



# Higher Education Review of Goldsmiths' College

June 2015

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Goldsmiths' College (the College). The review took place from 8 to 11 June 2015 and was conducted by a team of five reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Gwendolen Bradshaw
- Professor Jeremy Bradshaw
- Mr Hugo Burchell
- Ms Barbara Howell
- Mr Ken Harris (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 3. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 7.

In reviewing Goldsmiths' College the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

The [themes](#) for the academic year 2014-15 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,<sup>2</sup> and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

As part of the Higher Education Review the team also investigated a Concern that was submitted to the QAA Concerns Scheme by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) shortly before the start of the review visit. This concerned student complaints about the quality of supervision, inappropriate supervisor behaviour and complaints' procedures for research students in the College's Centre for Cultural Studies. Reference is made to the Concern at appropriate points in the present report, most notably in Sections B9 and B11. Further information relating to the Concern can be found in the summary section of the quality of student learning experiences in paragraphs 2.133 and 2.172.

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code)

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106)

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

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<sup>3</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review web pages: [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review)

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Goldsmiths' College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Goldsmiths' College.

- The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Goldsmiths' College:

- the range and quality of information, including the Virtual Open Day, available to help applicants make informed decisions before selecting their programme (Expectation B2)
- the work of the Departmental Student Coordinators as a key driver in articulating and delivering the student voice across the College (Expectation B5)
- the comprehensive support and development for Departmental Student Coordinators, including leadership training, that promotes effective partnership working (Expectation B5)
- the centrally produced management information and web-based guidance for programme monitoring that is consistent, comprehensive and accessible (Expectation B8).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Goldsmiths' College.

By September 2015:

- work within the published terms of reference of the Research and Enterprise Committee for the oversight of activity within research units and the monitoring of PhD completion rates (Expectation A2.1)
- develop an effective process for overseeing and recording the allocation of supervisors in accordance with the College's code of practice on supervision (Expectation B11)
- strengthen the Graduate School Board's remit for and oversight of supervision through the recording, monitoring and evaluation of supervisor training and development (Expectation B11)
- strengthen the recording and reporting of supervisory meetings and student progress to ensure that reports are completed diligently, signed off by all parties, and overseen and monitored by the Graduate School Board (Expectation B11).

By September 2016:

- ensure central oversight of staff development for those involved in teaching or supporting student learning in order to strengthen engagement with and reflection on academic practice (Expectation B3)
- ensure that annual programme reviews make consistent and effective use of centrally produced management information (Expectation B8).

## **Affirmation of action being taken**

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

- The current review of the personal tutor system to bring consistency to the role in supporting the student experience across all taught provision including partner institutions (Expectation B4).
- The actions being taken at institutional level to address inconsistencies in the quality and timeliness of feedback on assessed work, including at partner institutions (Expectation B6).
- The implementation and evaluation of the revised complaints policy and associated training across all provision (Expectation B9).
- The steps the College is taking towards an institution-wide approach to quality enhancement (Enhancement).

## **Theme: Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement**

The review team found evidence that the College is involving students in quality assurance and enhancement in a number of ways. The College works closely with the Student Union to achieve informed student representation on deliberative committees and in the periodic review of programmes. Student views are articulated by Departmental Student Coordinators whose reports are influential in proposing enhancements and driving change at both departmental and college level. DSCs also contribute to College-wide strategic developments such as the Student Experience and Engagement Strategy.

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

## **About Goldsmiths' College**

Goldsmiths' College (the College) was founded in 1891 by the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths as a technical and recreative institute and became one of the constituent colleges of the federal University of London in 1904. It acquired full college status in 1988, its own Royal Charter in 1990, and degree awarding powers in 2010-11.

The College is based on a single site campus located in the Borough of Lewisham, South East London, and specialises in programmes in the arts, humanities and social sciences. It currently has over 9,000 registered students, including 770 postgraduate research students, at its London campus, and a further 1,200 international students based at a partner college in Singapore.

The College's mission statement, which underpins its Strategic Plan, is to '...offer a transformative experience, generating knowledge and stimulating self-discovery through creative, radical and intellectually rigorous thinking and practice'.

The College is led by the Warden, the Deputy Warden who leads on Internationalisation, and three Pro Wardens who have specific leadership responsibilities and manage the work of six Associate Pro Wardens. The College has 20 academic departments grouped into three schools, each of which is led by a Pro Warden. The College's supreme academic body is Academic Board, supported by three committees: Learning, Teaching and Enhancement, Academic Development, and Research and Enterprise.

The College has experienced a number of major changes since its QAA Institutional Audit in 2009. A new Warden was appointed in 2010 and, following a review in 2012, the College changed its senior management structure and grouped cognate departments together into three schools in order to achieve greater consistency in corporate decision-making and academic practice. An additional Pro Warden (Interdisciplinary Development) was appointed to promote inter-departmental working. A new department, the Institute of Management Studies, became operational in 2012 and the College's approach to community education was modified substantially. Against a background of rising student numbers, professional support services were restructured in 2014 to increase their responsiveness to student needs and to bring them into a single organisational structure led by the Registrar and Secretary. In 2014 the Goldsmiths Students' Union President became a member of the College's Remuneration Committee, and in early 2015 the College replaced the post of Pro Warden (Student and Learning Development) with that of Pro Warden (Teaching, Learning and Enhancement).

The College's self-evaluation document identifies a number of other key challenges. These include aligning its strategy for growth in student numbers with the limited physical footprint of its campus, particularly in practice-based disciplines. It is addressing this challenge through an Estates Masterplan which aims to improve its estate generally and to maximise the usage of existing space. The College's growth strategy forms part of its 'Sustaining Goldsmiths' change programme to improve financial resilience through efficiency savings, prioritisation of activity, revenue growth and diversification of income streams.

Since the 2009 Audit the College has developed a partnership with LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore. The partnership commenced in 2012-13 and currently has over 1,200 students registered on 19 validated undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes. In addition the College has developed a study abroad partnership with Capital Normal University in Beijing, and recently approved a partnership with Nordoff Robins which will lead to the validation of music therapy programmes from 2015-16.

The Institutional Audit in 2009 resulted in a positive outcome, with five features of good practice and 10 recommendations, five of which were 'advisable' and five 'desirable'. The present review team found that the College has generally taken effective action to further embed areas of good practice and to address the recommendations identified in the 2009 review. In particular, three of the recommendations related to external examining and the College has strengthened significantly its arrangements in this regard.

## Explanation of the findings about Goldsmiths' College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

## 1 Judgement: The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Findings

1.1 The College secures threshold academic standards through its Credit Framework which aligns with *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation Scheme (ECTS), and the Higher Education Credit Framework. The College's Credit Framework informs a range of policies and processes for programme approval, amendment and review.

1.2 As a constituent college of the University of London, Goldsmiths' College is also required to adhere to Regulation 1 of the University which provides a broad regulatory framework for the titles and types of awards made in its name.

1.3 Programme specifications state the programme's level within the FHEQ and list any relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRB) or other external reference points. Programme specifications are available on the College's website and module specifications are kept on the College's virtual learning environment (VLE).

1.4 Periodic Review panels, which include two external experts, consider programmes against external reference points to ensure that appropriate standards are being achieved and the programme specification is being delivered.

1.5 External examiners are required to comment on the standard of the programmes and confirm their comparability with programmes in other UK higher education institutions in their reports.

1.6 The Quality Office informs staff when new or revised Subject Benchmark Statements are published.

1.7 The College's Credit Framework, approval and review processes and template documents, supported by the Quality Office and the College's Teaching and Learning Innovation Centre (TaLIC), enable the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.8 The review team examined the operation and effectiveness of these processes and procedures by reviewing the College's Credit Framework and documentation concerning the design, approval, review and professional accreditation, of programmes. It considered the terms of reference and minutes of relevant committees and panels and read external examiner reports. It tested its findings in meetings with a range of senior and academic staff.

1.9 The review team confirms that the College's Credit Framework aligns with the revised FHEQ (October 2014) and with ECTS and that it provides an effective common structure for modules and programmes leading to awards of the College or of the University of London. The Credit Framework specifies the relationship between the title and level of academic awards, programme structures and credit volume, and module size and status.

1.10 The College's programme development and approval policy and procedures have been written in accordance with relevant expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) and require externality in terms both of external reference points in programme documentation and the use of external expertise on approval panels and on the Programme Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

1.11 This works well in practice and programme approval and validation minutes evidence detailed consideration of the proposed programme and accompanying documentation produced by the programme development team. The reports of external readers are rigorous and check the programme's relationship to external reference points, its intellectual integrity and coherence, its proposed learning and teaching strategies and its indicative bibliography.

1.12 Programme specifications are comprehensive documents which provide a programme overview, locate the programme at the appropriate level within the FHEQ and relevant subject benchmark group, and identify PSRB accreditation and other external reference points where relevant. They provide a clear indication of intended learning outcomes and map them against modules at different levels of the programme. A further matrix considers qualification characteristics and assigns credit by relating individual modules to level, credit value, status and proposed assessment.

1.13 Alignment with external reference points is further considered as part of the validation and periodic review process as set out in the Periodic Review Policy. The Quality Office keeps a log of PSRB accreditations and alerts the departments of impending renewals, linking where possible into periodic review processes. Scrutiny of Periodic Review reports showed them to be rigorous in their use of externality.

1.14 External examiners are required to confirm in their reports that the academic standard set for awards is appropriate and that student achievement is comparable with other UK higher education institutions. The Quality Office's composite report for 2013-14 notes that all external examiners continue to confirm that academic standards are being met.

1.15 The review team concludes that the College's internal academic frameworks and procedures, both in design and operation, meet Expectation A1 and the associated risk level is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

1.16 As a constituent college of the University of London, the College awards the University's degrees to on-campus students, reserving its own degree-awarding powers for academic awards made at partner institutions.

1.17 Academic governance of the College as set out in the Statutes and Ordinances is the responsibility of the Academic Board, with membership being drawn from senior academics and elected representatives from each academic department. The student body is represented by Goldsmiths Students' Union President and three further student members. The Academic Board is responsible for the setting and maintenance of academic standards through the oversight of teaching, assessment and examination, and for research.

1.18 The work of The Academic Board is supported by three committees: Learning Teaching and Enhancement (LTEC), Academic Development (ADC) and Research and Enterprise (REC).

1.19 LTEC, formerly the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee is responsible for setting, maintenance and monitoring of academic standards; the quality of learning and teaching; and of student support and retention. LTEC is supported by three subcommittees; Programme Scrutiny (PSSC), Quality and Standards (QSSC), formerly Standards Scrutiny Sub-Committee (SSSC), and the Student Experience Sub-Committee (SESC). The PSSC has delegated responsibility for the approval of programmes and QSSC for the re-approval of programmes.

1.20 The ADC is responsible for the strategic development and evaluation of all academic programmes whether they are developed independently or in partnership, with the detailed work relating to collaborative provision undertaken by the Institutional Partnerships Sub-Committee (IPSC), which reports to the ADC.

1.21 REC is responsible for all aspects of research and enterprise, including research degrees and research training. Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee (REISC) and the Graduate School Board report to REC.

1.22 The College's programmes are delivered and assessed in line with its published credit and regulatory framework, including the assessment regulations, general regulations and undergraduate and postgraduate regulations. The programme approval process and periodic review of programmes is used to ensure that all programmes are aligned to the College's Credit Framework.

1.23 The College's governance arrangements, committee structures, academic frameworks and assessment regulations enable this Expectation to be met in theory.

1.24 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of these structures, frameworks and regulations through a review of the statutes, ordinances, committee structures, terms of reference and minutes of key College committees, College regulations and by talking to senior College staff and students.

1.25 Governance arrangement and structures are in place for the setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards as set out in the College's Committee Structure chart and in the terms of reference and membership 2014-15 of the College's key committees.

1.26 Membership of the committees, subcommittees and the Graduate School Board, include staff and student representation with the exception of REC, which does not include a student member, and REISC, with student membership to be confirmed. The minutes of these meetings indicate that student attendance broadly corresponds with their terms of reference.

1.27 The minutes of the ADC and PSSC show comprehensive consideration of new programme proposals and their development, covering both academic content and relevant aspects of the credit and regulatory frameworks.

1.28 Governance of research centres and units is in part the responsibility of the REC, whose terms of reference include matters relating to their establishment, monitoring and closure. The team reviewed REC minutes and noted that while it routinely considers proposals to establish new units or centres it does not routinely monitor the activity of existing centres, including the Centre for Cultural Studies. The REC's terms of reference also require it to receive minutes and reports from the Graduate School Board, monitoring PhD completion rates and developments. Minutes read by the review team confirm that the Graduate School has featured on some REC agendas but that there had been no consideration of Graduate School reports dealing with completion rates, apart from a minute to the effect that an internal audit of PhD supervision held in late 2013 had been 'quite positive'. The review team therefore **recommends** that the institution work within the published terms of reference of the REC for the oversight of activity within research units and the monitoring of PhD completion rates.

