Higher Education Review of Havering College of Further and Higher Education

June 2014

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Havering College of Further and Higher Education. The review took place from 10 to 12 June 2014 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Philip Davies
- Professor Donald Pennington
- Mrs Emma Hedges.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Havering College of Further and Higher Education 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 this report 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 5.

In reviewing Havering College of Further and Higher Education 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.

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[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/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106.
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus.
[4] Higher Education Review web pages www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Havering College of Further and Higher Education

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Havering College of Further and Higher Education.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Havering College of Further and Higher Education.

- The support for the scholarly development of teaching staff through mechanisms such as scholarship platforms and bulletins (Expectation B3).
- The opportunities and support given to teaching and professional services staff to facilitate their ongoing development (Expectations B3 and B4).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Havering College of Further and Higher Education.

By January 2015:

- ensure that all programmes are meeting the College's policy of providing assignment feedback within three weeks (Expectation B3).

By March 2015:

- establish student representation on committees at all levels within the College to engage students as partners in quality assurance and enhancement (Expectation B5)
- ensure that external examiner reports are made available to all students across the College's higher education provision (Expectation B7)
- strengthen and widen the College's moderation of assessment marking undertaken by staff at William Booth College (Expectation B10)
- consolidate and articulate the existing strategic approach to quality enhancement at higher education level (Enhancement).

By September 2015:

- provide appropriate and distinctive adult learning and social spaces for all higher education students to further enhance the higher education culture and community at the College (Expectation B4)
- develop a more comprehensive college-wide approach to provide dedicated higher education careers advice and guidance (Expectation B4).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The progress made with developing programme specifications for HNC and HND programmes (Expectation A3).
- The ongoing development of the StARs programme which includes, but is not limited to, the pilot of an accredited StARs training module (Expectation B5).

Theme: Student Employability

Havering College of Further and Higher Education (the College) has a strong background in providing vocational training in higher education, with many students already in employment, studying for career enhancement and development purposes with the support of their employers. It has long-established close links with some very well-known companies such as Ford, the Salvation Army and E.ON.

The College uses 'Five models of work-based learning' which set out, on a spectrum, the number of work experience opportunities there will be on all its higher education courses. Professional courses that have professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements have specified placements. Where it is difficult to find work placements, students often undertake projects which engage employers and outside agencies. Employers are engaged in a variety of ways at the College including course design and validation to give an industry perspective on the curriculum and in feedback in the annual monitoring process.

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

About Havering College of Further and Higher Education

Havering College of Further and Higher Education is a large college situated in the London Borough of Havering. Students are drawn from Essex, Kent and neighbouring London Boroughs. The College has approximately 900 students following higher education courses. Over 50 per cent of the higher education student body are mature students, while over 40 per cent are from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds.

The College's approach to higher education, which has developed over the last 35 years, has focused upon working with employers to generate 'fit for purpose' provision. The College declares its mission to be 'to deliver high quality education and training that responds to the needs of employers and individuals'. The College seeks to attract and retain learners at and through all levels to ensure that they achieve and thereby raise standards, widen participation, address social exclusion and contribute to economic growth.

The College's higher education provision is located in four strategic curriculum areas: creative arts including music and performance; social work, social policy and social studies; engineering, computing and construction; and teacher education and education studies.

Since the last QAA review in 2010, the College has restructured from three Departments and the Skills Hub to three sections consisting of two faculties (Arts and Sciences and Business and Technology respectively) and the Skills Hub. Higher education programmes are delivered across all three sections. Higher education has been strengthened by the

appointment of a Higher Education Development Coordinator from November 2013 and a Higher Education Student Experience and Engagement Manager from February 2014.

The College currently has relationships with Pearson for HNC/HND programmes and with two degree-awarding bodies: the Open University and the University of East London.

Due to the increase in higher education fees with effect from the 2012-13 academic year, the College terminated its relationship with the University of Greenwich.

The College describes the key challenges facing it and its higher education provision as being: reduced higher education student recruitment, the introduction of new higher education fees and a fluctuating student number control; the need to increase internal recruitment from further education level 3 courses to higher education programmes; and to redesign the higher education curriculum to a) complete the Curriculum Map, where appropriate; b) increase the number of higher education science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programmes; and c) increase the level of responsiveness to the educational and training needs of the local and regional economies and the communities the College serves. The College is striving to increase the number of higher apprenticeships across the higher education portfolio, to re-configure the staffing arrangements for higher education quality assurance and to secure the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in higher education with the development of the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education.

QAA's Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review of the College in 2010 identified a number of features of good practice and three recommendations: to (i) expand the database, developed to enable external examiner and verifier activities to be monitored and action points tracked, as soon as possible to cover external examiner reports for all higher education programmes; (ii) continue improving support for higher education students with learning difficulties and invisible disabilities; and (iii) continue implementing the actions planned to make improvements to the learning opportunities at Thames Gateway College, pending the longer term relocation of higher education engineering programmes to the College's main campus.

The College reported on the steps it has taken to address these recommendations which have included investment in a commercial programme - 'ProMonitor' - which was introduced for further education students in the 2013-14 academic year and is now being piloted with four new higher education programmes with effect from September 2014. If successful, this programme will then be rolled out across all higher education programmes from September 2015, to enable effective tracking of external examiner and verifier activities.

The College's first Access Agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) was implemented in the autumn of 2010, securing additional resources by increasing higher education fees to £2,000 from September 2011, in order to provide additional learning support (ALS) because of an identified learning disability or difficulty under the Disabled Student Allowance requirements; short term ALS support to enable students new to higher education to establish a firm foundation upon which to develop their academic careers; and support with English as an academic language or as a second or other language at the commencement of their studies. The higher education ALS Coordinator supports programme teams who are working with students with learning difficulties and invisible disabilities.

A variety of developments have been undertaken which address the third recommendation including the renewal and upgrading of engineering facilities at Havering College, the revalidation of relevant programmes, access to the virtual learning environment (VLE) and the learning resources at the College as well as continued use of the Centre for Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence (CEME) campus for higher education provision for the Ford Motor Company.

Explanation of the findings about Havering College of Further and Higher Education

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

1   Judgement: Maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards

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

Quality Code, *Chapter A1: The national level*

Findings

1.1   The College offers higher education programmes, which include Higher National Certificates/Higher National Diplomas (HNCs/HNDs), honours degrees and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education, with awards from the Open University, the University of East London and Pearson. The University of East London and Pearson qualifications are developed by the degree-awarding body and awarding organisation for the College to deliver. Degrees awarded by the Open University are approved by Validation Panels at events held at the College which ensure qualifications are at the appropriate level in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ).

1.2   Pearson develops its HNCs and HNDs, which are approved by Ofqual, for national delivery through its approved centres. The Open University validates programmes according to the Open University Handbook for Validated Awards. The revalidation of the Foundation Degree in Engineering, for example, involved consideration of the FHEQ descriptor for the award. The Validation Report indicates that the programme was developed with reference to the FHEQ. The University of East London validates the programme carrying its award through a similar process and issues a report to the College.

