Higher Education Review of Bishop Burton College

October 2014

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Bishop Burton College. The review took place from 13 to 16 October 2014 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Ruth Ayres
- Dr Philip Bassett
- Ms Caitlin Oliver (student reviewer)
- Dr Anya Perera.

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

In Higher Education Review the QAA review team:

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

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

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

The themes for the academic year 2013-14 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,[2] and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

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

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] Higher Education Review themes: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106.
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review web pages: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Bishop Burton College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Bishop Burton College.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Bishop Burton College.

- The internal course approval process demonstrates both rigour of College oversight and responsiveness to sector needs (Expectation B1).
- The annual review of admissions and induction processes enables continuous improvement (Expectation B2).
- The strong partnerships at course level between the higher education team, students and teaching staff (Expectation B3).
- Industry and employer contacts contribute to the development, delivery and enhancement of the curricula (Expectation B3).
- Deliberate steps are taken which effectively support students' progression from further education to higher education (Expectation B4).
- The wealth of opportunities for, and the College's openness to, receiving feedback from students (Expectation B5).
- College-wide engagement with national and local employers contributes significantly to the development of the curricula, and provides opportunities to enhance student learning (Expectation B10).
- The promotion and enabling of staff to develop and update their practice-based knowledge and skills (Enhancement).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Bishop Burton College.

By April 2015:

- introduce a mechanism for specifying the skills and learning development to be achieved on each placement (Expectation B10).

By September 2015:

- provide a greater focus on pedagogies that will inform and enhance teaching practice (Expectation B3)
- ensure a greater alignment between course-level innovations and the College's Strategic Plan (Expectation B3)
- review and evaluate the effectiveness of student engagement mechanisms (Expectation B5)

- review organisational and administrative procedures for the allocation, implementation and monitoring of placements (Expectation B10)
- articulate and ensure a shared understanding of the terms enhancement and good practice (Enhancement)
- monitor and evaluate more fully the impact of enhancement activities on student learning (Enhancement).

Theme: Student Employability

Employability is embedded throughout the College, with employer links ranging from national bodies to local employers. The College operates a number of commercial enterprises that promote students' acquisition of employability skills. The College could benefit from a more systematic organisation and formalisation of these links and its liaison with employers.

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

About Bishop Burton College

Bishop Burton College (the College) was founded in 1954 and is a specialist land-based further education and higher education college operating within an estate of 409 hectares. The College is situated close to the market town of Beverley in the East Riding of Yorkshire with a second campus (Riseholme) in Lincolnshire.

The College offers courses of study in all key sectors of land-based work including agriculture; animal behaviour, management and science; countryside management and science; environment; science; horticulture; equine science; and rehabilitation and therapy. It also offers higher education courses in sport, police studies, business management, teacher education, multi-disciplinary design, fashion and clothing, and floristry design. In 2013-14, 847 higher education students enrolled on courses at the College. Of the 2012-13 graduating cohort, 94 per cent progressed to employment or further study.

The College's mission is 'To be a leading specialist College focusing on excellence, employability and enterprise for our customers'. Its strategic aims, listed below, are reviewed and revised regularly to ensure that the College is responsive to local, regional and national policy and to demographic changes:

- provide an outstanding learning experience for all
- deliver provision that meets national priorities and is responsive to local and regional needs
- develop the capacity and capability of our staff to contribute effectively to the College agendas of quality, enterprise, sustainable development, and innovation
- ensure strong financial health, and organisational sustainability from effective use of estate, infrastructure and resources.

Since the previous review, the College acquired Riseholme College near Lincoln in 2012. While the provision offered at the current facility is at further education level, the strategic intent is to offer higher education courses at a new Riseholme campus from September 2015. This will enable the delivery of land-based higher education courses in Lincolnshire, where there is an unmet demand for land-based degree study. This will also provide progression opportunities from Level 3 courses onto degree-level study for students in Lincolnshire and also higher skills continuing professional development.