1.29 The review team considers that the College has effective structures in place to secure academic standards across the portfolio of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The College carries out its responsibilities effectively for its taught programmes through its academic committee structure. However, the oversight of research centres and units and of PhD completion rates by the Research and Enterprise Committee requires strengthening in order to comply fully with its terms of reference. Overall, the review team concludes that Expectation A2.1 is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

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

**Findings**

1.30 All taught awards have a programme specification which represents the definitive record for each programme and provides a detailed overview of the programme. Programme specifications are made available on the website for applicants and other stakeholders. In 2013-14 the College introduced a standard template for programme specifications. The template contains embedded guidance and serves to promote a consistent approach to programme design and approval across the institution.

1.31 Programme specifications are the principal document used in programme approval, monitoring and review and following approval become the definitive record of the approved programme. The Quality Office maintains a curriculum change spreadsheet which lists approved awards, monitors minor amendments and identifies any potential for curriculum drift. Definitive records for research degrees are maintained by Student Enrolment and Records.

1.32 The approval and review processes and procedures enable the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.33 The review team tested this by examining programme specifications and the recently adopted template used to produce them, the curriculum change spreadsheet, assessment regulations, validation and review documentation; and by holding discussions with senior and academic staff.

1.34 A review of programme specifications revealed that while there was legacy variation in programme specifications approved prior to 2013-14, the revised template had been adopted across the College from 2014 onwards and had led to greater consistency in programme specifications.

1.35 The programme specifications that the review team read specify the FHEQ level at which the award is located, indicate how its learning outcomes align with national qualification descriptors and identify the modules in which those learning outcomes are addressed. Programme specifications reference Subject Benchmark Statements and the College's credit framework in defining the academic content and structure of the programme, and the way in which a range of assessment instruments are used to demonstrate achievement of programme learning outcomes by students.

1.36 The team examined the Quality Office's Cumulative Change spreadsheet and found it to be effective in tracking the credit value of amendments made to programmes over time.

1.37 Validation and periodic review documentation further indicated discussion and careful consideration of programme specifications.

1.38 The review team concludes that the College carries out its responsibilities effectively to ensure that its programme design processes rigorously take account of the

definitive record of each programme and qualification. Therefore Expectation A2.2 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

1.39 The Academic Board oversees the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards, delegating responsibility for aspects of the approval process for taught programmes to the ADC, to the PSSC, and to the LTEC. The Graduate School Board and the Research and Enterprise Committee are responsible for considering proposals for research degrees, with final approval resting with the Academic Board. Research degrees are aligned to University of London regulations with the exception of practice based PhDs where there is an element of modification overseen by the Graduate School Board and the Research Degrees Committee.

1.40 Policies and procedures governing the approval of taught programmes and research degrees are clearly set out and published on the Quality Office website.

1.41 The programme development and approval policy and procedure is aligned with the Quality Code and provides a comprehensive framework for ensuring that all programmes meet UK threshold standards. Programme approval is underpinned by the principles of academic rigour, proportionality and peer review. In addition to alignment with external reference points, all proposals for new programmes must be aligned with the College's regulations and with its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The Programme Development and Approval Policy and Procedure clearly identifies the documentation required as part of the programme approval process.

1.42 Responses to any conditions resulting from a programme approval and validation process are submitted to the PSSC for approval. Confirmation and evidence that conditions have been met are required before final approval reports are submitted by the PSSC to the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee and Academic Board.

1.43 The review team tested the Expectation by scrutinising the College's academic policies and processes and their effectiveness through discussions with staff and students and by considering a wide range of approval evidence.

1.44 The team reviewed current programme approval processes available online via the Quality Office home webpage and found them to be clear and comprehensive. In this regard the team noted that the Quality Office had undertaken a careful mapping of these processes against Part A of the Quality Code.

1.45 Meetings with staff confirmed familiarity with and understanding of the Quality Code and the College's own academic policies, procedures and regulations as they relate to programme approval processes.

1.46 By examining review documentation the team was able to confirm that College approval processes are robust and applied consistently through the use of standard templates. They incorporate an appropriate level of externality ensuring that programmes leading to the College's awards comply with its Credit Framework and thereby assure UK threshold academic standards.

1.47 Proposals for research degrees are considered by the Graduate School Board and subsequently by the REC before being approved by Academic Board. The review team saw evidence of a new research degree programme proposal receiving detailed initial consideration by the Graduate School Board.

1.48 Evidence resulting from recent approval events including programme specifications, module descriptors, approval reports and committee minutes were reviewed and found to demonstrate adherence with published policy and procedures

1.49 The review team concludes that Expectation A3.1 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College publishes clear policies which are aligned to the Quality Code. The College has implemented rigorous processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees ensuring that academic standards are set in accordance with UK threshold standards and College frameworks and regulations.

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

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.50 The College has a clear and comprehensive regulatory framework governing the management of assessment. This framework is embodied specifically in its General Regulations and Undergraduate and Postgraduate Student Regulations, its Regulations for Assessment for Taught Degrees, the Goldsmiths Credit Framework and the protocols for Boards of Examiners. On-campus students at Goldsmiths are awarded degrees from the University of London, and the College's assessment regulations align with those of the University for both taught and postgraduate research programmes.

1.51 The College's regulations, policies and procedures for assessment enable the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.52 The team reviewed a range of documentation to test how the College's assessment processes operate in practice. In addition to the aforementioned regulations, the review team scrutinised the minutes of examination boards, programme approval records, programme and module specifications and external examiner reports. The team also held meetings with a range of academic and senior staff, and students, to discuss assessment practice and its role in the assurance of academic standards.

1.53 The College's programme approval process, at which grading criteria and learning outcomes are agreed, gives explicit consideration to assessment methods and thereby enables the College to assure itself that assessment is appropriately aligned to the academic standards of the award and to the institution's own regulations and policies. In particular, external subject experts, in reviewing programme documentation, are required to comment on the appropriateness of the way in which learning outcomes are to be taught, demonstrated and assessed. Assessment methods are subsequently specified in programme and module specifications, with the former linking the overarching learning outcomes for the programme to its constituent modules.

1.54 Those programmes accredited by PSRBs incorporate any additional requirements pertaining to assessment into the relevant programme and module specifications. Periodic review, also involving external subject experts, similarly evaluates the effectiveness of programme teaching and assessment strategies in enabling students to meet the designated learning outcomes.

1.55 Staff involved in assessing work are expected to adhere to generic conventions for marking: integrity and fairness are assured through the practice of anonymity and through a process of moderation. Boards of Examiners are convened to determine whether students have met the learning outcomes for their programme and therefore whether the recommendation of credit or of an award should be made.

1.56 In the case of joint honours programmes, a 'host' department is specified. The Board of Examiners of this host department is responsible for making final recommendations that take into account the recommendations from the other departmental Boards. There is cross-representation from contributing departments, with staff attending one another's Boards.

1.57 External examiners, appointed by the Academic Board, provide appropriate external oversight of standards: they are required to report on whether or not assessment processes are applied rigorously and in accordance with the College's regulations and policies. Consistency in the operation and the Boards of Examiners' decision making is additionally assured through the presence of a representative from the central Assessments Office at each meeting, who is able to provide advice on College regulations. Guidance is also provided to chairs and secretaries of examination boards, and to examination officers.

1.58 The Academic Board has final authority for decisions about student progression and achievement. It receives an annual overview report on the operation of Boards of Examiners, to ensure that they are working appropriately and effectively. The College also reports annually to the University of London, to confirm the alignment of its assessment processes both with the University's assessment regulations and with external reference points.

1.59 The College has a regulatory framework and associated processes for assessment in place, which enables it to adhere to the principle that credit and qualifications are awarded on the basis of achievement of relevant learning outcomes and in accordance with internal and UK threshold standards. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A3.2 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.60 The College has clear and comprehensive policies and procedures governing the monitoring and review of all taught programmes including those delivered at partner institutions. The purpose of these policies is to ensure that programmes continue to be delivered in accordance with the relevant programme specifications, and the College describes its Annual Programme Review as 'the cornerstone of the quality assurance process'.

1.61 These policies and procedures are supported by guidance on the Quality Office website. Provision is made for the monitoring of all types of programmes including those in the process of being taught out. The Periodic Review cycle is normally six years with the exception of partnership provision which is reviewed on a five-yearly cycle to coincide with the review of contractual arrangements.

1.62 The College's policies and procedures for annual and periodic review of programmes enable the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.63 The review team tested how the policies and procedures work in practice by examining programme review and associated documents, relating them to the management information provided by the Quality Office. The review team met academic and administrative staff who engaged in monitoring and periodic review activity for both home and partner provision and met students who had participated in monitoring and review activity but had not been members of a review panel.

1.64 The review team confirmed that the College had undertaken a comprehensive mapping of its annual and periodic review with the Expectation of *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review* of the Quality Code; and that the annual programme monitoring and review processes, as outlined on the College website, places the ongoing assurance of academic standards at their heart. It also confirmed that the monitoring and review processes at partner institutions mirrors on-campus requirements.

1.65 The review team read a selection of monitoring and review documents which demonstrated that they were produced in accordance with College requirements. Additionally the review team scrutinised a range of committee minutes which also demonstrated that the monitoring and periodic review processes and the consideration of their outcomes by departments and central committees was in keeping with College policies and procedures.

1.66 Reports considered by the review team demonstrate that external examiner and external reader reports explicitly address whether individual programmes have met internal and UK threshold academic standards, and that departments act on the analyses and overviews of the external examiners' and external readers' reports when carrying out monitoring and review processes.

1.67 The review process at programme and departmental level is well supported by management information supplied centrally by the Quality Office via designated departmental Annual Programme Review virtual learning environment (VLE) pages.

1.68 Staff confirmed that the monitoring and periodic review policies and process were well understood and told the review team that recent changes to the Annual Programme Review reporting arrangements, including revised timescales, had resulted in more robust monitoring practices.

1.69 The review team concludes that Expectation A3.3 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College publishes clear policies aligned to the Quality Code and implements rigorous processes for the monitoring and review of programmes to ensure that College requirements are met and UK threshold academic standards are maintained.

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

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.70 The College has clearly defined processes for the involvement of independent, external advice in setting and maintaining threshold standards. Appropriate externality is evident at both programme approval and periodic review; external examiners provide an ongoing assurance of the maintenance of academic standards. Programmes accredited by a PSRB see additional external involvement in ensuring that curricula reflect professional as well as academic requirements.

1.71 The various mechanisms in place at the College to ensure that external and independent expertise is sought for the assurance of academic standards enable the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.72 The review team scrutinised a range of documentation relating to the involvement of externality in the enactment of the College's quality assurance processes, including: records of programme approval, external examiner reports, the minutes of examination boards, reports from periodic review events, reports of collaborative partner and programme approvals and reports from PSRB accreditation visits. The team also met staff and students, including those involved in or studying on collaborative programmes, to explore how effectively externality is applied in practice.

1.73 Two external readers are appointed at programme approval stage to confirm that the academic standards of the proposed offer are appropriate and that due consideration has been given to the relevant reference points in its development; departments are required to respond to their reports as part of the approval process. Readers are appointed for their subject expertise and for their knowledge of similar UK programmes in the discipline area. Responsibility for the approval of programmes is delegated by the Academic Board via the LTEC to the PSSC. Since 2013-14 the PSSC has had an external academic member who provides additional assurance of both standards and consistency in the consideration of programme proposals. The present incumbent has a particular background in quality assurance and so has broad expertise in programme approval procedures.

1.74 Periodic Review panels similarly have two external academic members whose role is to comment on the currency, coherence and relevance of programme curricula and on the alignment of the programme(s) with relevant external reference points.

1.75 External examiners provide the College with an ongoing assurance of the standards of its academic provision. Clear processes and guidelines exist for their nomination, induction and for their roles and responsibilities, which are codified in the institutional handbook External Examining at Goldsmiths. External examiners are required to confirm that the programme to which they are appointed aligns with national expectations and reference points relating both to the subject area and to the assurance of academic standards. Their reports are scrutinised by the College's Quality Office before being

responded to formally by Programme Convenors. The Quality Office then produces an annual synoptic overview of themes emerging from external examiner reports which is considered at institutional-level committees, thereby enabling the College to assure itself that the standards and quality of its awards are appropriate. Further information on the role and responsibilities of external examiners can be found under Expectation B7.

1.76 External involvement in the maintenance and monitoring of academic standards for the College's collaborative provision mirrors its on-campus processes. Externality is a requirement of both the collaborative partner and programme approval processes and, in the case of the latter, at least one external adviser is required to have experience of the UK's higher education context. The periodic review of programmes at partner institutions also requires external representation.