1.3   The review team examined the College's use of the FHEQ through consideration of the approach of each of the degree-awarding bodies, information provided in the programme specifications, meetings with staff and representatives of the Open University and University of East London, and from outcomes stated in Open University Revalidation Reports and the report by the University of East London.

1.4   The higher education programmes offered by the College are allocated to the appropriate level in the FHEQ. The College has not undertaken explicit mappings of programmes against its appropriate qualification descriptor in the FHEQ. However, it is clear that for Open University validated awards, for example, the College makes use of the FHEQ at the development stage. At the validation stage the panel consider the appropriateness of the learning outcomes in relation to the higher education qualification being awarded.

1.5   The review team concludes that the College meets Expectation A1 and that the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter A2: The subject and qualification level*

Findings

1.6   The College states that appropriate subject and qualification benchmark statements are taken into account during the programme development stage. Open University Validation Panels check this at approval events. Some programme specifications make reference to an appropriate subject and qualification benchmark statement. This is undertaken by Pearson as the awarding organisation for HNCs and HNDs.

1.7   The degree in social work, awarded by the Open University, is developed in line with guidelines issued by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) which accredits both the full-time and part-time versions of the degree.

1.8   The development of programmes by the College which are validated by the Open University and the University of East London, together with the rigorous approach of validation events, ensure that higher education programmes offered by the College meet Expectation A2.

1.9   The team considered evidence from meetings with staff and reports from validation events as well as the approach to programme validation adopted by the Open University, as described in its Handbook for Validated Awards. Evidence was also obtained from scrutiny of programme specifications. For social work, the team considered communications from HCPC. The *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* was considered in relation to programme specifications for foundation degrees offered by the College.

1.10   The higher education programmes offered by the College conform to the requirements of appropriate subject and qualification benchmark statements. This is evident from statements made by representatives of degree-awarding bodies and the content of programme specifications. The review team suggests that the College could provide more explicit and written reference to guidance provided by appropriate subject and qualification benchmarks statements in order not to be dependent on the deliberations of validation panels for confirmation that the requirements are met.

1.11   The review team concludes that the College meets Expectation A2 and that the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: The programme level*

Findings

1.12   The College has well-developed programme specifications for all awards of the Open University and the University of East London. For each programme specification there are associated module specifications. Programme specifications clearly state aims and intended learning outcomes. Module specifications provide clearly stated intended learning outcomes. The review team noted that the College is in the process of developing programme specifications for all Pearson HNC/HND programmes that it offers and **affirms** the progress made with developing programme specifications for HNC and HND programmes.

1.13   Students studying a programme are provided with a Student Handbook, which is developed from a standard template. Student Handbooks contain key information about the student's programme of study, which includes programme aims and intended learning outcomes. Programme specifications and module descriptors are also made available to students through the College's virtual learning environment.

1.14   The team reviewed programme specifications and module specifications as well as comments made by students in the Student Submission. Students reported that the comprehensive induction programme covered these aspects of their programme of study.

1.15   Programme and module specifications provide appropriate information to students and other stakeholders concerning aims and intended learning outcomes. These are communicated effectively through Student Handbooks, the College's virtual learning environment and hard copy to staff, students and other relevant people.

1.16   The review team concludes that the College meets Expectation A3 and that the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter A4: Approval and review*

Findings

1.17   As indicated above, the College works with degree-awarding bodies and Pearson to validate and periodically review its higher education programmes. The degree-awarding bodies and organisations are responsible for setting and maintaining threshold academic standards for all its higher education programmes and it shares responsibility for managing the programmes.

1.18   The Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee reviews, as part of the annual programme review process, all external examiner reports, student surveys, and any College reports that are to be forwarded to the awarding or professional bodies. It also reviews the annual monitoring reports, awarding organisations and professional bodies.

1.19   Management and due diligence processes are specified in the partnership delivery agreements which the College embeds within its own processes. Programme design and approval is regulated by the degree-awarding bodies' requirements and is governed by their regulations. The College aims to adhere closely to these regulations and monitors its activities through the oversight of the Teaching Learning Success and Destination Committee which reports to the Senior Leadership Team. The delivery of programmes is further monitored by the Higher Education Strategy and Development Manager and the degree-awarding bodies. The College has effective validation and periodic review processes which follow degree-awarding body procedures and are well embedded.

1.20   The team met with senior managers and academic staff to test the effectiveness of the validation processes. The team examined validation reports and related documentation, and explored the mechanisms the College has for checking that this expectation is being evaluated. Partnership agreements and related documents were also consulted to see how well management processes are embedded and cross checked with external examiners reports. The team met staff to examine the College's use of the Quality Code, the awareness of staff and the impact of its use on College programmes.

1.21   The validity and relevance of programmes are regularly checked through the use of external examiners, employer engagement activity, and degree-awarding body representatives. Student representation is present throughout the validation and review process and external examiners are consulted in review. Study levels are set through the mapping of learning outcomes to the qualification descriptors in FHEQ which is done jointly with the degree-awarding body. The volume of study is also agreed with the degree-awarding body and student representatives are consulted about the overall design of the programme.

1.22   The College is making effective use of the Quality Code and there are clear examples of it being used in regulating the College's higher education provision through a detailed mapping of the Quality Code to the College's procedures.

1.23   The review team found that the College has an effective process for the approval and periodic review of programme design and approval of higher education programmes and makes informed use of relevant external reference points. Programmes are aligned to the FHEQ and the subject and qualification benchmark statements. The articulation of policy and of degree-awarding bodies and external reference points as part of the programme design,

approval, monitoring and review processes is very well established and the review team concludes Expectation A4 is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter A5: Externality*

Findings

1.24   The College understands the importance of making use of a wide range of independent and external expertise in order to effectively manage its academic standards. The College consults with independent academics and link tutors in the preparation, development and running of programmes. The College also works with professional bodies who provide external benchmarks which the College maps to relevant modules. The Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee reviews the contribution of external expertise through the annual programme review process and also through reviews of all external examiner reports to ensure College compliance with external recommendations.

1.25   The College aims to make good use of the views of external stakeholders. These include input from external examiners, employers, Open University Academic Reviewers and University of East London link tutors. External examiners and university representation are present at assessment boards to ensure the consistent application of degree-awarding body regulations. The College also seeks to involve employers and students in the validation and periodic review process. External examiners are employed to scrutinise assignment briefs and approve all assessment results. External examiners and verifiers report on all programmes, detailing strengths, weaknesses, actions and progress from the previous academic year. The College also makes good use of sector benchmark statements and relevant occupational standards.

1.26   The review team met senior managers and academic staff to test how well the College uses external expertise and reference points. The team examined evidence from a range of definitive course documents, to determine if appropriate 'mapping' of outcomes against subject benchmarks, external reference points and national occupational standards is undertaken. The team met a range of staff to examine if there was effective use of employers and external examiners in the management of standards. The team also met senior managers and academic staff to test the way that external examiners independently monitor programmes and the way teaching teams review and act on reports.

1.27   The team also checked whether external examiner reports are reviewed to identify cross-college themes and whether these are followed through. The team also examined carefully whether external examiner reports were made available in full to students.