Changes in the strategic direction of the College's University partners necessitated a review of validation arrangements. The College was validated by the Royal Agricultural University in 2013 to deliver a number of courses in agriculture and equine studies, and is closing its provision validated by Leeds Metropolitan University (now known as Leeds Beckett University). The College has expanded its provision in partnership with the University of Hull and continues with teacher education provision with the University of Huddersfield. The College is also reintroducing Higher National qualifications.

The College has maintained and built on the good practice identified in the previous review, and has taken steps to address all of the recommendations. A virtual learning environment has been introduced and is continually developed, supported by the work of i-learn champions. The College has implemented a clear system for ensuring the accuracy, completeness and currency of information, the effectiveness of which is endorsed by students. The College has developed its teaching observation system and has considered the introduction of a separate peer observation system. Peer observation does take place informally within the College and staff find these opportunities helpful. The College has many ways of obtaining feedback from students, both informally and formally, but has yet to evaluate fully the effectiveness of these mechanisms. The College has developed an Employer Charter and an Employer Workplace Guide to provide clearer information about their contribution to students' learning on placements. However, the nature of what students are expected to learn in the workplace could be further developed and clarified.

Explanation of the findings about Bishop Burton 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.

Explanation of the findings about Bishop Burton College

1 Judgement: Maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies

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   Different levels of responsibility are devolved by each validating partner, but all of the College's courses are designed in line with the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, and are subject to both internal and the validating partner's approval and validation processes. All awards have a course specification which is designed by staff involved with the course. These are internally scrutinised and sent to the relevant validating partner for approval. Learning outcomes are clearly defined in the course specifications and are made available to students in their course handbooks, module handbooks and, in broad terms, the College prospectus.

1.2   Templates, frameworks and the regulations of the validating partner are used by the College when developing new courses. The validating partners have ultimate responsibility for securing academic frameworks, but the College has internal checks to ensure that design aligns with national reference points such as the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, qualification characteristics and credit frameworks.

1.3   The College provided minutes of meetings between College staff and University partners where course development is discussed. These include course team meetings, and meetings with students about course revalidations.

1.4   Validation documents show that the College follows the validating partner's guidelines and processes, using documentation and templates that are supplied by the relevant institution. Internal scrutiny during design and pre-validation ensures that the courses comply with the requirements of the respective validating partner and the FHEQ and is benchmarked to the sector skills, and this is reviewed through the processes of annual monitoring.

1.5   This Expectation is met and level of risk is low due to the extent of both internal and external scrutiny to ensure that the College qualifications are at the appropriate level and that learning outcomes align with the FHEQ. The College also considers and takes account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. Consideration is also given to the Quality Code to ensure that the requirements of the FHEQ are met.

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

1.6   The College's courses adhere to the academic principles and regulations of the respective validating body and delegated responsibilities are clearly documented. Liaison between the College and its validating partners occurs at different levels of the College from the Principal to curriculum teams, with the Assistant Principal Higher Education being the central point of contact at senior management level. The Higher Education Academic Management Group (HEAMG) chaired by the Assistant Principal Higher Education is responsible for developing, planning and monitoring higher education performance against targets and reports to the strategic leadership group chaired by the Principal. These groups, together with the Quality Improvement Committee (QIC), support the maintenance of standards of the degree-awarding partners. The QIC is charged with directing the College's quality improvement and reports directly to the Board.

1.7   Changes to the senior management structure ensure that the College's specific responsibilities in each partnership are maintained. Concepts for potential new courses are proposed to partners to complement existing validated course allocations. The validating partners have overall responsibility for their courses with the Assistant Principal Higher Education charged with liaison at a senior level.

1.8   There are well documented academic frameworks and procedures, which are mapped against the Quality Code. Validating partners are involved at all stages of the course cycle from initial concept and development through to monitoring and review. Validation events are chaired by the awarding body and involve external expertise and scrutiny. The College also has mechanisms to assure itself of standards and alignment to benchmarking statements and FHEQ descriptors, with training provided by validating partners and annual updates on policy and procedural changes via staff development events.

1.9   The team scrutinised documentation including the course approval process, validation reports, annual monitoring, external examiners' reports and validating partner reports. The team also held meetings with senior managers and teaching staff including Curriculum and Learning Managers and Higher Education Programme Leaders.