1.77 A number of programmes at the College engage with and are accredited by PSRBs. PSRB activity is overseen centrally by the Quality Office, which maintains a log of accrediting organisations and alerts departments to impending renewals; PSRB reaccreditation is, where possible, linked to the College's internal periodic review processes. The reports from PSRB visits are considered by the Quality and Standards Sub-Committee, which monitors the actions taken in response to any conditions or recommendations.

1.78 Externality is embedded in the College's quality assurance processes, and a broad and appropriate range of independent external advice is sought in the setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards. The team therefore concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

## The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards: Summary of findings

1.79 In reaching its judgement about threshold academic standards, the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this area are met and the level of risk is low in all cases except A2.1, where it is moderate. There is one recommendation under Expectation A2.1 relating to the need to ensure that the Research and Enterprise Committee complies fully with its published terms of reference with regard to the monitoring of research units and centres and the monitoring of PhD completion rates. This recommendation does not pose a risk to the setting or maintenance of standards, but will enable the College to meet this Expectation more fully. The team therefore concludes that the setting and maintenance of academic standards at the College **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.1 A Programme Development and Approval Policy and associated guidance exist to support staff involved in the development and approval of new programmes. This Policy covers all taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes leading to a University of London or Goldsmiths award. It is available on the Quality Office webpages.

2.2 The approach to decision making in relation to programme design, development and approval is set out in the Programme Development and Approval Policy. Additional guidance for the approval of programmes at partner institutions is contained within the Collaborative Provision Handbook 2014-15.

2.3 The PSSC and the ADC both include student membership, and PSSC also includes a senior external member from another UK higher education institution.

2.4 A two-stage process for programme approval is in place, enabling an initial strategic approval to be followed by a detailed academic approval as appropriate. Stage 1 of the process enables the ADC to consider the rationale, overall intellectual strengths and coherence and the business case for the proposal. Indicative resourcing requirements are considered at this stage and the Senior Management Team plays a key role in the decision-making process. Stage 2 of the process involves writing a detailed programme and module specification for review by PSSC.

2.5 The College's processes for the design, development and approval of programmes enable the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.6 The review team assessed the effectiveness of the College's processes by reading the Credit Framework and Programme Development and Approval Policy and guidance provided for their use. It read full programme approval documentation, including the minutes of relevant committees, and tested its understanding through meetings with members of academic staff and students who had participated in programme design and approval.

2.7 The review team confirmed that the ADC considers programme proposals in light of their fit with the College's strategic aims and current academic portfolio and that it operates effectively and in accordance with its terms of reference. Programme teams present their business case for approval using a standard template, one section of which is completed by professional services so that new proposals may be checked against specific considerations that ADC should be aware of and further contextualised by departmental recruitment over the last three years. ADC makes a recommendation as appropriate, via a summary report, to the College's Senior Management Team. Where a proposal is not approved ADC indicates the nature of its concern and how it might be addressed by the proposers. The Senior Management Team has delegated authority from the Finance and Resources Committee to adjudicate on the business case and to allocate resources to new programme developments. The ADC minutes of meetings report Senior Management Team decisions, along with any conditions or other comments made by it in reaching its decision.

2.8 Academic approval resides with PSSC, which receives a programme specification and associated documentation for proposed new programmes. Standard templates, some with integrated guidance, are made available by the Quality Office for use during the programme development stage and, in the view of the review team, constitute helpful forms of support for the writing of programme approval documentation. Full consideration is given to external reference points and to additional externality provided by two external Readers' Reports for each proposed programme. The Readers' Reports are generally informed and thoughtful, raising questions to which the department responds. This creates a useful dialogue that helps to shape the development of the proposal. The review team read the minutes of PSSC meetings and confirmed that new programmes are scrutinised in detail at the approval stage.

2.9 The review team looked at the steps taken by the College to support programme development. The Quality Office has produced a useful general introduction to the Quality Code which is delivered via the VLE and uses short quizzes to support understanding. In addition, it provides a comprehensive online guide to the strategic and academic stages of programme development and approval. This guide refers staff to the Programme Development and Approval Policy but goes on to break down, step by step, the associated process starting with the remit of ADC and PSSC and moving on to how to write programme and module specifications and learning outcomes. The guide also covers students with learning disabilities, reference points and externality, joint degrees' programme modifications. The review team found this guidance to be comprehensive and helpful.

2.10 The College has also developed standard templates for programme specifications to support consistency in the structure and content of programme specifications. Staff commented favourably on use made of the templates to promote parity and consistency across programmes and told the review team that they found the new templates much easier to complete than the earlier versions they replaced. The review team read the revised online templates for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and confirmed both their ease of use and the clear and comprehensive nature of the guidance they contain.

2.11 Recent enhancements to the approval process include a more detailed submission at stage one and input from the Associate Pro Wardens (APWs) as appropriate. The level of externality has also been enhanced as the PSSC now includes an external member with significant quality assurance experience complementing the external perspective provided by the two external subject specialist readers.

2.12 The review team noted that the College had mapped its Policy against *Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval* of the Quality Code and that the mapping document evidenced appropriate alignment.

2.13 The review team concludes that the implementation of the programme approval policy and procedure ensures that Expectation B1 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

**Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission***

**Findings**

2.14 The College strives to deliver a positive application experience by means of policies and procedures to promote the fair recruitment and admission of students. Its Admissions Policy covers admissions and pre-admissions and is informed by *Chapter 8: Programme Monitoring and Review*, Fair admissions to higher education: recommendations for good practice (the Schwartz Report), and the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions Programme. The Policy takes into account relevant legislation including the Equality Act 2010, the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

2.15 Student recruitment is led by the Student Recruitment and Engagement Department within the Directorate of Students, Alumni and Library Service (SALS) which works closely with academic departments in the recruitment process.

2.16 The College operates a centralised admissions system managed by the Admissions Office for all non-practice based undergraduate programmes. Decisions are made on an agreed basis by academic admissions tutors who also arrange interviews and associated tasks such as auditions, presentations, written work, sample scripts and portfolios of work. The Admissions Team is responsible for processing applications, informing applicants of interview arrangements and Offer Holder Days, and supporting departments throughout the admissions process.

2.17 The College produces print and online prospectuses for undergraduate, postgraduate and international applicants and arranges open days and other on-campus recruitment events. Students unable to attend these events have access to Virtual Open Days, webinars and chat sessions.

2.18 The College's regulations, policies and procedures for recruitment and admissions enable the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.19 In testing the application process the review team looked at the range of information available to prospective students and talked to staff and students about their experience of the admissions and induction processes.

2.20 The students whom the review team met commented positively about the information provided by the College and by departmental offices during the application process. Both UK and international students were appreciative of the attention they had received when applying for their programme, as were non-traditional entrants applying for recognition of prior learning (RPL) or the transfer of academic credit from another institution.

2.21 The team saw evidence of the wide range of on-campus recruitment activities designed to help applicants make their choices. These include open days, campus tours, offer-holders' days, and department-specific activities. It also learned about the range of virtual recruitment events that the College provides for students who are unable to attend them on campus. These include Virtual Open Days, which offer students a range of virtual tours of the campus and its facilities, a live 'chat' facility and interactive webinars covering

topics ranging from information about the history of the College and its alumni to the Tier 4 visa application process. Staff told the review team of their experience of staffing Virtual Open Days and the positive feedback they had received from students. They explained that these provide another 'touch point' allowing applicants to ask more detailed questions than might otherwise be the case.

2.22 The review team learned that in addition to Virtual Open Days, departments provide a wide range of online master classes, entitled Goldclasses, with the intention of allowing potential applicants to get a flavour of studying their academic disciplines at the College. The Department of Computing enables prospective applicants to sample the programme via a departmental blog and the opportunity to undertake a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) in Creative Programming for Digital Media and Mobile Apps written by department staff and leading to a certificate in creative programming. The range and quality of information, including the Virtual Open Day, available to help applicants make informed decisions before selecting their programme is **good practice**.

2.23 The College commissioned an audit of the admissions process in 2014. The review team read this audit, which covered the Admissions Office and the International Partnerships and Developments Team, and noted that it was positive, identifying 11 areas of good practice and only one area where improvement could be made. The review team read the College's comprehensive Admissions Policy and saw evidence that the college has mapped its application process to the Quality Code. LTEC receives an annual admissions report. The review team also read a series of reports evidencing oversight of applications and admissions at LASALLE.

2.24 The College conducts an annual review of all programmes in order to monitor recruitment levels and possible candidates for closure. In order to mitigate the effects of programme closure on applicants, the College recommends a deadline of 30 April for closures to be enacted, aligning with the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) deadlines for students to make their final choices and providing time for them to find alternative programmes.

2.25 The review team confirmed that staff are suitably trained in the admissions process. Staff receive training at the Recruitment and Admissions Forum and admissions tutors receive an Admissions Tutor Handbook. International Admission Agents receive newsletters advising them of admissions activity and key dates. The College provides a regular Teachers and Advisers Magazine and an annual conference. All staff involved in admission require yearly approval from the Admissions Office. The review team examined evidence of programme and fee information provided for home and overseas applicants and noted the College's intention from 2016-17 to set international fees that will not be subject to inflationary increases over the duration of the programme.

2.26 The review team considered evidence that demonstrated a range of induction and welcome activities for newly registered students. Meetings with students and staff confirmed the availability and relevance of these activities. The College reviews the induction experiences of students by way of an annual, substantial 'Just Joined' report. The process was introduced in 2012 and further revised in 2014.

2.27 Overall, the College has policies and processes in place that allow for the fair admission of students. Staff are suitably trained and students report positive engagement with the application and induction processes across all provision. The review team therefore concludes that the College meets Expectation B2 and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

### **Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching***

#### **Findings**

2.28 The College has an institutional Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy that includes research-informed teaching as a fundamental feature, together with internationalisation, employability and career success for students and development for staff. The strategy defines institutional aims for new resources and approaches to teaching and learning, and recognising and rewarding teaching.

2.29 The College is midway through a major estates refurbishment and redevelopment project that is intended to ensure that the availability of high quality teaching and learning spaces keeps up with increasing student numbers.

2.30 TaLIC supports staff in the delivery of their teaching and provides training and development opportunities for staff and students. It has been working to ensure an appropriate level of staff engagement with the College's VLE and maintains a repository of examples of good practice

2.31 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and its implementation, supported by the work of TaLIC, enable the Expectation to be met in design.

2.32 The review team tested this Expectation by examination of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and evidence of its implementation, checking its understanding through meetings with senior managers, teaching and support staff and students. The team also read documentation, including committee papers, Annual Programme Reviews and Periodic Review Reports and user guides.

2.33 The implementation of the College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy includes the production of action plans to develop its strategic aims within each department. In 2013-14 these documents were considered at the Learning Teaching and Quality Committee (since renamed the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee). A major strategic aim of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy is to maximise interaction between teaching and research. The College is clearly making progress with this aim, as demonstrated by the frequent references to research-informed teaching in Annual Programme Reviews and Periodic Reviews. The strategic aim of increased internationalism, diversity and widening participation is being addressed by including a section on international and cross-cultural perspectives in the new programme approval submission pro forma, and by a new Internationalisation Strategy presented to the Academic Board in June 2014. The Strategy aims to promote internationalisation in a number of ways, such as increasing diversity in the academic community, promoting the international mobility of staff and students, internationalising the curriculum, and involving international visiting researchers in giving lectures and workshops.

2.34 TaLIC provides a range of staff development opportunities, including courses, bespoke training, and one-to-one coaching. The Centre also produces reports on innovation in teaching and learning, written by TaLIC academic developers. Teaching staff reported that attendance at TaLIC courses and the repository of online material had informed their

practice. TaLIC also administers a fund that provides fellowship support for enhancement projects in learning, teaching or assessment. Fellowship recipients are invited to present their work at the annual TaLIC Teaching and Learning Conference. Outcomes from successful fellowship projects have been mapped against the Teaching and Learning Strategy and a new member of staff has been employed to monitor more closely the outcomes of the projects.

2.35 The relevant minutes confirm that TaLIC staff sit on all Periodic Review panels, which means they are able to observe emerging good practice and training requirements.

2.36 Strategic aim six in the Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy refers to recognising and rewarding teaching. Promotions criteria at the College allow for academic staff to progress from lecturer to senior lecturer, and on to professorial level, on the basis of excellence in, and contributions to, pedagogical development, and academic staff confirmed this was the case.

2.37 While teaching staff at the College are expected to undertake either a PG Certificate or PG Diploma in the Management of Learning and Teaching, this is currently not mandatory. Completion of the Certificate, Diploma or MA confers eligibility to become a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. The review team learned that the College is aiming for between 10 and 12 teaching staff to achieve Senior Fellow status of the Higher Education Academy this year.