1.28   The College makes effective use of external expertise in the management of quality assurance processes. Open University Academic Reviewers and link tutors act as a valuable connection between the College teams and the universities and advise on the application of assessment regulations, assessment, teaching and learning strategies, enhancement of the student experience and resourcing. The College also makes effective use of external examiners. All external examiners have an induction on appointment. External examiner reports are reviewed annually to identify college-wide issues and are responded to by heads of curriculum.

1.29   Employers and external academics with relevant experience are routinely and effectively used in the validation and periodic review process. There is strong employer involvement in assignment design and in driving forward curriculum initiatives and innovation, and strong employer input is evident within relevant modules embedded within the higher education curriculum. The College has aligned programmes to relevant professional body guidelines.

1.30   The College has well established policies and processes to ensure that there is robust independent scrutiny and external participation in the management of threshold academic standards. The College ensures that there is contribution from a wide range of expertise and that effective use is made of external academic, professional bodies and employers. The review team found that the College's use of independent and external expertise is solid, valid and reliable and that Expectation A5 is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.31   The College has the responsibility for the design, monitoring and internal moderation of its assessment procedures. Principles of assessment are set out in Assessment Strategy and the Open University assessment regulations and are in accordance with the regulatory requirements of each degree-awarding body and the awarding organisation.

1.32   The College sets its own assessments. All assessment questions are approved by external examiners in advance of being issued to students. Internal verification, and standardisation at award and module level are all well embedded. The programme team carries out internal moderation on a range of assessments alongside independent marking. The College has Academic Misconduct Procedures which define plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct.

1.33   The College claims to have effective processes for carrying out the checking and verification of assessments. It provides training and support to staff to assess work robustly and reliably. First and second marking processes include internal moderation. The College makes use of external examiners to scrutinise assignment briefs and approve all assessment results. External examiner reports are reviewed by the Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee which takes a strategic view of assessment procedures. The annual monitoring process routinely reviews assessment issues.

1.34   The review team met management staff and academic staff to test the assessment processes. The team also looked at the virtual learning environment to see what written instructions and guidance on assessment requirements and processes are available to staff and students. The review team looked at a range of documents relating to assessment and also examined procedures defining plagiarism and other forms of misconduct and the way they are applied.

1.35   The College has effective processes for carrying out the checking and verification of assessments. Unit lecturers are responsible for setting individual assignments which are verified by another member of the team before being agreed by external examiners in advance of being issued to students. The curriculum manager then ensures that all external examiner recommendations are followed. All marking is measured against learning outcomes and published criteria and moderated to ensure consistency.

1.36   The College provides assessment guidance and training for all higher education staff. This includes inductions, mentoring and direction on assessment procedures to ensure staff understand the assessment requirements, marking process and grading criteria.

1.37   The College has robust, valid and reliable processes for the design, approval, monitoring and review of assessment at all stages, from validation through to implementation and periodic and annual review. The review team found that assessment of students is accurate, valid and reliable and that the College's award of qualifications and credit are based on the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The review team therefore concludes that the College's procedures meet Expectation A6 and the level of associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.38   In reaching its judgements about the quality of student learning opportunities the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.39   Overall, the College is effective in managing its responsibilities, in conjunction with the degree-awarding bodies, and maintaining academic standards. Effective use is made of relevant subject and qualification benchmarks and external expertise in the development of programmes and their subsequent approval and monitoring. The College has recognised the need for programme specifications for its HNC and HND programmes, and these are currently being developed.

1.40   Effective use is made of input from external examiners and from academic reviewers and link tutors from the validating institutions, as well as from employers. External examiner reports are made available to staff and student representatives but, currently, not routinely to all students (see Section 2). The maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.

2   Judgement: Quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1   The programmes validated by the Open University, the University of East London and Pearson, and delivered by the College, each require different procedures and documentation for the process of programme approval and of periodic review and revalidation.

2.2   The College maintains its own local strategic oversight of the design, approval and development of programmes through its Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee which reports to the Senior Leadership Team. The College conducts regular reviews and training events to maintain and enhance the capacity of its staff to design and develop higher education programmes.

2.3   The review team also met managerial and academic staff responsible for preparing for and conducting validation events, including representatives from some of the degree-awarding bodies. The review team also examined the documentation associated with the validation and revalidation of higher education programmes provided by the College. The accounts provided confirmed the detailed and thorough approach to developing programmes and obtaining approval.

2.4   The review team found that the validation and revalidation processes demonstrate a systematic approach to defining and maintaining the standards and quality of programmes. All panels employ academic and industry experts as independent externals. The approval events make explicit reference to appropriate external reference points and, where necessary, professional standards.

2.5   Validation and revalidation events address the provision of resources available to support learning including books, journals and equipment. The College involves students and employers in programme design and processes of development and review. The College also makes informed use of relevant external reference points. Programmes are aligned to the FHEQ, the subject and qualification benchmark statements, and, where relevant, occupational and professional standards. Management and review processes are specified in the partnership delivery agreements with the degree-awarding bodies and there is evidence that these are consistently followed.

2.6   The review team concludes that the roles played by the College in the design, approval, monitoring and review of the higher education programmes it delivers meet Expectation B1. The College has a consistent and effective approach to the design of programmes and robust approval mechanisms ensure that risk in this area is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Admissions*

Findings

2.7   A document which is the responsibility of the Higher Education and Overseas Admissions Manager sets out the higher education admissions and enrolment procedures and describes in detail the role of all of those involved in the admission of students such as threshold services, who are the first point of contact at the admissions stage, and curriculum managers, who are responsible for setting admissions criteria and indicating these in programme specifications. The majority of higher education admissions come through UCAS and there is a specialist higher education admissions team which provides advice and guidance, such as advising students on student finance applications, as well as application processing. Applications for part-time study come directly to the College for processing. If an applicant discloses information such as having an additional support need or a disability then the higher education admissions team notifies student support services who will provide tailored support to these applicants such as support for applying for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

2.8   The College admits a limited number of students through Accredited Prior Learning (APL) and has an APL policy. Some courses require students to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check at application stage and suitability procedures are laid down by the College. If an applicant is unsuccessful then the College will suggest more suitable programmes within the College; complaint and appeals guidance is found in the higher education admissions and enrolment procedures. The College reviews admissions procedures by holding Selection Panel meetings which happen throughout the academic year. These meetings allow staff to make amendments to internal selection processes based on experience of recent admissions. The College also seeks feedback on the admissions process via student surveys.

2.9   The effectiveness of the College's admissions procedures and policies was tested by the team using supporting evidence such as the documents detailing the application process for BA (Hons) Social Work and applicant information sheets. The team also met staff with a responsibility for admissions such as senior academic staff and by meeting the Higher Education and Overseas Admissions Manager and support staff to hear about how the admissions procedures work in practice.