1.10   There are robust mechanisms and systems in place to fulfil this Expectation and the College demonstrates a clear understanding of its responsibilities. College responsibilities are defined in partnership agreements with its University partners. All documentation is clearly referenced to the Quality Code. Oversight is maintained by validating partners, and internally by the Assistant Principal Higher Education and her team. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.11   Information regarding all of the College courses is available to all stakeholders by several routes, including the prospectus, course handbooks, College website and virtual learning environment (VLE), all of which are reviewed annually, or monthly in the case of the website. Course specifications are validated by the relevant degree-awarding bodies; they are then reviewed by the College course teams at an Annual Planning Day. Modifications are agreed and approved internally before being sent to the external examiners and to the relevant awarding body for validation.

1.12   The College uses its awarding body's templates for module and course specifications, which make links to learning outcomes and assessment strategies. There is reference to a University assessment tariff to ensure parity for modules with the same credit value. All University partners require that any changes to modules or courses are approved by them prior to delivery.

1.13   New course proposals are sent to the relevant awarding body for approval. Forms from the University of Hull make explicit that developmental consent must be attained before application for full approval. University link tutors advise on assessment, regulations, approval of assessment and changes.

1.14   Course development happens either through strategic decisions or from curriculum areas. Minutes were provided from student feedback meetings in which students were positive towards changes made to courses.

1.15   The College clearly articulates its responsibilities and demonstrates that it follows awarding body procedures. Awarding bodies also have relevant checks in place.
The Expectation is met and the 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

1.16   Course design and approval processes refer to the FHEQ, benchmarking statements and national occupational standards where applicable. The College does not offer courses accredited by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, or research degrees.

1.17   Courses follow an internal approval process that aligns with the College's strategic direction and mission. Staff have access to the validating partner's quality assurance manuals, templates and regulations with scheduled team meetings to monitor progress and contribution to the final validation documentation. New proposals are discussed with partners, and internal scrutiny prior to validation includes sector and industry consultation with externality via the validation and approval process; this ensures compliance with the FHEQ and with the degree-awarding body.

1.18   The College's internal procedures ensure that it fulfils the requirements of its awarding partners. Updates on validations were presented to the Curriculum and Standards Executive but are now received by the Higher Education Academic Management Group. This is chaired by the Assistant Principal Higher Education who signs off proposals and informs the strategic leadership group.

1.19   Assessments are seen by a link tutor or colleagues at partner institutes (Royal Agricultural University/University of Hull) prior to use but more autonomy is afforded by Leeds Metropolitan University. Conversely, the University of Huddersfield sets all assessments for its provision, which are approved by the University-appointed team of external examiners. Other assessment briefs and examinations are sent to the external examiner and examinations are also scrutinised by an internal panel. The link tutor at the Royal Agricultural University provides academic support to the team giving advice on assessment, regulations and exam boards. The link tutor meets with the team and students and produces an annual report that includes an overview of academic standards and student performance.

1.20   The team scrutinised course approval documentation, including minutes of College course teams and committee meetings, completed templates and other validation documentation. The team also looked at reports produced by or for the University partners and other internal mechanisms to review the validity of assessments including module reviews and trends, summaries from the Annual Planning Day, and quality improvement plans. The team met with staff operating at all levels of the organisation including those involved with delivery, course design and review and sought the views of both current students and alumni.

1.21   The College has procedures in place to ensure the validity and relevance of all its courses and feedback from students, employers and external examiners is captured in the annual monitoring review process. This is supported by the Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Review meetings which are held three times a year. The Annual Planning Day is an important part of the review mechanism for schemes and is adopted universally.

Proposed changes to modules, substantiated by external examiner, student and employer feedback, are identified at planning days and considered at Scheme Board meetings for courses validated by Leeds Metropolitan University and the Joint Board of Studies meeting for the University of Hull. All changes made to courses adhere to the respective awarding body's rules and guidelines. Changes to schemes validated by the Royal Agricultural University, which is the College's newest partner, are approved at its academic standards committee. The College produces annual quality reports for the University of Hull and Leeds Beckett University.