2.38 Staff recognise the value of Performance and Development Review in promoting self-reflection on teaching practice, but participation in the scheme is currently not mandatory.

2.39 The College considers the provision of training and support to be critical for postgraduate students who are undertaking teaching and tutoring. To this end, TaLIC works with the Graduate School to offer training for research students undertaking teaching through, for example, Graduate Tutor Induction Days, an Academic Practice module on completion of which students are eligible to apply for Higher Education Academy Fellowship at Associate level, and the PG Certificate in the Management of Learning and Teaching. Departments mentor such students by pairing them with an experienced colleague.

2.40 The College has stated its aim of recognising and rewarding teaching and realises that the success of this strategy and the quality of teaching requires the engagement and expertise of all staff. At present, attendance on the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education for staff new to teaching is not mandatory and is decided and monitored at departmental level. In order to ensure that learning and teaching practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship, and that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning is appropriately qualified, supported and developed, the review team **recommends** that the College ensure central oversight of staff development for those involved in teaching or supporting student learning in order to strengthen engagement with and reflection on academic practice.

2.41 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy includes an aim of ensuring academic staff and students are fully supported with access to training in the use and development of e-resources. TaLIC has developed a user guide for its VLE that includes expectations for staff engagement with the VLE. In 2013-14, TaLIC monitored the VLE to ensure that minimum expectations were met or exceeded. There is a VLE user group designed to share good practice and examples of these are collated and made available to staff on the VLE. Staff considered the efforts to promote consistent use of the VLE to be effective. They were aware of the VLE user group and had made use of the examples of good practice. Departmental Student Coordinator (DSC) reports on the VLE have highlighted

inconsistency at times but overall there has been substantial improvement and students are generally appreciative of the large amount of material available for many modules.

2.42 The College's Sustaining Goldsmiths project is a change programme designed to build resilience and a financial base capable of sustaining the College into the future and preserving the quality of the student experience. Senior staff described it as a response to a changing environment, designed to avoid crises. It was developed in consultation with the student body, which had expressed concerns about the growth in student numbers.

2.43 Students reported that study and teaching space were at a premium and they were finding it increasingly difficult to find workspace. They were aware of the plans to increase the amount of study space but felt the availability of new space was not keeping up with increasing student numbers. The review team read one of the 2014 DSC annual reports entitled Learning and Teaching Spaces Group, the findings of which were informed by a survey of over 1,000 students. The report concludes that learning spaces at the College are generally good but that a number of urgent problems need to be addressed by Estates and Facilities. The report also finds evidence of many disused spaces around the campus that could be put to use; a point which was also made by senior College staff who told the review team that space utilisation surveys had indicated substantial levels of unused capacity or 'passive resource'.

2.44 The Space Management Review Group involves students, academic staff, and staff from Estates, and Information Technology and Information Systems. In 2011, and in response to student feedback received through DSC reports, the College initiated a rolling programme of refurbishment of its teaching facilities that will run until 2016. It has also included the development of a number of new learning spaces, including collaborative learning spaces and specialist facilities, such as computer laboratories, science spaces, theatre and performance spaces, and art and design studies.

2.45 Postgraduate students recognise the efforts made on their behalf by the Graduate School to secure additional space.

2.46 The College and its students would benefit from strengthened monitoring of staff development and reflection on academic practice. Nevertheless, the implementation of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, including the promotion and sharing of good practice, the redevelopment of teaching accommodation and the provision of training and development opportunities, together mean that Expectation B3 is met and the level of associated risk is low.

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

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement**

**Findings**

2.47 The College states that it is committed to supporting and enabling students to achieve their full potential. Students are supported in their learning by a comprehensive set of services, including Welfare, Counselling, Student Advice, Disability Support, Immigration Advice, and a Careers Service. The organisation of these support services has recently been revised, with the aim of improving the student experience and allowing for continuing increase in student numbers. The College uses data from national surveys to enhance its provision. There is a personal tutor system that is currently being refreshed and the College is developing an overarching institutional Student Experience and Engagement Strategy.

2.48 The College's provision for student support enables Expectation B4 to be met in theory.

2.49 This Expectation was tested by the examination of a wide range of documentation, including, regulations, strategy documents, committee papers and online materials, and through meetings with senior managers, teaching and support staff and students.

2.50 The Student Experience Subcommittee plays a key role in developing the student learning experience. It has been tasked with producing a Student Experience and Engagement Strategy in consultation with the student body. Students spoke enthusiastically about their involvement in the process and felt their voice was having real influence in shaping the strategy. A draft of the strategy was presented to LTEC in May 2015 and will go to the Academic Board in September for immediate implementation in the academic year 2015-16.

2.51 The College's analysis of its National Student Survey (NSS) outcome is thorough and results in enhancements to the student experience. Responses to the survey are analysed by the Market Intelligence Team within the Student Alumni and Library Services (SALS). Departmental responses are benchmarked against other institutions in the sector and departments are then required to produce written responses to issues raised by the survey and produce action plans to address them. LTEC minutes indicate appropriate oversight of this process and identify the need to develop strategies to improve communication to students of actions taken to improve their experience.

2.52 The Sustaining Goldsmiths project aims to sustain teaching quality and preserve the student experience, against a background of increasing student numbers. It has resulted in increased investment in the library. SALS have carried out detailed scenario planning to predict the likely impact on the support services of continued increases in student numbers.

2.53 The Immigration Advisory Service (IAS) was generally praised by students. It was formed in August 2014, to coordinate the activities of a number of departments and teams to provide support for international students, and regularly delivers training to those working directly with international students.

2.54 Students are generally satisfied with their experience of induction to the College. There is a Welcome Week for new students, covering programme learning outcomes, and assessment and progression regulations. The event is repeated in January, in a slightly reduced format for students who start programmes then. Students found Welcome Week to

be fun and well organised, though postgraduate students felt they were not well catered for in terms of social events.

2.55 The induction process includes introduction to the Assessment Guidelines, and the College's expectations regarding plagiarism and poor academic practice. Students are advised of these regulations and plagiarism is clearly explained from the start of their studies. Study skills are offered by the Centre for English Language and Academic Writing (CELAW), the Library and Open Book, a College initiative that supports those from offending and addiction backgrounds throughout their programme. The College works with collaborating partners to assure effective and equivalent support for students based at partner institutions.

2.56 The College has been trialling a transition to higher education programme. It includes introductions to study skills and to College systems, sessions on 'demystifying academia' and an introduction to student life. It will be available across the College from September 2015.

2.57 The College introduced the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) in 2014. Following evaluation in 2015, some minor modifications are being introduced. There is also an employability award scheme, the Gold Award that is designed to help students to develop new skills, experience new situations, learn about themselves and grow in confidence. Management of this award was recently transferred from TaLIC to the Careers Service and uptake has increased this year. The College's Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship runs a programme of SYNAPSE workshops that aim to develop entrepreneurial thinking among students.

2.58 The Careers Service is available via the VLE. It advises and supports departments in constructing and enriching curricula, and has an Enterprise and Skills Team that delivers employability, academic study and professional practice skills' training in partnership with a range of professional services and academic departments. The review team noted the comprehensive nature of the annual report produced for LTEC by the Careers Service.

2.59 All students at the College are allocated a personal tutor and invited to attend meetings three times per year. However, the student submission comments on 'mixed experiences of personal tutors', and this was confirmed by the students whom the review team met. Following identification of deficiencies by DSC reports, the Personal Tutor scheme is currently undergoing revision, under the auspices of LTEC. An update on progress was presented to LTEC in May 2015, with new descriptors for the Personal Tutor and Senior Tutor roles and proposals to publish the minimum requirements to which all departments would be expected to adhere. Online training modules are being prepared. A phased approach to the introduction of the role descriptor and training plan is now being devised. The College is clearly working with its students to address their concerns and the review team **affirms** the current review of the personal tutor system to bring consistency to the role in supporting the student experience across all taught provision including partner institutions.

2.60 There is an e-portfolio system available on the College's VLE, although participation in it is optional. Some departments make extensive use of the e-portfolio, and some have included it in assessments.

2.61 Professional and student services have recently been reviewed and brought into a single organisational structure. Senior staff told the review team that this had introduced a more student-centred approach that enables student input to decision making. As a result of this reorganisation, some administrative units have been combined. For example, International Admissions and UK Admissions have been brought into a single unit offering

alignment of functions, and Student Recruitment and Engagement has replaced three former units.

2.62 Support staff report that the closer alignment of all student-facing support services has been beneficial, in terms of closer working at all levels and a more explicit focus on the student experience. There is a Senior Management Team of SALS that meets regularly to discuss emerging issues, strategies, quality assurance action plans and DSC reports action plans.

2.63 An evaluation report on the restructuring of professional services, presented to the Finance and Resources Committee in March 2015, noted considerable efficiency gains and cited numerous examples of improvement to process, standards and staff and student experience.

2.64 Following consultation with the Students' Union, a Student Services User Group is being formed, following the model of the existing Library User Group. The group will meet for the first time in September 2015.

2.65 There is a Counselling Service, and the Student Advice and Disability Support Teams have specialist Counsellors and Mental Health workers. The service was reviewed in 2014-15. There is an Assistive Technology Centre (ATC) in the Library. The Student Advice and Disability Support Service contacts new students with a declared disability. Students who are already at the College can access the service through the Student Centre. The service also coordinates the Mental Health Forum. Students report that the increase in student numbers has put great pressure on the Disability and Counselling Service, although the review team were assured by Support Staff that the current restructuring of the service will result in increased staff numbers.

2.66 While there are clearly differences in experience across the institution, students are generally complimentary about the support available to them. They are particularly enthusiastic about the potential of the Student Experience and Engagement Strategy to enhance student support and the review team considers the Student Services User Group, with its involvement of the DSCs, is likely to bring benefits to the College and its students. The provision of a wide range of student support and the College's monitoring and evaluation of its provision allow Expectation B4 to be met with low level of associated risk.

**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**

2.67 The College works in partnership with the Students' Union to involve students in contributing to change and development which enhances the learning environment. This expectation is made clear in the Student Charter which underpins the Student Experience and Engagement Strategy.

2.68 Student representation is assured by a two-tier system comprising student representatives and DSCs. All programmes have student representatives who are primarily responsible for gathering and reporting feedback at programme level, while DSCs operate at departmental and sometimes College level. Both student representatives and DSCs are represented at Departmental Boards.

2.69 DSCs produce termly reports and have regular meetings with College staff in order to communicate student issues. The roles and expectations of both DSCs and student representatives are made clear in the Academic Representation Handbook

2.70 The College also provides opportunities for students to engage in the quality assurance and enhancement of their learning experience by involving them in programme approval and in annual and periodic programme review.

2.71 The processes and policies in place enable the Expectation to be met in theory and allow students to engage as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

2.72 To test this, the review team examined the Student Experience and Engagement Strategy, the Academic Representation Handbook, the Student Charter and the student submission, and other documents and reports produced by student representatives. It examined student involvement in College committees and department boards, LTEC, as well as the wider work of student representatives in user groups such as the Library User Group. To check its understanding the review team held meetings with a range of academic and professional support staff, and with undergraduate and postgraduate students based on campus and at LASALLE College.

2.73 The review team explored how the student voice is articulated by looking at the Academic Representation Handbook and associated role descriptors. The Handbook is produced by the Students' Union and provides guidance about the student voice and representation across the College. The Handbook defines student representation and its structure, provides tips and guidance for representatives, and gives examples of changes that have been effected as a result of student feedback.

2.74 Departments aim to have at least two undergraduate DSCs and one postgraduate DSC, and there are currently some 55 DSCs across the College. DSCs attend Department Board and Department Learning and Teaching Committee meetings.

2.75 The termly reports which DSCs write for their departments consist of a template and commentary that provide an overview of student feedback and are considered both by the department itself and by Students' Union. LTEC and SESC subsequently receive composite overview reports which incorporate responses from departments. DSCs also make group presentations to the College on projects which are agreed in November and researched over the following months. In 2014-15 projects covered areas such as feedback assessment, hidden programme costs, learning resources, study spaces, student support.

2.76 Projects reports are usually around 3,000-4,000 words in length and align with the College's key strategic initiatives. The project, termly and overview reports which the review team read indicated high levels of engagement and represented a powerful and coherent articulation of the student voice. Staff told the review team how important these reports were in identifying and addressing student concerns and in enhancing the student learning experience, describing DSCs as 'relentless in telling the College what works and what doesn't work' and as a 'powerful tool for enhancement'.

2.77 The College provides DSCs with a bursary in recognition of the work they undertake and their key role in articulating the student voice. It is also taking steps to further improve the efficiency of the DSC system and avoid duplication of effort by planning adjustments to the speed and regularity with which it updates DSCs about actions taken in response to their reports. The College's intention to explore a year-round and more holistic method of assuring timely feedback to student representatives is recorded in the November 2014 minutes of LTEC and involves professional services staff being invited to attend DSC meetings throughout the year.

