staff, thereby informing the termly reflection exercises within the PQSAR system. The student submission suggests that the College should set a deadline for the election of representatives, with the team noting that all programmes had representatives in place.

5.4 The College facilitates student representative training via the enrichment team, using the Class Representative Handbook at regular meetings between senior management and class representatives. The student submission notes, however, the need for more guidance and training.

5.5 The student submission includes some critical comments about the effectiveness of the student voice system, especially whether the College listens in sufficient detail to students and provides enough information to representatives.

5.6 The review team therefore explored these comments further and recognised a wide range of evidence supporting the systematic and deliberate empowerment of students in quality assurance processes. The team also noted the success of the College in winning a national Leading the Learning Voice Award in 2011. The student involvement strategy uses focus groups led by the Student Enrichment and Support Team in addition to surveys. The College's Student Council includes higher education student representation. Student involvement within quality assurance processes is also achieved through biannual curriculum walks involving students and management, with subsequent action planning.

5.7 Feedback about actions taken by the College following student feedback is provided through the 'You said, We did' publication, with specific examples being supplied for higher education. As detailed in Expectation C, the review team was also informed during the review visit about a new Action for Enhancement proposal that is to be submitted to the May 2014 Higher Education Committee, where an annual meeting is to be scheduled between all higher education student representatives, programme directors and the Chair of the Higher Education Committee to discuss student survey data from the previous academic session.

5.8 The College does not have its own Student Charter, and because of its singular relationship with one awarding body it has made a conscious decision to use the University's version, which is included consistently within programme handbooks.

5.9 The MoA between the University and the College states that all external examiner reports will be made available to students once released by the University. The 2012-13 summary of examiner reports states that discussion takes place with student representatives through the Programme Management Committees. During the review visit the team noted student awareness of external examiner feedback through the availability of reports on the VLE.

5.10 The thematic element therefore demonstrates that the College has successfully introduced systems and procedures for the involvement of higher education students in quality assurance and enhancement.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 27 to 29 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#).

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See **technology enhanced or enabled learning**.

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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