1.22   There is a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities at all levels, which are well documented. There is rigour in internal scrutiny which is data-rich. The College reviews its own practices and there are examples of how senior management committees fulfil their terms of reference in the context of the academic cycle, using key performance indicators and examining trends.

1.23   The College has appropriate mechanisms to ensure it is fulfilling the requirements of its validating bodies and regularly liaises with each awarding body. The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.24 Following successful internal approval, each course is validated by a University partner using their academic requirements. Externality is provided for each validation event, often including an employer representative as well as an academic from another university. The awarding University appoints an external examiner for each course and conducts the examination award and progression boards. Learning outcomes and assessment requirements are clear in each course specification and in module handbooks provided to students, which are detailed and comprehensive. In some instances, these are supplemented further by module study guides.

1.25 University partners review assessments before they are finalised. The University of Huddersfield set all assessments for the Teaching Education courses within the Consortium. A College panel reviews all examination papers prior to submission to the external examiner and to the University partner.

1.26 Assessment strategies are reviewed annually linking to the focus on employability. Each course produces an action plan in response to external examiners' reports which are tracked by the Quality Office. The College produces an external examiners' summary report and reports are submitted to QIC for institutional oversight. Course teams contribute to the annual monitoring report and action plans arising from this. Curriculum Quality Review meetings are held three times a year.

1.27 External examiners report on assessment outcomes each year using the awarding body's template for external examiner reports, and are required to confirm that assessments are appropriate and that standards achieved are comparable with other universities with which they are familiar. Assessment boards, conducted by the awarding University, consider outcomes and student achievement at both module and award boards, where the achievement of credit is confirmed. The partner Universities undertake periodic reviews of their validated courses and produce a written report that includes the findings of their external examiners and the confidence they have in the College's processes for addressing them. These reports are considered by the Senior Leadership Group (SLG), HEAMG and the QIC.

1.28 The team considered a range of documentation relating to the requirements set by the awarding Universities, the external examiner reports for a range of courses and a selection of responses to the external examiners from the course teams, course-level quality improvement plans, the composite reports the College provides to senior committees, and the periodic reports of the Universities when reviewing their provision at the College. Confirmation for triangulation was obtained through meetings with staff and students.

1.29   The individual assessment tasks are confirmed initially at validation and annually by course teams using the internal verification process and the awarding Universities' annual scrutiny of assessments or Scheme Board processes. Additionally, assessment strategies are reviewed annually by the College and assignment briefs and examination questions are submitted to external examiners for approval in advance of publication to students.

1.30   Student performance is reviewed via the annual monitoring review process to ensure the effectiveness and appropriateness of the assessments at both module and course level.

1.31   The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low. All internal processes are well established and rigorous.

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

1.32   The College produces an institutional review of validated courses in a partner quality report which is submitted to the validating body. There is rigour in the review processes which include annual monitoring reports, the annual planning event, quality improvement plan for schemes, the production of institutional reports for partners and the annual monitoring cycle timeline. Modifications are reported to validating partners through the appropriate channels. The College's Annual Planning Day reviews course specifications and modules annually. Feedback from external examiners, students, industry and/or employers is sought to inform any modifications.

1.33   There are well established internal review and monitoring processes and the College produces annual overview reports for its validating partners.

1.34   The team examined documents relating to the College's internal review processes and those submitted to the validating partners and cross-referenced these to reports from the validating partners and external examiners' reports. Oversight at team to institutional level was confirmed in meetings with the Assistant Principal Higher Education and her team (Higher Education Registrar and Quality Manager), Curriculum and Learning Managers, teaching staff and students.

1.35   The mechanisms for course monitoring and review are robust, fulfil the requirements of the awarding bodies and provide data-rich information to support the institution's commitment to quality improvement. The College's oversight will be strengthened by a planned institutional annual summary report which will disseminate best practice.