2.78 On the basis of the substantial evidence it saw about their role and impact, the review team identified as good practice the work of the Departmental Student Coordinators as a key driver in articulating and delivering the student voice across the College.

2.79 The review team learned about the ways in which DSCs are supported in their role by the Students' Union, the Quality Office, by the Student Engagement Team within SALS, and by the Students' Union's Student Voice and Representation Coordinator, who also provides specific support for DSCs during their annual projects.

2.80 The review team saw training materials which explained the 'DSC Contract' and stressed the importance of attributes such as punctuality, attentiveness and professionalism in the role. A full calendar of DSC activity is published at the beginning of the academic year and is complemented by an induction event and separate training days for undergraduate and postgraduate DSCs. A further 12 DSC meeting dates and activity deadlines are diarised over the academic year, including meetings with the Warden, and the year ends with a handover meeting to the following year's DSCs. Students told the review team that in some cases departmental meetings are now being restructured around the submission dates of DSC reports.

2.81 The review team noted the coverage of practical skills such as report writing in the training materials provided for DSCs. It also noted the steps taken by the College to respond to requests from the Students' Union, DSCs and student ambassadors for training in leadership skills, which they felt were as important as practical skills in representing the student community effectively. Leadership training was offered for the first time in November 2014 and was attended by 42 DSCs and student ambassadors. The programme entitled 'Front Runner' was a four-day intensive programme designed to develop leadership and entrepreneurial skills in student leaders. The review team concludes that the comprehensive support and development for Departmental Student Coordinators, including leadership training, that promotes effective partnership working, is **good practice**.

2.82 The review team confirmed appropriate levels of student representation in the College's deliberative committees by exploring their terms of reference. The team tested student engagement in committee meetings by reading a selection of minutes and found appropriate consideration of a variety of student issues and representation of student views. In addition to College committees, the review team looked at department-based committees and student/staff forums covering undergraduate and postgraduate provision where DSCs submit reports for discussion. This further confirmed engagement with the student voice.

2.83 The College makes appropriate use of surveys to capture and respond to the student voice, including the NSS, the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey (DHLE), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey. Additional feedback is collected through specific groups such as the Library User Group which meets twice yearly and allows students to feed issues in directly to library staff. The Students' Union has recognised this as a positive step by the College to address student issues. Module evaluations are used within subjects in order to capture the experiences of students on issues relating to their programme.

2.84 The students whom the review team met concurred with the view expressed in the student submission that the representation of the student voice is effective and that it is valued by the College and students alike. The student submission also observes that in 2014 the College became the first in the country to allow a student onto the Remuneration Committee which decides senior management pay. The student submission describes this as 'symbolic and practical evidence that the College takes the Student Voice seriously' and College senior staff describe it as indicative of the high quality of the College's relationship with the Students' Union.

2.85 The review team concludes that Expectation B5 is met because the College demonstrates an extensive level of engagement with the student voice through committees and surveys and because it provides a strategic approach to student engagement that is driven by the DSCs and student representatives. The associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.86 The College's comprehensive regulatory framework for its management of the assessment of students is complemented by a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. This document identifies a number of institutional aims relating to assessment, including the development of students' understanding of assessment processes and the use of a comprehensive range of assessment methods. Academic departments are required to devise associated strategies and action plans that address how they intend to manage and enhance aspects of assessment.

2.87 The General, Undergraduate and Postgraduate Student Regulations, the Regulations for Assessment for Taught Degrees, the Goldsmiths Credit Framework and the protocols for Boards of Examiners provide clearly-defined policies for the operation of assessment, and include information on processes pertaining to extenuating circumstances, academic misconduct, appeals, and the conduct of examination boards. A Student Assessment Handbook for taught degrees supports this suite of documents and provides students with accessible information on the practical and regulatory aspects of assessment at the College. Generic guidelines for the research degree examination process also exist.

2.88 The College's regulations, policies and procedures for assessment enable the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.89 In addition to regulatory and strategic documentation, the team reviewed the minutes of examination boards, programme and module specifications and handbooks, external examiner reports, and information relating to staff development and training in assessment. The team also met senior and academic staff to discuss the application of assessment policies, and with a range of students, including those on collaborative programmes, to explore their experiences.

2.90 The review team found that assessment regulations, policies and forms are readily accessible to staff, students, external examiners and other stakeholders through the College's website. Programme and module handbooks and specifications provide specific information on assessment methods and processes, including those relating to PSRB requirements. Students are introduced at induction to assessment arrangements, including programme and module learning outcomes. The students seen by the review team all spoke positively about the clarity and timeliness of information relating to assessment, and about the support they receive from academic staff in helping them to understand the requirements and procedures of their modules and programmes.

2.91 Institutional support for those involved in designing, evaluating and marking work for assessment is available through the TaLIC. In addition, there is an induction and mentoring process, organised within departments, for those members of academic staff who are new to assessment at the College, and related staff development is also made available to staff at partner institutions. Guidance is provided to chairs and secretaries of examination boards, and to examination officers, through an annual workshop; this workshop also introduces

participants to any recent regulatory changes and how they might impact on the consideration of student progression and achievement.

2.92 The College recently reviewed its academic feedback policy, to address inconsistencies in the quality and timeliness of feedback that had been identified through an analysis of findings from recent student surveys and external examiner reports; a revised policy was subsequently launched in November 2014. The new policy sets out a series of guiding institutional principles with respect to academic feedback. Core minimum departmental expectations and responsibilities are also established in the document, including those relating to timeliness, presentation and meaningfulness, and departments are expected to establish and publicise their own individual policies.

2.93 However, students who met the review team reported that they had not yet felt the impact of the new institutional policy. Although some students spoke of prompt and constructive feedback, others noted that practice varies considerably between departments and tutors. Students at an overseas partner institution spoke particularly about academic feedback that was slow in arriving and not always beneficial for formative purposes. Academic and senior staff similarly acknowledged that inconsistencies across the College remain, although it was observed that work is currently taking place across the institution in association with TaLIC and with DSCs to embed further the new policy in departmental practices. The review team acknowledges the need for academic feedback practice to be determined and monitored at a level beyond that of individual departments and accordingly **affirms** the actions being taken at institutional level to address inconsistencies in the quality and timeliness of academic feedback on assessed work, including at partner institutions.

2.94 Evaluation of assessment regulations and policies is the responsibility of the QSSC, reporting to the LTEC and to the Academic Board. The College's academic misconduct policy was recently reviewed. It now provides clear information on the institution's procedures and penalties, and students are expected to confirm that they have read the overarching statement each autumn. An Annual Assessments Report, which provides the Academic Board with an overview of student progression and achievement across the College, includes a statistical overview of cases of misconduct. A revised extenuating circumstances process has also recently been proposed, and will be developed in 2015-16. The new procedure aims to address an inconsistency in approach across departments by centralising the consideration of cases.

2.95 A new institutional policy on the recognition of prior learning (RPL), and the consideration of credit transfer, is also to be introduced in 2015-16 to consolidate practice across the College. Although the student regulations currently outline the minimum credit requirements for an award to be made to ensure consistency across all departments, the team was nevertheless informed that departments currently have a degree of discretion in the granting of RPL. RPL, where approved, is properly documented on the Student Records System.

2.96 The College has an appropriate regulatory framework, and a suite of interrelated policies and procedures, for meeting this Expectation. The review team identified one area for improvement in relation to current inconsistencies in the quality and timeliness of academic feedback to students, and affirms that the College is responding effectively to the matter. The review team concludes that Expectation B6 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.97 College policies and processes relating to external examination are located in the Handbook for External Examining at Goldsmiths, which provides information on nomination, induction, roles and responsibilities, and on how reports are considered at both programme and institutional level. College expectations about the role of external examiners in monitoring threshold academic standards and the quality of students' learning opportunities are also addressed in its regulatory framework. External examiners for taught provision are required to approve draft examination papers, moderate assessments and attend examination boards, confirming through the submission of an annual report that the standards for the programme to which they are appointed are appropriate and that assessment has been conducted in a rigorous, equitable and fair manner, and in accordance with College regulations. They are also required to comment on any proposed changes to programmes.

2.98 The College's processes for the nomination and induction of external examiners, and the regulatory framework in place to enable them to discharge their responsibilities, enable this Expectation to be met in theory.

2.99 In addition to the Handbook and regulatory information, the review team scrutinised external examiner reports and departmental and institutional responses to them. It also considered the minutes of Boards of Examiners. The team met academic and senior staff to explore the operation of the external examiner system at the College, and discussed with a range of students, including those at a partner institution, their experience of engaging with external examiners and their awareness of the centrality of the role in the assurance of academic standards and the quality of provision.

2.100 Nominations for external examiners for taught programmes are completed by heads of department on a standard, institution-wide form and submitted to the Quality Office for initial scrutiny and approved by the Pro Warden for Teaching, Learning and Enhancement before being reported to Academic Board. The Dean of the Graduate School approves external examiners for postgraduate research students. Taught programmes with a foreign language element are required to have an examiner with experience of both the language and those UK reference points pertaining to academic standards.

2.101 External examiners receive a standard appointment letter from the Quality Office that provides hyperlinks to relevant College guidelines and regulations. A dedicated page on the College website includes related forms, such as a nomination form and report templates. External examiners for collaborative programmes are required to attend a briefing event to which on-campus external examiners are also invited. The College has established a mentoring scheme for those newly-appointed external examiners with no prior experience of the role: such examiners are paired with a more established colleague, and both parties report informally at the end of the year.

2.102 External examiners for taught programmes report annually on academic standards and the conduct of assessment, and highlight areas of good practice that they have observed in performing their role. Reports, once submitted, are annotated by the College's Quality Office, with particular attention being given to areas of good practice and to items that require a specific response. Programme convenors respond, and their comments are endorsed by their head of department. The Quality Office then sends the responses to

examiners, and the sample reports seen by the review team did not indicate any failings in this process.

2.103 Reports are considered at departmental committees, at which student representatives are present. The on-campus students who met the review team showed some awareness of external examiners and their reports. The reviewers verified that external examiner reports form part of the annual programme review process, which requires programme convenors to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of any actions taken or any changes that have been made as a result of their feedback. In the College's Periodic Review process, external examiner reports for the previous three years form part of the evidence base and are commented upon in programmes' self-evaluation documents.

2.104 The Quality Office produces an annual synoptic overview of themes emerging from external examiner reports which is considered at institutional-level committees such as LTEC, thereby enabling the College to assure itself that the standards and quality of its awards are appropriate.

2.105 Separate overview reports are produced for the College's collaborative provision. The nomination, approval and reporting procedures for external examiners for collaborative programmes, and the roles and responsibilities of such examiners, mirror those for the College's on-campus provision. Where possible, external examiners are appointed to both the collaborative programme and its on-campus equivalent. The students at one partner institution who met with the review team spoke very positively about the engagement of their external examiners in their learning experience.

2.106 The procedures the College employs for external examining are scrupulous and well managed, and the processes for considering, responding to and acting upon their reports are effective. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B7 is met and the associated level of risk low.

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

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review**

**Findings**

2.107 The College's approach to the Annual Programme Review (APR) and Periodic Review of programmes is set out within the relevant policies which are published on the Quality Office webpage. Strategic oversight of monitoring and review activity is maintained by LTEC, although the detailed consideration of reports is undertaken by QSSC.

2.108 The approach to the monitoring of programmes is formally launched on an annual basis by the Quality Office once requisite statistical information is available. A dedicated VLE page is used to present programme and other relevant statistics for each Department. A standard, single reporting template for the purposes of annual monitoring was introduced in 2013-14. The reporting template includes embedded guidance for staff to assist them in its completion.

2.109 Both policies were reviewed recently and mapped against *Chapter B8* of the UK Quality Code. This alignment and its attendant processes enable the Expectation to be met.

2.110 To test the Expectation the review team scrutinised College policies and procedures and their effectiveness while also reading a selection of annual programme review reports and periodic review documentation. Additionally the team read minutes recording oversight of these processes by QSSC, LTEC and Academic Board. The team also met staff and students from a variety of College departments and professional service areas and students from one overseas partner who had varying experiences of participating in annual programme review and the periodic review of programmes.

2.111 The review team confirmed that the College's revised APR Policy, which was implemented in 2014-15, aligns with *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review* of the Quality Code and provides clear monitoring processes. Annual Programme Reviews may cover a single programme or group of cognate programmes, with joint honours programmes being processed separately to provide for evaluation by both contributing departments. The same reporting template is used for both undergraduate and postgraduate monitoring reports in order to promote consistency.