2.10   The review team also asked students to share their experiences of admissions, which were all positive. The College has a 'Quality Matrix Standard' which is an external quality framework that recognises the effective delivery of information and guidance to support individuals in their choice of career and learning goals. The student submission confirms that students felt informed about the application process with 87 per cent agreeing that information prior to arrival allowed them to make an informed decision about studying at the College. Ninety-seven per cent agreed their applications were dealt with efficiently and 90 per cent said the application process was simple. The student submission also states that students were made to feel welcome at the College, with 95 per cent agreeing with this statement.

2.11   From the information provided by the College, including the higher education admissions and enrolment procedures and the examples provided of detailed applicant information, and hearing about how these procedures work in practice in staff meetings, it is clear that the College are admitting students in a fair and consistent way; the procedures are

reviewed regularly for effectiveness and currency. Therefore the review team concludes that the College meets Expectation B2 with a low level of risk.

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

2.12   From a strategic point of view, the College has a Higher Education Teaching and Learning Strategy. There is a Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee which has oversight of quality.

2.13   The College takes a number of measures to ensure that teaching remains current and of a level suitable for higher education. Higher education teaching staff benefit from a number of practices and policies that encourage scholarly development and activity. There is a dedicated scholarship strategy which describes College practice and publications such as a Scholarship Bulletin and a Scholarship Journal are frequent and contain good news stories of staff developments and qualifications as well as news items written by staff. There are also scholarship platforms where staff deliver presentations on research. Higher education staff are also encouraged to undertake additional study and qualifications, as well as being given support to attend subject-relevant conferences and events.

2.14   The College also has a number of ways to develop teaching staff pedagogically. Higher education teaching staff are expected to have teaching qualifications and staff who are new to teaching will now undertake a newly validated Open University programme, a PGCE in Teaching in Higher Education. The College practices teaching observations on all higher education programmes to review and enhance teaching practices. Grades received through observations are linked to staff appraisal and development. The College hosts events to share best practice in teaching and learning such as 'Bright and Breezy Breakfasts' and 'Learning Lunches'.

2.15   Students are able to offer feedback on teaching and learning through completing module feedback. The feedback gathered varies between subjects and is both quantitative and qualitative. The College did pilot a central electronic module evaluation system but take-up of this new approach was low so the College reverted to programme-based evaluation forms. Module evaluation is considered at programme committees.

2.16   The College has a policy which sets out a three week turnaround of provisional assessment feedback. This is publicised to students in handbooks and the need for timely feedback has been identified in the assessment strategy. However, in meetings with students it became clear to the review team that the four week turnaround expectation was not being met consistently across the College. The student submission also asserts that waiting for assignment marks can be distracting if students are completing further assessments while still waiting for the results of the last. Students understood that final marks often took longer than four weeks because of external verification; however some students said that they had been waiting months for a provisional mark and feedback. NSS scores indicated a high score for the quality of feedback, but a low score for the length of time between hand in and hand back. The review team therefore **recommends** that by January 2015 the College ensure that all programmes are meeting the College's policy of providing assignment feedback within three weeks.

2.17   The review team explored the role of the Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee in some detail by reviewing terms of reference, agendas and minutes and through discussions with senior staff. The remit of this committee has recently been reviewed and the name has been changed accordingly. Staff were able to explain the reason behind this change and the review process demonstrates the College's ability to be proactive in evaluating committee structures. In staff meetings, both senior and academic staff spoke highly of initiatives to encourage and support scholarly activity.

2.18   Many academic staff were able to give examples of ways the College had supported them with scholarly development. It was clear to the review team that this is a particular strength of the College and the review team recognised the support for the scholarly development of teaching staff through mechanisms such as scholarship platforms and bulletins as a feature of **good practice**.

2.19   Teaching staff were able to confirm that they were also supported in terms of pedagogical development and the views of a new member of staff confirmed that the higher education teaching staff were well inducted and supported. Staff confirmed that they found lesson observations to be useful. The Open University praised the College on a number of occasions during validation events for the College's approach to staff development. After meeting with teaching and professional services staff it became clear to the team that the opportunities and support given to facilitate their on-going development are **good practice**. The review team also explored the views of students by considering the student submission, in which 90 per cent of students rated teaching as good. In the meeting with students, courses were described as stimulating.

2.20   Based on the evidence provided by the College and from meeting staff and students, the review team concludes that Expectation B3 is met and that the risk is low. The College is committed to providing a quality learning experience to students with a particular focus on the ongoing development of the staff who deliver and support teaching.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B4: Enabling student development and achievement*

Findings

2.21   Students benefit from an induction programme when they begin as a higher education student. This introduces them to their programme and the College and its facilities such as support services and the LRC. The College VLE is relatively new, having been introduced in September 2013. It contains key information for students about their programme and course handbooks, lecture notes and assignment briefs are posted to it. There are college-wide expectations of what will be added to the VLE with a Course Quality Rubric. The College also has a student intranet which contains important college-wide information for students including access to the library catalogue.

2.22   The College use a plagiarism checking tool and the BA (Hons) Social Work programme are piloting its use to mark assessments, provide feedback and share assessed work with external examiners. Students have access to the College LRC with higher education students being given an Athens account for online journals, databases and eBooks. The LRC inducts students and offers study skills workshops for students and programme teams.

2.23   The review team were able to clarify their understanding of the evidence and narrative provided by the College by meeting with professional services staff and by having a demonstration of the VLE. It is clear that the College recognises the importance of having functioning online systems to assist students with their learning and employs learning technologists to support students and staff in using IT. In the meeting with students, students agreed that the new VLE is a valued learning tool and represents an improvement over the previous VLE; some students described some initial problems with the VLE and the plagiarism checker but these have now been rectified.

2.24   Staff confirmed that they felt well resourced within their areas and the need for additional resources is considered in self-assessment reports, with professional services staff being represented on high level committees such as Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination. Students in meetings appeared to be satisfied with the library although some did express a need for greater access to online resources as their Athens account did not grant them access to some resources that they needed. This was also reflected in the student submission, with some students feeling the library has inadequate resources to enable their development.

2.25   Student views are sought on the College's learning resources through specific surveys and in student focus groups. Student experience of induction was good, with the student submission stating that students had positive experiences at the beginning of their course. In meetings with students, they identified the lack of a dedicated physical social and study space on the Ardleigh Campus for higher education students. While students were given a study and IT area separate from further education students, the need to give students a dedicated space of their own where they can socialise between lectures is not being met and students made it clear to reviewers that this would enhance their experience and identity as higher education students. The review team therefore **recommends** that by September 2015 the College provide appropriate and distinctive adult learning and social spaces for all higher education students to further enhance the higher education culture and community at the College.

2.26   Student support is delivered by both academic staff and by professional support services. Students are assigned a personal tutor, an academic staff member, who is able to provide ongoing advice and support. Personal tutors arrange regular group tutorials as well as scheduling one to one meetings with tutees. Personal tutors have a wide support remit including success and progression, careers advice and pastoral support. More specific support can be provided by College support services such as disability support, specific learning difficulty support and language support (ESOL).