1.36   There are clearly defined responsibilities for both the College and the awarding bodies, which are articulated in the partnership agreements. The College demonstrates that it fulfils its responsibilities through its internal monitoring and review processes, and the production of an annual report for each awarding body. The internal monitoring and review is evaluative, and incorporates feedback and quantitative data. The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.37   The responsibility for ensuring that standards are appropriate for the award rests with the partner University. To ensure this, externality is provided at validation events and external examiners are appointed to each course to monitor progress. At validation, the awarding partner will often include an academic from another university and an employer who is cognisant of the course area under development. The College's course managers nominate external examiners which are considered by the QIC before being presented to the partner University which makes the appointment. After appointment, the College's course managers and HE Programme Leaders will brief the external examiner on the details of the course.

1.38   Senior committees, including the Higher Education Academic Management Group, the Strategic Leadership Group and the QIC, receive summary reports based on the external examiner comments and annual monitoring reports. Each course is required to produce an action plan to address any issues raised by their external examiner; this is monitored by the Higher Education Registrar and Quality Manager, who also compiles an overview report for the QIC which indicates any common themes that need to be addressed at the College level. The awarding bodies undertake an annual review and periodic reviews of the courses they validate to monitor standards and quality.

1.39   The team considered documentary evidence in the form of external examiner reports, validation events, annual monitoring reports, and College-level external examiner and annual monitoring summary reports. These were tested and triangulated through meetings with staff and students.

1.40   The College has comprehensive processes for annual monitoring to keep standards constantly under review which include an Annual Planning Review and termly in-year reviews by the Assistant Principal HE, the Assistant Principal Quality and the Higher Education Registrar and Quality Manager. Assessments are reviewed as part of this process and take into account the comments from external examiners and student evaluations. The College monitors submission and return dates to ensure compliance with their policy for the return of student work.

1.41   Externality is assured at validation and review by the awarding bodies. The College makes use of externality in course design. Internal processes for the nomination of external examiners are rigorous.

1.42   The College has comprehensive initial scrutiny and monitoring arrangements for its courses. Assessments are reviewed annually. Senior committees receive appropriate levels of information on which they are able to make informed judgements. The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

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

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

1.43   The College fulfils its responsibilities for all Expectations, and the level of risk is low in all cases. The College rigorously follows its awarding bodies' policies and procedures for setting and maintaining academic standards, and has thorough internal processes for appropriate discussion and development of new courses. The College works closely with its validating partners in the design, approval and review of courses, which ensures that the academic standards set by the awarding bodies are maintained effectively by the College. The team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies 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 and Approval*

Findings

2.1 Curriculum development aligns with the College's Strategic Plan and the relevant curriculum area's operating plan with a strong emphasis on vocational education and training that meets local and regional demands and sector/industry needs.

2.2 There are clear and distinct processes for validations for each of the three major partners which involve externality with industry/sector input, demand and student input and peer review. Course development teams are given advice and guidance with access to specific training sessions and an online quality operations manual, and use the respective institute's templates. Course specifications are approved during validation and reviewed annually with staff having access to training during the year. The course specification, templates and so on of the relevant validating higher education institution are used and their quality manual and regulations are made available online with access to the partner's VLE.

2.3 Due consideration of benchmarking statements and relevant occupational standards are used during course design and approval, with each course developed to comply with the FHEQ, and new courses must demonstrate employability and have industry/employer engagement. The Higher Education Academic Management Group (HEAMG) is chaired by the Assistant Principal Higher Education and occurs fortnightly, and its remit covers the development and implementation of an innovative and stakeholder responsive curriculum offer. Proposals are approved internally by the Assistant Principal Higher Education after being presented to the HEAMG with a strategic overview taken by the strategic leadership group. Final approval for a new development is given by the Quality Improvement Committee (QIC).

2.4 There is externality throughout the design and approval process. Stakeholders are consulted in course approval which must satisfy the respective validating partners' requirements drawing on external expertise. There are a number of review mechanisms internally and operated by the validating partner to ensure courses are fit for purpose. Internally these mechanisms articulate with three-year operating plans for each curriculum area. All emergent ideas for new curriculum development must align with the College's strategic planning processes and mission.