2.112 The reporting template aligns with a standard dataset of management information which was reviewed and revised at the same time as the APR process itself. The revised dataset presents statistical management information in formats that are readily understood by programme convenors and which directly inform the categories of information required by the Annual Programme Review template. The information provided includes student recruitment, progression and completion data over a three-year period, external examiner and PSRB reports, student survey outcomes and DLHE results. External examiner reports are vetted and marked up by the Quality Office to highlight comments for departments to follow up. The review team found close correlation between the statistical management information provided by the Planning Office and the relevant sections of the standardised review templates. The management information is uploaded to an individual departmental VLE page which was demonstrated to the review team.

2.113 The staff whom the review team met welcomed the central provision of management information. Senior staff spoke of the College's commitment to achieve greater

consistency in administrative processes and academic practices. Academic staff confirmed to the team that the quality of management information had improved following the 2013-14 review and the fact that it was 'all in one place' was helpful both for departments engaging in APR and for centres like TaLIC in identifying good practice across the College.

2.114 On the basis of its evaluation of the revised approach to the provision of management information and the positive reaction of the staff it met, the review team concludes that the centrally produced management information and web-based guidance for programme monitoring that is consistent, comprehensive and accessible is **good practice**.

2.115 Notwithstanding the quality of the management information now available to departments and the use of a single annual monitoring template with standard inbuilt guidance, the review team found a degree of inconsistency in the review reports it read. The length of these reports varies considerably. This partly reflects the size of the programme and partly the different ways in which management information is used. Some review reports enrich their narrative with extracts from management information where it is relevant and informative to do so, while others do not. In order to capitalise on the progress made with the availability and consistency of centrally produced management information (see paragraphs 2.111-2.113), the review team **recommends** the College ensure that Annual Programme Reviews make consistent and effective use of centrally produced management information.

2.116 Before review reports are submitted to the Quality Office, drafts are considered at Departmental Learning and Teaching Committee, enabling students to be involved in the monitoring process. In this regard, the review team noted some inconsistency in Departmental Learning and Teaching Committee minutes insofar as some identify student members while other do not. The Quality Office presents an annual synoptic report for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes to QSSC. The synoptic reports identify examples of enhancement taken from individual APRs, enabling good practice to be disseminated across the College. Action plans are monitored by QSSC until they are completed and the review team read several examples of action plans being updated.

2.117 The Collaborative Provision Team together with the Academic Link review the Annual Programme Review reports for validated provision and joint awards.

2.118 The Periodic Review of programmes is undertaken every six years, or every five years in the case of partner provision. The Quality Office maintains a schedule for the periodic review of programmes and supports departments in associated activity. Departments prepare a self-evaluation document and present supporting evidence to a periodic review panel which involves at least two independent members external to Goldsmiths, a member of TaLIC and a DSC.

2.119 The Quality Office produces a report following each Periodic Review event and action plans developed in response to review reports are considered at departmental level and monitored by QSSC until completed. This review process is overseen by the LTEC and Academic Board.

2.120 A major and minor amendments process governs changes to programmes which occur as a result of annual monitoring or periodic review. This process provides examples of major and minor amendments and prescribes the procedure to follow in each case. The Quality Office maintains a record of changes to programmes to monitor 'curriculum drift' and can intervene if a series of minor changes are being made to a programme to ensure that appropriate processes are followed. Consultation with students is required where changes are being proposed to programmes.

2.121 The review team confirmed that the approach to the monitoring of partner provision mirrored that required for on-campus provision. When visiting partner institutions, academic

links monitor the implementation of action plans associated with Annual Programme Review reports.

2.122 The College has developed a policy governing programme closure and the review team was provided with an evidence trail demonstrating the two-staged approach employed. The review team confirmed the effectiveness of this process.

2.123 Consultation with students is required where changes are being proposed to programmes. The student body is confident that this requirement will be implemented not only through their membership of PSSC but also because of the new requirement to provide evidence of student consultation.

2.124 The College recognises a level of inconsistency in relation to module evaluation particularly in the case of joint awards and is currently at the early stages of working towards a standardised approach through the use of an application linked to the student records system.

2.125 Discussions with staff and students, together with the evidence considered by the review team, confirm that although there are some inconsistencies, programme monitoring and periodic review processes are generally rigorous and work effectively to maintain academic standards and to enhance learning opportunities. The review team concludes that Expectation B8 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints**

**Findings**

2.126 The College has procedures for academic appeals and complaints that are based on Office of the Independent Adjudicator good practice guidance. The same regulations and procedures apply to all students, including those whose degrees are formally awarded by the University of London. Those who have completed or withdrawn from their studies may lodge a complaint up to three months following graduation or termination of studies. There is a separate procedure for appealing an admission decision. Guidance documentation for staff and students is widely available. Responsibility for handling complaints and appeals, together with annual analysis of the data lie with the Complaints and Appeals Manager and his Team. The regulations and procedures were recently revised to streamline the process and allow for external mediation.

2.127 The accessible, fair, and proportionate complaints and appeals policies, with its clear lines of responsibility and escalation, enable the Expectation to be met in design.

2.128 In testing this Expectation, the review team met senior managers, teaching and support staff and students, and reviewed a wide range of documentation, including regulations, complaints and appeals forms, student handbooks, guidance documentation and other material available on the websites of the College and its partner institution, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore.

2.129 The process for submission and consideration of complaints and academic appeals is clearly defined. It is set out in the General Regulations and accompanied by a 'Complaints and Appeals Guidance' document that is a more user-friendly source of practical information about the student complaints procedure and appeals against assessment for taught and research students. Guidance is also included in the majority of student handbooks seen by the review team, and on the College website.

2.130 Students from a range of programmes and levels of study, including postgraduate students, told the review team that they knew where to find the relevant information, should they wish to lodge a complaint or academic appeal. This included students on the programmes delivered at LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore, who were aware of the guidance information in their validation handbook. Student representatives and DSCs are told how to direct students towards the Complaints and Appeals Team or the Students' Union Advice Service. The Complaints and Appeals Team advise students to speak to their Senior Tutor and the Students' Union before launching a formal complaint. Several students reported that they would seek advice from one of their tutors or, in the case of research students, from one of their supervisors, the departmental research manager or the Graduate School, depending on the circumstances.

2.131 The College Complaints and Appeals Team provides training through a rolling programme of workshops tailored to the needs of individual departments. This training is delivered in a 90-minute workshop format which, in addition to more general coverage of complaints and appeals and the College procedures for handling them, also includes consideration of any patterns emerging from the complaints or appeals that concern the relevant department. Teaching staff reported attending these training sessions.

2.132 Consideration of appeals and complaints data is the responsibility of the Complaints and Appeals Manager, together with the Pro Warden Teaching, Learning and Enhancement and the Director of Governance and Legal Services. An analysis of the data, including a breakdown by ethnicity, mode of study, whether home/EU or international and gender, is presented in the Annual Report on Student Complaints, Appeals and Conduct that is submitted to the Academic Board. Following a recent review of the College's committee structure, reports on complaints and appeals will also be presented to QSSC to identify any implications for institutional learning and enhancement.

2.133 In September 2014, the previous 4-stage complaints procedure was replaced by a 3-stage process, in which stage 1 attempts front-line resolution at departmental level, before escalation to a formal complaint at stage 2. Stage 3 allows the student to request a review of any decision made at stage 2. One consequence of these changes is that complaints become formal more quickly than in the previous arrangement, facilitating formal review of complaints data from stage 2, compared with stage 3 previously. Stage 1 complaint data is reviewed on a less formal basis through discussions between the Complaints and Appeals Manager and individual Heads of Department.

2.134 Changes to the complaints procedure resulting from the revision in September 2014 include a provision to allow students to complain outside their Departments. In practice, this means that at stage 2, a formal complaint may be assigned to a member of staff from a different department, if there are concerns about possible conflict of interest. The new regulations also allow either party to request mediation at any point during the complaint and appeal procedures. The framework required for this to be enacted is currently under development. Consultation with staff and other institutions has indicated the need to inform and educate staff and students about the nature and value of mediation. A proposal for a pilot mediation scheme will be submitted to the Academic Board in September 2015, with the aim of launching in selected departments in the autumn and spring terms 2015-16. The review team **affirms** the College's implementation and evaluation of the revised complaints policy and associated training across all provision.

2.135 The changes introduced in September 2014 have significantly strengthened the College's complaints processes and addressed a substantial part of the Concern submitted to the QAA Concerns Scheme by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Complaints made by research students are dealt with in the same way as those made by other students. The new 3-stage complaints process allows for the quicker escalation of complaints beyond the supervising department and provides for impartial investigation by a member of staff from another department in cases of conflict of interest. College oversight of complaints arising at departmental level has been strengthened by the appointment of a Complaints and Appeals Manager with a centralised, College-wide role, and the review team has affirmed the value of the staff development workshops in dealing with complaints that he provides for academic departments. Meetings with students, including research students, confirm that the College has been effective in explaining the complaints procedure to them.

2.136 The ready availability of regulations, procedures and guidance, the effective operation of appeals procedures, and the College's ability to monitor the resulting data, allow Expectation B9 to be met with a low level of associated risk.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.137 The College's current portfolio of collaborative provision includes validated provision, joint awards, study abroad (non-Erasmus), and off-campus delivery. Its partners include LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore, which currently delivers 19 undergraduate and postgraduate taught degrees validated by the College to over 1,200 students and Capital Normal University with which the College has a study abroad partnership. Institutional approval for the validation of postgraduate taught and postgraduate research awards has just been given to Nordoff Robins and is expected to commence in 2016.

2.138 The Academic Board holds ultimate responsibility for the approval of new validated, joint award and study abroad arrangements. The ADC, a subcommittee of Academic Board, evaluates and monitors potential formal institutional partnerships, advising and making recommendations to the Senior Management Team and the Academic Board, with the detailed work undertaken by the Institutional Partnerships Sub-Committee (IPSC), which reports to the ADC. Responsibility for programme approval rests with LTEC, via PSSC following completion of the relevant programme approval process as described in the Collaborative Provision Handbook. Ongoing partnership issues are considered by IPSC and LTEC or its subcommittees.

2.139 The College's comprehensive arrangements for managing higher education provision with others enable the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.140 The review team tested the effectiveness of procedures by examining the College's register of collaborative provision, administration handbooks and memoranda of agreement with partners, and a range of procedures, regulations and reports used for the approval and management of collaborative provision. The team reviewed staff development activities, Academic Link roles, Admission and Assessment reports and held meetings with senior staff, academic and professional support staff, and students. The review team further reviewed the procedures for managing work placements

2.141 The review team read minutes evidencing Academic Board oversight of collaborative provision and an example of the Board's letter of confirmation to a new partner following satisfactory completion of the approval process. It was clear that new proposals contained within the collaborative register had gone through the appropriate stages of outline approval, institutional approval, programme approval and agreement through the committee structure followed by Academic Board. At the time of the review the IPSC of the ADC was relatively new. The review team sampled the minutes of IPSC and found them to be focused and informative.

2.142 The Collaborative Provision Handbook was developed to manage quality and standards at partner institutions and revised with the approval of Academic Board in June 2014. The Collaborative Provision Handbook references the Quality Code, *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others* and sets out the fully cycle of procedures for approving new collaborative provision, with separate consideration of the business case and academic proposal. Academic, legal and financial due diligence and appropriate risk

assessment are undertaken in a manner that is proportionate to the scale of each proposed new partnership.

2.143 The approval process is consistent with on-campus delivery, making use of UK reference points for academic standards in terms of level, content and development in the discipline. The process is managed by the Collaborative Provision Team and involves a full panel visit, with two external panel members. The team read examples of validation panel briefing documents and found that they contained comprehensive information about the College's approval process, background and logistical information for the visit, and helpful meetings guidance for the panel.

2.144 Approved programmes at partner institutions are added to the Collaborative Provision Register. The register is maintained and updated as required by the Collaborative Provision Manager, and is published on the College website. The review team confirmed its currency.

2.145 The Collaborative Provision Team is further responsible for ensuring that a formal memorandum of agreement defining the responsibility of both parties is in place for the ongoing management and review of each partnership. The memorandum of agreement, which is a legal document, is complemented by an administration handbook which serves as an operational guide for managing the provision. The reviewers found both documents to be clear and comprehensive.

2.146 Annual monitoring requirements and periodic review processes for collaborative provision mirror those for on-campus provision, with the exception of the time line for review which is every five years for programmes delivered at a partner institution. QSSC and LTEC consider summary external examining and APR reports for programmes delivered through collaborative provision alongside those for programmes delivered on campus. Partner institutions also submit annual admissions and assessment reports which are analysed by the relevant professional services teams and received by QSSC, together with the report for programmes delivered on-campus. The review team read a number of LASALLE's APRs and found them to be substantial, thorough and reflective, making good use of management information.