2.27   The College employ specific higher education development workers to be a first point of contact to higher education students in terms of advice and an Additional Learning Support Coordinator who supports higher education students with additional learning needs. Careers advice and guidance is provided by personal tutors and while there is no dedicated higher education careers adviser, the further education careers adviser provides support for higher education students and 17 per cent of the students seen in the 2013-14 academic year were higher education. Employability is embedded into the curriculum on all courses although the five models of work-based learning and the majority of higher education courses are vocational with students going directly into employment.

2.28   The team reviewed support provision by considering the evidence and narrative in the SED submitted by the College. Staff in meetings were able to confirm that they believed that the College was supportive to all higher education students, a view which was echoed in the meeting with students. Despite teaching staff and professional services staff agreeing that this was adequate, students identified a need for more tailored higher education careers support and guidance.

2.29   While it is clear that the College has employability as a strong focus, students, especially those on arts-based courses, felt that the College could do more to support them in terms of careers and progression. Some were unaware that they could go to the further education careers advisor for support. With this in mind, the review team **recommends** that by September 2015 the College develop a more comprehensive college-wide approach to provide dedicated higher education careers advice and guidance.

2.30   In conclusion, the review team found that the College is a supportive and well resourced environment for higher education students. There are many support and learning services available to students, with a wide range of staff who are also well supported in their professional development. The feature of good practice (in Expectation B3), the opportunities and support given to teaching and professional services staff to facilitate their on-going development, also transcends into this area, with staff confirming in meetings that they were given ample opportunities to widen their expertise by attending conferences and being members of professional bodies relating to their area of work. Therefore, the College meets Expectation B4 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

2.31   The College makes use of Student Academic Representatives (StARs) to provide peer representation at a variety of meetings about quality assurance. These students are trained and supported by the Higher Education Student Development Workers. StARs are elected within programmes and represent their peers at Course Boards of Study which have recently been standardised to ensure consistency across higher education provision at the College. These meetings provide a forum for students to offer feedback. The College expects a minimum of three of these meetings per year and a variety of topics are discussed here, such as scrutinising the annual monitoring report, operational issues and discussing the external examiners' reports.

2.32   Course Boards of Study feed into the higher education self-evaluation report and action plan. There are also StARs committee meetings which are college-wide and open up a dialogue between StARs and the Students' Union. Students can find out about StARs on the Student Intranet. The College has recently given StARs the opportunity to take a credit bearing module, validated by the Open University, as a development to their StARs training although take-up of this module has been low.

2.33   The review team were able to meet a number of StARs at the College, all of whom confirmed that they felt supported in their role. Students knew who their StARs were and how to raise issues with them. Some StARs did say that while the College was good at listening to student feedback, it could sometimes take a long time for that feedback to be acted upon.

2.34   The College has taken steps to enhance the StARs system, by revising Course Boards of Study and by developing the StARs training module. It is unfortunate that not many students have engaged with this module as the College is clearly recognising the ways in which it can enhance the StARs system and a validated training module such as this is an innovative development. The review team therefore **affirms** the ongoing development of the StARs programme which includes, but is not limited to, the pilot of an accredited StARs training module.

2.35   The College also seeks student feedback through surveys and focus groups. There is a college-wide survey undertaken in November and students are asked to fill in feedback forms in student focus groups which are held with senior managers; these act as a checking process to ensure students went through the correct admissions and induction processes as well as giving students the opportunity to offer qualitative feedback.

2.36   As already indicated (see paragraph 2.15) students are able to offer feedback on teaching and learning through completing module feedback. The feedback gathered varies between subjects and is both quantitative and qualitative. Module evaluation is considered at programme committees and in Annual Monitoring Reports. The variety of methods used to collect student feedback is also considered in Annual Monitoring. Students are involved in the revalidation of programmes, with validation panels meeting with groups of students to give their feedback.

2.37   The review team were able to consider student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement by considering the evidence submitted by the College and by meeting

students who were able to share their experiences of offering feedback. All students were able to confirm that they felt their views were taken into account and they confirmed that they completed module evaluation and there is clear evidence of student feedback being considered in Annual Monitoring and revalidation. The College was also able to provide evidence of action taken following student feedback at focus groups. Academic and Professional services staff were also able to confirm the variety of ways in which students could offer feedback on their academic experience.

2.38   Although student representation at a course level is good, there is a lack of students on boards and committees within the College. There is a Students' Union at Havering, which represents both further education and higher education students, but the Students' Union does not have representation at high level committee meetings such as the Corporation or the Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee. Without student representation at strategic decision-making committees, the review team feels that students cannot be fully integrated as partners in their learning. This representation should be college-wide and does not have to be specific to higher education students only, for example, having a place open to a representative of the Students' Union on the Corporation would show a commitment to high level student representation. The team therefore **recommends** that by March 2015 the College establish student representation on committees at all levels within the College to engage students as partners in quality assurance and enhancement.

2.39   In conclusion, the review team were able to confirm that the College is committed to developing StARs and collecting and using feedback at a programme level. Representation at a committee level is not as extensive as it could be and the College should consider how to fully integrate students as partners by involving them in the College's decision-making processes. Overall, the team feel that Expectation B5 is met but that currently the level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.40   The degree-awarding bodies specify the policies, regulations and processes that govern the assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning. In the cases of Pearson awards, the methods of assessment are set by the College and approved as part of the validation process. All assessment regulations are managed by the College's Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee.

2.41   Assessment information is communicated to students through the universities' websites and the course handbooks. The review team learned that the criteria and methods of assessment are communicated in assignment briefs. Course handbooks also describe the criteria and weightings of the elements of assessment that will be applied, as well as hand-in and feedback dates for coursework.

2.42   The assessment of student work is guided by a Higher Education Assessment Strategy and directed by Assessment Regulations. Students are informed about their assessments through their programme handbooks. Assessment methods are varied according to the nature of the programme. Assessment regulations, policies and procedures are managed by the Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee.

2.43   The review team spoke to senior managers, academic staff, professional staff and students to test the providers approach to assessment. Documentation was examined describing assessment principles and including the Higher Education Assessment Strategy, the Higher Education Assessment Regulations and other related assessment documentation.

2.44   The review team found that assessment is robust and consistent with principles set out in the Assessment Strategy and Assessment Regulations for Open University and University of East London programmes which are in accord with degree-awarding body regulations. Assessment of HND follows similar procedures modelled on university awards and, where appropriate, with the regulatory requirements of Pearson. Awarding body regulations on assessment are monitored by Course Boards and reviewed annually.

2.45   Staff teaching and assessing higher education programmes receive appropriate and regularly updated training and mentoring in carrying out assessment and assessment and feedback are informed by subject-specific and educational scholarship.

2.46   The evidence available from students and from staff indicate that while feedback on assessment is constructive and helpful, it is not always timely. The College has a three-week turnaround policy for providing feedback but the review team found this timescale was not always met. The review team suggested that the College might ensure that it has robust tracking mechanisms for monitoring the return of feedback so that it is aware of any late returns and is able to take appropriate remedial steps.