2.5 Documentary evidence pertaining to course design development and approval from both the College and the awarding institutes was examined both before and during the visit and this was supplemented by discussions with employers, staff and students during the review visit.

2.6 There are various mechanisms to ensure liaison occurs with partner institutes. A course manager and team are identified to develop the course with the relevant Higher Education Programme Leader and Curriculum and Learning Manager responsible for leading development. The College has well defined review mechanisms that include student feedback through mid and end-of-module reviews with quality improvement plans for

schemes. Overarching reviews for courses validated by a partner are submitted to each partner, and the link tutor at the Royal Agricultural University provides an overview.

2.7 The internal mechanisms for proposing a new course involve presenting a full rationale that looks at current providers with evidence of future demand and information from relevant sector skills councils. There is evidence of clear engagement with the employers, industries and the sector at all levels of the College from the Principal to course teams, with students also directly interfacing with employers. Ideas emanate from both curriculum areas and the sector, allowing the College to demonstrate its strategic aim to be responsive to local and sector need and its emphasis on student employability. The internal course approval process demonstrates both rigour of College oversight and responsiveness to sector needs, and is **good practice**.

2.8 The College closely adheres to the policies and procedures of its validating partners and the respective roles and responsibilities are well understood. The levels of scrutiny and review both internally and externally are systematic and ensure effective course design, development and approval. The College's deliberate engagement with the sectors and industries it serves ensures this Expectation is met and the risks are 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

2.9 Entry criteria for all courses is agreed at the development stage before approval at validation. Full-time applications are made via UCAS. Part-time applications are made direct to the College using the College's own application form. Outcomes of applications are then communicated to the students by the means through which they applied. The College reviews the process periodically or as necessary following any national requirements. The College monitors the time taken to process applications and closely monitors students that progress from further education to higher education within the College.

2.10 The application flow chart shows how applications are handled and the roles of student services and the course manager in the application process. Entry criteria are made clear at internal higher education course approval as well as the application for development consent and are confirmed at validation.

2.11 The admissions process is evaluated by an induction and admissions survey sent to students. Additionally, the University of Hull has commended improved timely guidance to applicants with a Disabled Students Allowance.

2.12 There are clear procedures and a flow chart that documents the applications process. Student services make offers when applications meet entry requirements and no other considerations need to be taken into account, but course managers make final decisions in more complex cases through interviewing or assessing applicants.

2.13 The College supplied evidence that admissions procedures are carried out effectively and are monitored by the strategic leadership group. A working group was convened in March 2014 to review the effectiveness of admissions. The team also met with staff and students who confirmed that the processes worked well. In addition, student written feedback on the admissions and induction experience is positive. The annual review of admissions and induction processes enabling continuous improvement is **good practice**.

2.14 The Expectation is met with low risk due to the internal measures in place to monitor and evaluate the admissions process. The College reports on the effectiveness of admissions as part of its annual review processes and admissions criteria are approved prior to partner approval. An area of good practice has been identified as the annual review of admissions and induction processes enables continuous improvement.

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

2.15   The College has a clearly articulated strategic plan which aims to provide an outstanding learning experience for all, and to meet national priorities while being responsive to local and regional needs. The College's 2014-17 Operating Plan sets key performance indicators for the quality of learning and teaching as 90 per cent good or better, and zero per cent inadequate grades by June 2015.

2.16   Teaching staff appointees are approved by the relevant University partner. A College Board Member is also included on SLG recruitment panels. New staff are on probation for one year and receive an individual development plan on appointment, overseen by the Curriculum Area Learning Managers together with a mentor/buddy. The College's Induction and Probationary Review Process for new staff is comprehensively documented, with the process aligned to the College's Values and the Skills and Competency Profiles of the role, and opportunities highlighted for any training and development needs. Action plans are created as appropriate with progress reviews every three months. Staff are required to undertake a formal teaching qualification.