2.147 If a partner institution is considering the termination of one of the validated programmes on offer, the process mirrors the process used for on-campus provision, with an additional reporting line to IPSC.

2.148 Staffing arrangements and staff development policies are confirmed during institutional approval with responsibility for the recruitment, appointment and development of staff delegated to the partner. The College is informed of new teaching appointments as part of the Annual Programme Review submission, which is reviewed by the academic links.

2.149 The appointment process for external examiners is the same as for on-campus programmes, and new external examiners receive a one-to-one induction from the Collaborative Provision Team if they are unable to attend an annual induction event. External examiners attend the meeting of the Board of Examiners at the partner institution and comment on the student learning experience as part of their report.

2.150 Each collaborative programme is supported by the Collaborative Provision Team and by an academic link based in the department in which the validated programme is located. Academic links play a major role in subject-level liaison with collaborative partners by, for example, moderating samples of work marked by the partner, reviewing partner APRs and reporting on them to their departmental learning and teaching committee, and attending programme assessment panels at partners, either physically or via video-conference. It was clear from meetings with staff and from academic link visit programmes which the reviewers

saw that academic links engage in activities such as attending assessment panel events, meeting staff and students and assisting at practice-based student shows. However, the LASALLE students whom the review team met seemed unaware of such visits by College staff.

2.151 Student engagement opportunities are detailed in the quality assurance procedures for collaborative provision, communicated to students via programme handbooks, and are promoted during induction. Students at LASALLE told the reviewers that they were represented on a number of committees, including the Academic Board and Faculty Board. They were also able to discuss programme-level matters in regular meeting with their programme leader. They were confident that they would know how to make a complaint if they needed to.

2.152 Although no formal personal tutor system is currently in place at LASALLE, the students confirmed that support was available from their supervisory tutor or they could go to their Programme Leader or Student Services for advice. Overall the students whom the reviewers met were positive about the programme, but had some concerns about variation in the quality of assignment feedback and its return times, and apparent unwillingness on the part of staff to use the full range of marks.

2.153 The College provides three main categories of placements: placements which are an essential part of professional training; year out placements; and shorter placements, either compulsory or optional, which are not linked to professional training. Proposals for new placements are scrutinised by the PSSC. The College recorded over 870 students on placements for 2014-15 with support for departments to develop further placements provided by the Careers Service.

2.154 To support the management of and current support material for placements, LTEC approved revised central guidelines for managing the risks associated with them, with the process to be rolled out to departments by the Work Placement Manager and monitored by SESC. The Academic Board approved a framework to be used when setting up work placements to ensure that quality and standards are met and risks addressed. Students told the reviewers that the information available for placements was well communicated and personalised to their individual needs.

2.155 The Placement Manager, who works in the Careers Service, provides support for the personal tutors who supervise placements. In teacher education, this is supplemented for the PGCE by means of a link tutor and mentors. The Erasmus+ scheme is coordinated by a new Student Mobility Team within Student Services reporting to IPSC. The Work Placements Manager and the Erasmus Manager have regular meetings to synchronise their respective activities.

2.156 Overall, the team found substantial consistency between the policies and procedures for collaborative and non-collaborative provision. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.157 The enrolment, record and examination of MPhil and PhD students at Goldsmiths is managed by the Research Degrees section of Student Services, which has responsibility for administering MPhil and PhD studies. PhD students initially register as MPhil students and complete an upgrade examination.

2.158 Research (MPhil and PhD) degrees are awarded by the University of London and are therefore subject to University of London regulations. However, the administration and supervision of research students as well as their assessments are delegated to the College which appoints examiners and makes arrangements for viva voce exams. The examiners make the final decision on whether an award is to be made, and the College sends a list of the awards made to the Diploma Production Office of the University of London on a monthly basis. The Research Student Handbook supersedes the University of London regulations in terms of arrangements for examinations.

2.159 Each research student is expected to have two supervisors. Supervisors are appointed by the head of the relevant department, who is also responsible for ensuring that supervisors attend appropriate training.

2.160 There is a Graduate School that reports to the Graduate School Board. It provides initial and refresher training for supervisors of research students, and training modules for research students.

2.161 While the structures and procedures at the College may allow it to meet the Expectation in theory, the devolved nature of much of the responsibility means that without robust institutional oversight the processes has the potential to fail individual students, without the institution noticing.

2.162 The review team tested this Expectation through meetings with senior, teaching and administrative staff, and with research students. They reviewed a wide range of documentation, including regulations, student handbooks, supervisor training data, Annual Progress Reports, and committee papers.

2.163 The Graduate School was established with the aim of to improving and enhancing the experience of research students. The Graduate School website, the Graduate School Virtual Office, contains information about the Postgraduate Research Regulations, Goldsmiths Research Online and EThOS (the British Library's collection of UK theses). It also contains relevant contact details, and links to guidance on a range of registration and visa-related matters.

2.164 The Graduate School runs an induction programme for research students every September and January. It also provides an extensive range of training modules that complement subject-specific training, including Core Qualitative Research Methods and Core Quantitative Research Methods modules. Research students reported good access to a range of training modules including, though not restricted to, those provided by the

Graduate School. The newly-refurbished Graduate School accommodation was popular with research students who use it for study space when the library is busy. Students also spoke positively about the annual Goldsmiths Graduate Festival that is run by postgraduate research students and facilitated by the Graduate School.

2.165 The work of the Graduate School is overseen by the Graduate School Board. The Graduate School Board is a key forum for reviewing codes of practice, regulations and policy, and for consideration of institutional strategy for the delivery of research degrees.

2.166 The Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research and Training explains that the responsibility for appointing supervisors for research students lies with heads of department, supported by their departmental research committees. These committees also have responsibility for review of supervisory loads annually. The review team considers that the devolved nature of this responsibility allows for potential variation between departments. The Graduate School undertakes an annual audit of supervisory arrangements, though it was not clear how effective this was since the data supplied showed large variations in the number of research students per supervisor and several students with no record of a second supervisor. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College develop an effective process for overseeing and recording the allocation of supervisors in accordance with the College's code of practice on supervision.

2.167 The Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research and Training also describes the expectation that Heads of Department will ensure that supervisors are suitably experienced and trained. The self-evaluation document and supporting documentation make it clear that each new supervisor is offered a training programme in research supervision, but attendance at this training is not mandatory. This was confirmed by teaching and support staff, who told the review team that completion of the training was strongly encouraged, but not compulsory. The same approach was taken to the refresher training, offered by the Graduate School.

2.168 Supervisor training data shows that around one third of all supervisors attended either initial or refresher training in the current academic year. However, the team was unable to find any evidence of a central record of which supervisors have attended training within a given number of years. By leaving supervisory training and refresher training to the discretion of departments and not maintaining a formal institutional record of the training and retraining, the institution is unable to identify whether any of its research supervisors have failed to receive training of any kind. The College is unable, therefore, to assure itself that every one of its research supervisors is appropriately qualified and prepared for supervision of students admitted to research degree programmes. The review team **recommends** that the College strengthen the Graduate School Board's remit for and oversight of supervision through the recording, monitoring and evaluation of supervisor training and development.

2.169 The College's expectations for supervisors of research students is contained in the Research Student Handbook and the Quick Guide to Supervision. Research students informed the review team that they met their supervisors on a regular basis, typically once or twice per month and that they found the meetings, which are formally recorded, to be useful. For students who are based outside London, the supervisory meetings may be held by electronic communication, such as email or video-conference.

2.170 The Graduate School sends an Annual Progress Report form to every postgraduate research student. This is completed by students and their primary supervisor. The Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research and Training explains that Departmental Postgraduate Committees are responsible for oversight of these reports.

2.171 The terms of reference of the Graduate School Board include monitoring student progress and reporting to Research and Enterprise Committee on PhD completion rates.

The Research Degrees section of SALS sends a Continuation and Completion Report to departments for completion three times a year. Each year, Academic Board receives an overview of Annual Progress Review reports. However, while this monitoring framework should work in theory, investigation by the team revealed deficiencies in practice. Annual Progress Review forms seen by the team included examples that had not been signed by one or other of the supervisors and examples that had not been fully completed, yet had been signed off on behalf of the departmental postgraduate committee. In one example, the Chair of Departmental Postgraduate Committee had countersigned their own student's Annual Progress Review. Since there was no record of a second supervisor for this fourth year student, there was no evidence of any other person reviewing this student's progress.

2.172 Following earlier proposals by the Dean of the Graduate School in February 2015 the PGR Supervision Review Group met in May 2015 and made recommendations designed to remedy deficiencies in supervision records and the documentation of key milestones, including Annual Progress Reviews and upgrade examinations. The proposals made by the Supervision Review Group were approved by Academic Board at its June 2015 meeting for implementation in 2015-16. While noting that it is aware of and beginning to address the deficiencies identified in paragraphs 2.165 and 2.166, the review team **recommends** the College to strengthen within the prescribed timeframe the recording and reporting of supervisory meetings and student progress to ensure that reports are completed diligently, signed off by all parties, and overseen and monitored by the Graduate School Board.

2.173 The College has recently introduced Practice-As-Research PhDs. These are based on the existing University of London PhD, but with different requirements for the written thesis, which is shorter than a traditional thesis, while retaining the same requirement for academic rigour. Students are expected to place their research in a theoretical context, describe their methodology, and demonstrate how their work contributes new knowledge to their subject. The Practice-As-Research format is becoming increasingly popular.

2.174 The College has taken part in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey for the first time, this year. The newly introduced Student Market and Intelligence Team will be tasked with analysing and reporting the findings, initially to Student Experience Sub-Committee, Graduate School Board, Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee and the Research and Enterprise Committee.

2.175 The review team considered that the changes to the terms of reference of the Graduate School Board and the recommendations of the PGR Supervision Review Group have the potential to significantly reinforce the College's central oversight of supervisory arrangements for postgraduate research students and to address those aspects of the Concern submitted to the QAA Concerns Scheme that relate to supervisory practices. College senior managers are acutely aware of the need to effect these changes quickly and senior research managers assured the review team that they would be fully operational by September 2015. From the discussions with the College, the review team considered that it had taken appropriate action to address the issues of quality of supervision and inappropriate supervisor behaviour in the Centre for Cultural Studies upon which much of the Concern was based. Current Postgraduate Research students whom the review team met expressed satisfaction with their supervisory experience and this, taken in conjunction with the results of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2015, which provided no counter-indications, persuaded the review team to accept the College's view that the Concern reflected an isolated problem that was confined to the Centre for Cultural Studies and had not spread to the wider research student body.

2.176 However, at the time of the review visit, the lack of robust institutional oversight of research student supervision and progress prevents the institution from assuring itself that too much reliance has not been placed on a small number of staff for any given research

student, and means that the Expectation is **not met**. The level of associated risk is deemed **moderate** because the College is aware of the issues and expects to resolve them by next academic year.

**Expectation: Not met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

2.177 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. Of the 11 Expectations in this area, 10 are met with low levels of associated risk. Expectation B11 is judged by the team to be not met and the level of risk is moderate, with three recommendations arising. The three recommendations under B11 are clustered around the need to strengthen the College's oversight of aspects of research supervision. A further recommendation under Expectation B3 reflects the need to strengthen central oversight of the professional development of staff engaged in learning and teaching and a final recommendation under Expectation B8 advises the College to ensure that its centrally produced management information is used consistently and effectively in programme review.

2.178 The review team makes three affirmations in this section of action already being taken by the College to address identified areas of weakness. The team affirms the review of the personal tutor system, the action being taken to address the quality and timeliness of assessment feedback to students, and the implementation and evaluation of the revised complaints policy with associated staff training. The steps being taken towards an institution-wide approach to enhancement have also been noted as this is relevant here. Paragraph 4.11 refers.

2.179 The team also identifies four areas of good practice which make a particularly positive contribution to the management of this judgement area. These relate to the range and quality of information available to applicants to the College, the work of the Departmental Student Coordinators in articulating and delivering the student voice, the comprehensive support provided by the College to support the work of Departmental Student Coordinators which includes leadership training, and the effectiveness of the management information and web-based guidance provided by the College for programme monitoring.

2.180 In summary, the College makes available to its students learning opportunities that are appropriate to the intended learning outcomes of the awards for which they are studying. The review team deliberated at considerable length before deciding on the basis of the evidence available to it that the quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations. It reached this conclusion because all but one of the applicable Expectations are met. The Expectation not met represents a moderate rather than a high risk because it relates to a confined area of the College's activity that can be addressed without major structural, operational or procedural change. The College is aware of the issues, has implemented a number of changes already and expects to implement the remainder by the start of next academic year.