2.47   The review team found that the College has robust and effective assessment processes in place to ensure that students have varied and appropriate opportunities to show they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the award of a qualification. The management of examination boards, the use of external examiners and the application

of assessment regulations are robust and valid. Expectation B6 is met and the risk is assessed as 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

2.48   The College nominates potential candidates to the Open University which appoints the external examiners to their validated programmes. The College inducts and responds to examiner comments and incorporates their recommendations into programme action plans. The specific approach of external examiners is determined by the validation requirements of the awarding institutions and varies slightly between them. The Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee has oversight of external examiners and reviews all external examiner reports annually.

2.49   External examiners are used by the College to review programmes, confirm that awards are made at appropriate standards, benchmarked against levels elsewhere in the sector, and to attend and confirm assessment boards. External examiners are used by the College to confirm that threshold standards are being appropriately applied. They also contribute to other aspects of the management of programmes including: advice on the content and structure of the curriculum, the approval of assessment briefs, the checking of assignment briefs, sampling of assessment results, attendance at examination boards, (except in the case of Pearson awards) and the submission of an annual report on the assessment processes and student achievement.

2.50   The review team spoke to curriculum managers and senior managers and staff from the Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee who are responsible for overview of external examiners within the College. The review team also examined external examiners' reports for the higher education programmes delivered by the College together with the responses made by the College and evidence of the completion of actions that followed. Additional documents relating to external examiners were also consulted.

2.51   The evidence seen indicated that the degree-awarding bodies have in place explicit, comprehensive and appropriate policies and regulations governing and defining the nomination, appointment, induction and roles of external examiners. External examiner reports confirm the validity, reliability and integrity of the examination processes. External examiners are provided with appropriate access and the College responds to external examiners' comments in timely and effective ways. Curriculum managers consider and respond to external examiners' reports in their annual reviews and action plans.

2.52   The Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee reviews all external examiner reports and responses as part of their annual programme review process with a particular focus on college-wide issues. Progress in implementing any actions suggested by external examiners' reports is monitored by the Head of School.

2.53   External examiners visit annually to scrutinise assignment briefs, assessment decisions and feedback. The College arranges for external examiners to meet students. Students do not have full access to external examiner reports. The College has started a pilot which presents reports to student representatives on some programmes at the course boards but this does not extend to all programmes nor to all students. Neither are the reports available to students online. The review team **recommends** that by March 2015 the College ensure that external examiner reports are made available to all students across the College's higher education provision.

2.54   The review team confirmed that the College makes scrupulous use of external examiners to maintain the standards of awards and contribute to quality assurance and enhancement of its programmes. The review team finds that the College's use of external examiners is consistent with the requirements of the Quality Code set out in *Chapter B7: External Examining*. Subject to making external examiner reports available to students, Expectation B7 is met and the level of risk in this area is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review*

Findings

2.55   Primary responsibility for annual and periodic review lies with the degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation. Each of the universities and Pearson require slightly differing procedures for reviews. The College has aligned its review of Pearson programmes to the systems required by university programme reviews to bring consistency to its approach to annual reviews. Annual and periodic monitoring is overseen by the Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee.

2.56   Programmes are validated for between three to five years and all programmes are reviewed annually. Periodic reviews are managed by the awarding institutions and where successful lead to revalidation of the College provision. The College's curriculum managers compile annual monitoring reports together with action plans to consolidate good practise and address any issues that have emerged during the academic year. These reports and action plans are compiled together into an institutional annual monitoring report scrutinised by the Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee and the degree-awarding bodies.

2.57   The review team spoke to curriculum managers, senior managers, and academic and professional staff, from both the College and the degree-awarding bodies, who have participated in reviews, and staff from the Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee who are responsible for overview of external examiners within the College. The review team also examined annual review documentation and reports, and other documentation related to the review processes.

2.58   The annual programme monitoring and review documentation is comprehensive and demonstrates detailed consideration of individual modules, statistical data, complaints and appeals, external examiners' reports, student feedback and outcomes, student progression, staff feedback, employer feedback, resources, staff development needs, student support, enhancement of the programme and responses to the previous year's review. The schedule for annual monitoring reports is clear and timely with reports to the University of East London required at the start of the autumn term and for the Open University at the end of the autumn term.

2.59   In addition the annual monitoring reports contain quality improvement action plans developed by the curriculum managers and teams. The action plans are effective in identifying improvements to programmes to be put into effect in the next academic year at programme level. The annual programme reviews feed into the College's annual self-assessment reviews which are reviewed by the Board of Governors. The team found that students participate in annual monitoring through surveys and through the student representative system as well as through course boards which allow student input into programme decision making.

2.60   The evidence seen by the review team confirmed that the College has effective procedures in place to routinely monitor and periodically review programmes for both the degree-awarding bodies and Pearson which meet the expectations of the Quality Code both in respect of programme monitoring and review and managing higher education provision with others (see Expectation B10). Expectation B8 is therefore met and the level of risk in this area is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B9: Complaints and appeals*

Findings

2.61   The College has clearly stated policies and procedures for student compliments and complaints, and academic appeals. Complaints are managed centrally by the Quality and Standards Section. Students are required to complete a Customer Complaints form which is available from various points round the College and the virtual learning environment. When a complaint is received it is recorded than passed to the appropriate faculty to investigate and resolve. If the complaint cannot be resolved at faculty level or resolved informally, an Investigating Officer, who is usually a manager at the College, is appointed to conduct an investigation of the complaint. The Investigating Officer produces a report and recommendations for resolution. Complaints are reported to the College management team every two months for tracking and monitoring.

2.62   Academic appeals are sometimes made following decisions taken by an Assessment Board. The College's academic appeals policy and procedure is used for programmes awarded by the Open University and Pearson. The University of East London uses its own appeals policy and procedure for any academic appeals made by students on programmes for which it makes awards. An academic appeal is first considered by the Higher Education Strategy and Development Manager to determine whether or not there is a prima facie case. If there is a prima facie case an Appeals Panel is set up to hear the case. Appeals against decisions of the Appeal Panel may only be made on specified procedural grounds.

2.63   The complaints and academic appeals policies and procedures ensure that students are treated fairly and equitably, are effective as judged by feedback from staff and students and are progressed to acceptable timescales. The review team suggests that policies could be more specific in providing precise timescales by which each stage of a process should be completed and reported back to students.

2.64   The review team looked at Student Handbooks, the College's VLE and discussed both sets of policies and procedures, with specific examples, with staff and students to test how well these policies and procedures were understood, implemented and effectively resolved matters.

2.65   Both the complaints and academic appeals policies and procedures work effectively and are well understood by both staff and students at the College. Senior staff, teaching staff and professional services staff demonstrated a good understanding of the policies and how to advise students when asked. Staff were able to provide specific examples to demonstrate the operation of both sets of policies and procedures. Students also understood both of the policies and procedures well and were able to describe an example of each during the meeting with the review team. Students are given information about the policies and procedures for academic appeals and making a complaint in their Student Handbook and on the VLE. Staff, for example, Higher Education Advisers, are also available in the College to advise students.