### 3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

#### **Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision**

#### **Findings**

3.1 The College publishes information about its provision via its website and a series of printed materials that include prospectuses for undergraduate, postgraduate and international applicants. The College also produces information for its short courses. Prospectuses are available via the Programme Enquiries team, at UCAS fairs and at Open Day events. Information is available online for both prospective and current students. The prospectus and website copy related to programmes is coordinated by the Communications team, with approval of content being given by the academic Heads of Departments and the Heads of Professional Services.

3.2 All students receive Departmental handbooks, programme guides and module guides, containing information available in hard copy and via the VLE.

3.3 On completion of their studies, students receive a certificate and from 2014-15 a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) which incorporates the European Diploma Supplement (EDS). In addition to providing information about academic achievement the EDS provides an opportunity for students to include information about additional achievements including, for example, work experience and volunteering activities.

3.4 Information on the College's quality assurance processes is managed by the Quality Office and published online. The College makes available its governance-related documents online and these include its mission statement, student charter and wider information sets.

3.5 The College has processes in place that allow for the Expectation to be met in theory.

3.6 In order to test the Expectation the review team examined a number of documents that included a selection of programme handbooks; Student Charter; the undergraduate, postgraduate and international prospectuses; materials and documentation used for open days and programme promotion; and a selection of College policy documents. The review team also reviewed the website and the VLE. A number of meetings was held with staff and students across the College.

3.7 The review team tested the Expectation by examining the different types of information produced by the College for its audiences. The College produces a number of prospectuses for prospective students. There is an online portal that provides specific information for schools and colleges' admissions tutors. The review team found that the prospectuses provide detailed information about individual programmes of study which are supplemented by individual programme pages on the website. The programme pages contain additional information about scholarships and awards, where available. The website includes links to programme specifications and modules and a comprehensive range of further information which potential applicants might require to inform their decision, such as financial support, study mode, campus information and dates of study. Key Information Sets can be accessed via the online prospectuses.

3.8 The review team examined evidence of programme and fee information that is provided for applicants both home and overseas. From 2016-17 the College intends to set international fees so that there will be no inflationary increases over the duration of the programme.

3.9 Successful applicants receive a variety of information prior to and during arrival. On arrival, new and returning students are able to access a variety of information about their studies via the VLE and via programme guides and handbooks. The College provides a number of welcome events and activities that include information provided by the library services, and a student news information email. The October 2014 edition informed students about the Ambitious Futures graduate placement scheme, Erasmus+ and study abroad opportunities in China, volunteering opportunities, the International Student Society and details of services provided by SALS and the Students' Union. Students told the review team that they were confident about the accuracy and availability of information produced and provided by the College.

3.10 The review team examined the College's processes for ensuring the accuracy of its information and found that this responsibility resides with the Communications Team, with approval of content being given by the academic heads of departments and the heads of professional services. Information about programmes delivered by collaborative partners is also subject to review and approval.

3.11 Programme handbooks are produced using a prescribed template and style guidelines and must be signed off by the responsible head of department or nominee. The review team checked the information available to current students in programme handbooks and module outlines and found it to be consistent and comprehensive. Handbooks include relevant academic regulations, module information, assessment methods, information about additional student services and support, links to the VLE, reading lists, resit information, detailed timetable and schedules, and contact details of lecturers. Handbooks also contain grading information and information on extenuating circumstances. All handbooks are available to students via the VLE. Handbooks are updated annually and their production is supported by a member of the Communications team to ensure adequate checks for accuracy. Students at collaborative partners receive handbooks and programme specifications that are produced by the partner institution using criteria specified by the College. Students were positive about the amount and quality of information they received at programme level. They were appreciative of information received via the VLE, while noting only that there was some variation in the use of the VLE made by departments and individual tutors.

3.12 The College makes use of its website to inform actual and potential students about its regulatory framework. This includes Undergraduate and Postgraduate Student Regulations, along with a set of General Regulations and Assessment Regulations for Taught Degrees. The webpages also provide public access to all governance documents including public information, KIS, the HEFCE Wider Information Set, committee structures, the College Charter and the Student Charter. The College website also displays its mission, vision and values and an introduction by the Warden.

3.13 Students told the review team about issues with the late publication of timetables. Similar concerns are expressed in the student submission which observes that the issue is being addressed and that the Students' Union is working with the College to introduce a centralised timetabling system. College staff confirmed that the adoption of a central timetable is imminent.

3.14 The student submission comments on delays in updating departmental web pages. Students told the review team that variable use of the VLE was made by academic staff and departments, but that when it was used the quality of information was high.

3.15 The review team examined evidence of programme and fee information provided for both home and overseas applicants and was able to verify that the College has a process in place for the annual reviewing and discussion of fees at a senior level.

3.16 The College provides access to a wide range of information for its various audiences in both print and online format, and students generally comment positively about its accuracy and accessibility. The College has processes in place to ensure the accuracy of information is routinely monitored. For these reasons the Expectation is met and the level of associated risk is low.

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

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

3.17 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. There are no recommendations or features of good practice in this area. The review team is satisfied that the College has effective processes in place to ensure that the information it provides for internal and external audiences is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The review team concludes that the quality of information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

### Findings

4.1 The College is in the process of developing a centralised approach to quality enhancement, responsibility for which has up to now been located within individual academic departments.

4.2 A new role of Pro Warden for Teaching, Learning and Enhancement was created in September 2014, with responsibility for those institutional strategies pertaining to student achievement, experience and employability, and to learning and teaching. An appointment to the post was made in January 2015.

4.3 The College's committee structure was also recently revised as one of the outcomes of a review of its governance framework that reported in June and September 2014, and a clearer emphasis was subsequently placed on how enhancement is addressed through its deliberative mechanisms. The Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee was renamed the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee from the start of 2014-15, and given responsibility for strategic planning and policy development matters relating to learning, teaching, enhancement, and the student experience. At the same time, a Student Experience Sub-Committee, reporting to LTEC, was established to develop, monitor and promote enhancement initiatives around the student experience.

4.4 The College's approach to enhancement is said to be embedded currently within its Strategic Plan. The student experience is one of the four pillars of this plan, and related key performance indicators refer to the improvement of student satisfaction and retention rates, as well as to the resources available to students at the College.

4.5 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy also has an implicit enhancement remit. It identifies seven core themes (including internationalisation, diversity and widening participation, graduate employability, and new resources and approaches for teaching and learning), and associated institutional aims. Department-level action plans and performance indicators outline how these aims are to be enacted at a local level, and are monitored by the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee. There are no equivalent College-wide performance indicators. The review team was informed that a key aspect of the role of the Pro Warden Teaching, Learning and Enhancement is to lead the development and delivery of the next iteration of the institutional Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, the current version of which expires in 2016. The team heard that the College expects this document to be defined as a Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Strategy, when it is redrafted next year, to underscore its purpose of drawing together the institution's enhancement aims and objectives.

4.6 Finally, a Student Experience and Engagement Strategy, to be approved in September 2015, aims to articulate the College's current and future approach to enhancing the student experience. The final version will make explicit its links with other related College strategies, particularly the Strategic Plan and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

4.7 The College's vision for enhancement as it is currently articulated through its institutional-level strategies is not a fully cohesive one, and the review team could not find

evidence of a deliberate and overarching strategy driving or determining the College's enhancement activity.

4.8 The team nevertheless noted centrally supported examples of enhancements to the student learning experience. These initiatives link particularly to student retention, in the case of a Peer Assisted Learning Scheme (or PALS) and GoldStart, a programme supporting transition to higher education, and to employability, with work being undertaken under the auspices of the SYNAPSE programme. Similarly, TaLIC provides guidance to staff in relation to learning and teaching practice, and operates a Learning and Teaching Fellowship scheme that provides financial support for specific enhancement projects in the areas of learning, teaching and assessment. TaLIC is represented on all periodic review panels, thereby linking quality assurance and quality enhancement across the College.

4.9 The review team also agreed that the work being undertaken by DSCs was particularly noteworthy, and supported the institution's view that this mechanism for student engagement is also one of the key drivers in enhancement at the College.

4.10 Taken together with the College's existing quality assurance processes, all of which provide an appropriate opportunity for the identification and dissemination of good practice and local enhancement activity, these initiatives provide a strong basis for a future enhancement strategy at the College.

4.11 The review team confirms that these activities derive from an emerging strategic approach to quality enhancement, and that recent changes to the College's senior management roles and deliberative structures provide an effective framework for future developments in the area of enhancement. In the light of the developments identified above, the team **affirms** the steps the College is taking towards an institution-wide approach to enhancement. It concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

4.12 In reaching its judgements about the enhancement of student learning opportunities the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. There are no recommendations for improvement in this area.

4.13 The team identified two linked features of good practice under Expectation B5 that are relevant to the enhancement of learning opportunities. The first acknowledges the key role played by Departmental Student Coordinators in articulating and delivering the student voice across the College, while the second acknowledges the College's investment in them through the comprehensive support and development it provides. These features of good practice are complemented by other examples of enhancement activity.

4.14 The team was unable to fully relate these instances of enhancement activity to an overall enhancement strategy. It did however note a number of changes to senior management roles and committee structures evidencing an emerging strategic approach and affirmed the steps the College is taking towards an institution-wide approach to enhancement. The team therefore concluded that the enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

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

### Findings

- 5.1 The College has developed an innovative approach to capturing, and relaying the student voice through the creation of the Departmental Student Coordinator (DSC) role, which attracts a bursary and is central to student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement at the College. Students taking on this role receive training and are in a position to ensure that the student voice is captured and reported both at departmental and College level.
- 5.2 Each department aims to have a minimum of two undergraduate and one postgraduate DSCs. DSCs ensures that feedback from student representatives at programme level is integrated into termly reports to LTEC. DSCs meet with heads of department at least once a term to discuss any department wide issues, and with senior staff at fortnightly meetings. They also periodically meet the Warden.
- 5.3 DSCs have also been involved in the development of the Student Experience and Engagement Strategy, both through membership of SESC and participation in focus groups.
- 5.4 An important aspect of DSCs' work is the collaborative annual projects they undertake based on common issues raised by the student body, such as for centralised timetabling and the provision of learning spaces. These reports are presented to the Senior Management Team, with an action plan presented to LTEC and make a major contribution to assuring the quality of the student learning experience.
- 5.5 Students' Union elected officers are members of Council and students are represented on the College's Academic Board and major deliberative committees at which quality assurance and the student experience are discussed. Students are not represented on the Research and Enterprise Committee. Students who met the review team confirmed attendance at Departmental Boards, the Academic Board and the Quality and Standards Sub-Committee. A review of minutes of committees confirmed that with some minor exceptions this was broadly the case.
- 5.6 In addition to formal exchanges, the good working relationship between the College and the Students' Union enables regular, informal meetings to take place and key members of staff such as the Warden, Registrar and Secretary and Pro Warden (Teaching, Learning and Enhancement). Similarly, the Students' Union Chief Executive meets regularly with the Head of SALS, and the Quality Office meets with the Students' Union Student Voice and Representation Coordinator to plan agendas for DSC meetings.
- 5.7 The terms of reference of all committees other than Research and Enterprise Committee provide for student representation.
- 5.8 As set out in the Periodic Review Policy students engage in the development of the Periodic Review self-evaluation document, are invited to participate in the periodic review meetings, and are involved in drawing up the action plan in response to the outcomes of periodic review. Evidence seen by the review team indicated that in most cases students had played a full role in the periodic review process, including involvement in staff away days when programme development was being considered.
- 5.9 The Students' Union is invited to participate in the Senior Staff Residential and at the most recent event led a session on 'What could staff-student partnership really mean?'

5.10 Students have further participated in the Library User Group to help shape the development of library resources including both the physical buildings and the resources and it is expected that they will be on the Student Services User Group.

5.11 The College also obtains feedback by engaging with the outcomes of student surveys, including the NSS, the DLHE, the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey. Departments further engage students via module evaluation surveys, usually completed at the end of the second term, with some departments, such as History, obtaining feedback termly. The review team found numerous examples of the College acting on the student contribution and closing the feedback loop.

5.12 Overall the College is receptive to the student voice and is taking appropriate steps to engage students formally and informally in quality assurance and enhancement. The DSC role is particularly innovative and enables student feedback to be reported coherently and with impact at both departmental and College levels.

## Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 29-32 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#)

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

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

### Academic standards

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

### Award

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

### Blended learning

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

### Credit(s)

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

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

### Dual award or double award

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

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

### **Enhancement**

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

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

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

See also **distance learning**.

### **Framework**

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

### **Framework for higher education qualifications**

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

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

### **Programme (of study)**

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

**Programme specifications**

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

**Public information**

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

**Quality Code**

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

**Reference points**

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

**Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

**Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

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

**Threshold academic standard**

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

**Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such resources as course handbooks, information and reading lists; blogs, message boards and forums; recorded lectures; and/or facilities for online seminars (webinars).

**Widening participation**

Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel: 01452 557 000  
Email: [enquiries@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@qaa.ac.uk)  
Website: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

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