2.66   The review team regarded the policies and procedures for complaints and academic appeals, and their implementation and operation, as effective. The team concludes, therefore, that Expectation B9 of the Quality Code is met, and the 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

2.67   The College's higher education awards are all made by university partners or through Pearson. In view of this, the College has a responsibility to ensure that academic standards are met and maintained and that the College assures its partners of the quality of learning opportunities that it offers to students. There are institutional agreements between the College and the Open University and a collaborative agreement with the University of East London. The College is an approved centre of Pearson to deliver its Higher National Certificate and Higher National Diploma programmes.

2.68   Since 2006, the College has collaborated with the Salvation Army School of In-Service Training at William Booth College to deliver the BA (Hons) Pastoral Care with Psychology top-up degree, which is validated by the Open University. This programme is for serving Salvation Army Officers and builds on their Diploma of Higher Education, which is validated by the University of Gloucestershire. The collaborative arrangement between Havering College and William Booth College is stated in the Institutional Agreement. Management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities is the responsibility of Havering College, which is in turn accountable to the Open University. The Open University has validated and revalidated this arrangement three times since 2006, with the latest validation taking place in October 2013. The College works jointly with teaching and professional services staff at the William Booth College to teach, assess and support students with their learning experience.

2.69   Work-based learning opportunities are managed by programme teams which work to one of five models of employer engagement developed by the College. The College manages this aspect of its provision well. This is dealt with more fully in Section 7: Thematic element of the report.

2.70   A number of programmes, for example, Social Work, Teacher Education, Counselling and Early Childhood Years, require students to undertake a placement or learning experience. These are managed by Placement Officers. The School of Social Work delivers a Level 7 Practice Educator's qualification to train and prepare social workers to supervise students.

2.71   The review team tested the collaborative arrangements of the College through examination of institutional agreements, reading reports of validation events, annual monitoring reports, Pearson external verifier reports, and meetings with representatives from the Open University, University of East London and William Booth College and students from William Booth College.

2.72   For University partners, communication is maintained through both quality assurance staff and academic staff liaising with the Head of Higher Education Strategy at the College. Academic links are with specialist academic staff at the partner university and course leaders at the College. There are regular meetings between academic and professional services staff from the partner universities and the College. The College enjoys effective and productive partnerships with both its degree-awarding bodies. For awards

made by Pearson the main points of contact are with the external verifier and the Pearson Regional Manager. This works effectively for both the College and Pearson.

2.73   The collaboration between Havering College and William Booth College is formally stated in the Institutional Agreement. This states that a Strategic Liaison Group should meet once a year. Inspection of minutes of these meetings demonstrates that both colleges liaise effectively at management levels and identify areas for quality enhancement. Liaison between teaching staff and professional services staff takes place regularly and at all levels. Staff at both colleges teach, set assessment tasks and mark student work. This liaison is effective and represents an established and well-managed partnership by both Colleges. Havering College staff conduct teaching observations of William Booth College teaching staff and jointly discuss external examiner reports.

2.74   Where William Booth College staff set assessments there is a verification process conducted by Havering College to ensure the assignments are appropriate and relate to the module's intended learning outcomes. Once assessments are agreed, Havering College forwards them to the external examiner for comments, makes any required revisions and then gives them to students. This represents a secure and effective process for setting assignment tasks. Some assessments are both first and second marked by William Booth College staff and then moderated by a member of staff at Havering College. Moderation by the Havering College member of staff consists of a sample of marked work being considered by the programme leader at William Booth College and the member of staff at Havering College. This approach by the College presents a degree of risk due to a limited sample being taken and just one member of staff moderating the academic standards of the assessment process at the College. In view of this, the review team **recommends** that by March 2015 the College strengthen and widen the College's moderation of assessment marking undertaken by staff at William Booth College.

2.75   Overall, the review team concludes that Expectation B10 is met and that risk in this area is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.76   The College does not offer research degrees and Expectation B11 is therefore not applicable.

Quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.77   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. Overall, the expectations are met. The review team recognised two areas of good practice in relation to staff support and development and noted that good practice highlighted in the previous IQER review continues to be maintained and developed.

2.78   The review team recommends the further enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities in the areas of feedback, student representation, the availability of external examiners' reports and the provision of dedicated social and learning space. In the case of student representation, while noting student representation at both governance and at faculty and programme level, this could be enhanced by representation throughout the committee structure.

2.79   In a large college such as this with a large number of further education students, the existing dedicated spaces for higher education students could be usefully supplemented by provision of further appropriate dedicated space where higher education students could meet, work and socialise and this could be a significant factor in fostering the higher education identity for these students. The quality of student learning opportunities meets UK expectations.

3 Judgement: Quality of the information produced about its provision

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

Quality Code, *Part C: Information about higher education provision*

Findings

3.1 The College's two main outputs of distributing external information are its website and the prospectus. The College has recently reviewed its website provision and will be launching a new website soon. The College produces a higher education prospectus and more detailed course information guides which are designed to give applicants a snapshot of the course, including modules covered. Programme teams provide information for the prospectus on an annual basis. There is a process to ensure that all information is current and relevant; which is coordinated by the marketing department, with curriculum teams providing information regarding the programme and curriculum. Information is checked for accuracy by programme teams, marketing and a proofreader and signed off by the Marketing Manager. The process for reviewing and amending information on the website is the same, however this is done every four months, or whenever a change is identified.

3.2 To review the public information available, the review team looked at the higher education prospectus and the College website which provides detailed information for prospective students such as course fees, assessment, entry requirements, fees and progression. Information on the website and in the prospectus appears to be accurate, detailed and up to date. Staff in meetings were able to describe the process for submitting and checking public information.

3.3 The development of a new website shows that the College is proactive in terms of keeping its online profile accurate and fit for purpose. The team saw extensive and detailed information for prospective students both pre- and post-application, particularly on the BA Social Work programme. In meetings with students, they indicated that they were satisfied with the information they received prior to arrival. Some students felt that their progression opportunities had not been made clear enough to them and cited challenges finding a university which would accept them on a top-up course, a route which had been suggested to them when they first embarked on their programmes. This lack of clarity around progression, along with a perceived lack of higher education careers guidance was raised as an issue by students. The College may wish to focus on assisting students with applying to top-up courses in conjunction with actions deriving from the recommendation under B4 (develop a more comprehensive college-wide approach to provide dedicated higher education careers advice and guidance).

3.4 The College also has external recognition for the quality of information provided to students in the form of the Quality Matrix Standard which is an external quality frame work that recognises the effective delivery of information and guidance to support individuals in their choice of career and learning goals. The student submission confirmed that 87 per cent of students agreed that information prior to arrival allowed them to make an informed decision about studying at the College.

3.5 The College provides up-to-date information, such as College services and updates, to current students via the student intranet. This intranet also keeps staff up to date with developments at the College. The College VLE, which is described in more detail in

section B4, is another important source of information for current students. Students are given access to course handbooks, which can be found on the VLE. These course handbooks contain information about programme content, assessment, complaints and appeals, mitigation processes, support services and the details of external examiners. These handbooks have recently been reviewed and a standard template developed to ensure consistency across higher education provision. Students are given a hard copy of their course handbook and directed to the online version on the VLE.

3.6   The College has varying procedures for communicating qualifications and grading to students depending on validating partners. The College communicates grades from Pearson courses. For the Open University-validated programmes the College uses a diploma supplement template and issues certificates on behalf of the Open University. All correspondence with University of East London students is dealt with centrally by the University.

3.7   The review team were able to see a demonstration of the College intranet and VLE. From the demonstration, it was clear that the College is careful to ensure it provides accurate and relevant information to students and staff. The expectations for the currency of online information are determined in the Course Quality Rubric. There is evidence of checking processes to ensure students are given access to this information in the student focus groups. These questionnaires also ensure that students are aware of important College processes such as mitigation and appeals. In the student meeting the review team was able to confirm that students felt well informed while at the College. Students in this meeting seemed appreciative of the College's recent online developments.

3.8   In conclusion, the College provides public information through its prospectus and website and has a robust checking system to ensure that information here is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Internally, students and staff are kept up to date via the College intranet and VLE and students are provided with course handbooks. Therefore, the review team has confidence that the College meets Expectation C with a low level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.9   In reaching its judgement about the quality of the information produced about the College's provision, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The review team scrutinised a range of documentation (both published in hard copy and via electronic media) made available to prospective, current and former students and other stakeholders.

3.10   The review team found that the College has considered the formal requirements of this aspect of the Quality Code and has ensured that it can demonstrate its compliance with the broad expectation. The College has approval mechanisms in place for ensuring that published information is accurate. The quality of the information produced about its provision **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: Enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College states that it adopts a strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities and that this is informed by good practice across the sector, feedback from students and recommendations, for example, from Institutional Annual Monitoring Reports for the Open University. The College also uses external reports, such as the QAA review report 2010, to plan enhancement activities for staff involved in the delivery of higher education programmes at the College. Other sources of information that provide recommendations and actions for quality enhancement include external examiner and external verifier reports, annual monitoring reports for programmes, and feedback from employers. The College produces summary reports from annual monitoring reports and external examiner reports which are then considered by the Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee.

4.2 The College has conducted numerous staff development activities over the past three years, and has more planned for the rest of this calendar year. Each of these staff development activities has been linked to an appropriate chapter of the Quality Code. The College has a number of ways of disseminating good practice across the College, including a 'Bright and breezy breakfast' poster and a 'Scholarship Platform' poster. Commendations from the Open University are used to identify good practice which is then disseminated across the College.

4.3 The review team looked at a wide range of evidence, as mentioned above, and discussed quality enhancement at each of the staff meetings.

4.4 There is evidence that systems are in place with respect to quality enhancement at programme level and that there is some college-wide consideration of key aspects of external examiner reports and annual quality monitoring reports at the Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee. The wide range and frequency of staff development activities aimed at quality enhancement demonstrates the proactive approach taken by the College. However, it is not clear how all these staff development activities are evaluated to determine their overall impact on quality enhancement. The summary analysis of external examiner reports and annual monitoring reports are valuable sources of cross-college information about good practice and areas for quality enhancement. However, the review team concludes that more should be done to bring together different sources of information and activities to develop an integrated strategic approach to quality enhancement. The review team **recommends** that by March 2015 the College consolidate and articulate the existing strategic approach to quality enhancement at its higher education level.

4.5 The review team thought that there could be better connections between Course Boards and central committees such as the Teaching, Learning, Success and Destination Committee. While students are involved at programme level and attend meetings of their Course Board, more needs to be done to involve students as partners at higher level committees so that they can make a contribution to the strategic approach of the College to quality enhancement.

4.6 There is evidence of considerable activity undertaken by the College with the aim of enhancing student learning opportunities at programme level. Overall, the review team concludes that the College meets the expectation that deliberate steps are being taken to

improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. However, there is a moderate risk to the consolidation and articulation of enhancement initiatives that relate to an integrated strategic approach.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

Enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.8   The review team was able to conclude that the College takes deliberate steps to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities while at the same time recommending the consolidation and articulation of its strategic approach. The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The College has a strong background in providing vocational training in higher education, with many students already in employment, studying for career enhancement and development purposes with the support of their employers. The College has links with some very well-known companies and organisations such as Ford, the Salvation Army and E.ON.

5.2 The College has developed five models of work-based learning, designed to embed employability throughout its higher education provision. This document describes the nature of employer engagement and the varying ways in which students will gain work experience and build their employability skills. The 'Five models of work-based learning' sets out, on a spectrum, the number of work experience opportunities there will be on all higher education courses. This ranges from work-based learning on very vocational courses where a portion of the course is based in the workplace, such as foundation degrees, to work-related activity on those courses where meaningful experience in the workplace is difficult to find, such as in the performing arts industry. This model is clearly well thought out and sets out the amount of employer engagement and work experience students can expect on their course.

5.3 Professional courses that have PSRB requirements have specified placements and students are assessed in the workplace based on a pass or fail grading. Some students can gain individual accreditation with nationally recognised bodies and students must accrue a certain number of hours; these tend to be organised by the student and supported by the College. Where it is difficult to find work placements, students often undertake projects which engage employers and outside agencies. Other courses work on a basis of giving students opportunities for work experience; these are not mandatory placements. An example of this is Graphic Design. The College employ placement officers to secure and manage placement opportunities.

5.4 The majority of students the team met were enthusiastic about the work experience opportunities provided by the College, with many of them already being in employment. Students seemed largely positive and well prepared for employment, which is echoed by figures from the DLHE, where employment of graduates is above average. Some students, especially those on arts-based courses, where there is less opportunity for work experience, were concerned about future employment. As Expectation B4 describes, careers advice and guidance for higher education students can be provided by personal tutors, or the further education careers adviser; however some higher education students perceived a lack of support in this area which led to the recommendation for the College to develop a more comprehensive college-wide approach to provide dedicated higher education careers advice and guidance.

5.5 Employers are engaged in a variety of ways at the College. As mentioned earlier, the College has adopted 'Five models of work based learning'. All of these models require engagement with employers and some require employers to be involved in the assessment of work. Programmes which carry PSRB accreditation have a minimum amount of placement hours specified by the regulatory body and students are assessed on their competence by receiving a pass or fail. Placement providers are given partnership agreements which list the responsibilities of the provider and of the College and in a meeting with employers, placement providers confirmed that the College communicated well with them. Students undertake professional practice modules and placement providers are given guidance on providing feedback about student progress.

5.6 Employers are involved in course design and validation to give an industry perspective on the curriculum. The review team were able to meet an employer who had

been involved in validation and one employer who was also a governor of the College, showing the importance the College places on employer engagement at a strategic level. Employer engagement is also sought in annual monitoring with an annual monitoring heading being dedicated to employer feedback.

5.7   The employers the review team were able to meet valued their involvement with the College and agreed that the College produced work ready graduates. This is echoed in the College's figures for the DLHE, which are above the national average.

5.8   From the evidence provided by the College and from meeting with staff, students and employers the review team were able to confirm that employability of higher education students at the College is clearly an organisational priority. Employer engagement is good and students are given a number of opportunities for placement learning. There is a lack of understanding, however, of where dedicated careers advice is available to higher education students.

Glossary

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

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

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