2.17   The College monitors the quality of teaching and learning through a formal observation of teaching, learning and assessment process for all its higher education staff, using a standard template, the outcomes of which are reported to the QIC, and previously to the Curriculum and Standards Executive (Higher Education). Observation teams are established around each curriculum area, with observations taking place for all teaching staff at least once a year. Where the teaching grade is 3 or 4, the staff member is re-observed within six weeks and an action plan developed as appropriate. The observation of teaching, learning and assessment process is revised annually, with consideration at course team meetings and through the annual monitoring and review process.

2.18   The College is committed to developing the capacity and capability of staff, including areas of quality and innovation, with examples of teaching staff applying for continuing professional development external to the College to develop their subject-based practice. Attendance at each internal 'Inspiring Excellence' staff development session is monitored, with outcomes feeding into individuals' performance development reviews.

2.19   There are processes in place within the College to encourage the sharing of good practice, such as the annual 'Ideas Day', a 'Technology Showcase' event, the establishment of a joint further education/higher education QIC and the College's staff development programme: 'Inspiring Excellence'.

2.20   There is evidence of a strategic drive to enhance the College's VLE. A Learning Technology Group is chaired by the Assistant Principal Quality and includes VLE Champions, known as i-learn coaches, and reports to the SLG. The Learning Technology Group has strategic responsibility for leading technology-enhanced learning at the College, and oversees audits of course and module information on the VLE. VLE content is audited against College criteria for bronze, silver or gold status, which is designed to encourage

development of the VLE, facilitate the sharing of good practice in technology-enhanced learning and provide staff development in technology-enhanced learning.

2.21   The review team was given a demonstration of the VLE which is used to house external examiners' reports and responses, course resources including materials used in teaching (for example PowerPoint slides), articles and journals, and more generic resources such as learning resource centre and careers. The VLE is also used to promote extracurricular opportunities, announce changes to College events and provide responses to student feedback via module questionnaires and student forums such as 'You said, we did' posters.

2.22   Students believe the staff to be well trained and qualified, making reference to National Student Survey data and staff members' relevant employment experience enhancing lectures. Students also confirmed that the VLE was accessible both on and off campus. The student submission suggests that the College should make enhancements more visible on the VLE, and make greater use of the VLE for course announcements on the home page. Students also suggested access to the VLE via mobile devices would be useful.

2.23   There is evidence from external examiners' reports, the student submission and meetings the review team held with staff and students of strong partnerships at course level between the higher education team, students and teaching staff, which is **good practice**.

2.24   Teaching is regularly observed through 'Learning Walks' undertaken by senior managers, together with informal opportunities for peer observation. In addition, a Teaching Passport has been introduced in February 2014 to enable staff to reflect upon and evaluate their practice and identify and record their continuing professional development.

2.25   Staff present at regional and national events, and internal staff development focuses largely on subject-specific, industry-updating or practice-based professional development. The Inspiring Excellence programme includes developmental sessions on teaching, learning and assessment practice, including 'levelness', use of mobile technologies and use of Grademark. However, pedagogic development and enhancement relies more on individual staff taking the initiative than through a clear strategic drive to enhance specific aspects of pedagogic practice at higher education level across the College. As such, the review team **recommends** that the College provide a greater focus on pedagogies that will inform and enhance teaching practice.

2.26   Staff participate in the academic staff development opportunities put in place by the College and its validating partners. Higher education teaching staff met by the review team reported that they were keen to try out new ideas as a result of seeing something new and the informal sharing of good practice that takes place between members of the higher education teaching team through, for example, informal discussions and peer observations. The extent to which this development of innovative practice is driven strategically through the College's Strategic Plan is unclear, such that the review team **recommends** that the College ensure a greater alignment between course-level innovations and the College's Strategic Plan.

2.27   There are strong industry and employer contacts which contribute to the development, delivery and enhancement of the curricula and represent **good practice**. This is demonstrated by the variety of ways in which industry and employers contribute to the development, delivery and enhancement of the curricula. Courses are mapped to employer needs and appropriate benchmarks, and year-on-year improvements in employer satisfaction over the last three years are noted in the College's annual survey of employer satisfaction.

2.28   The College articulates a clear strategic plan for learning and teaching, which is underpinned by developments to enhance the VLE and appropriate recruitment processes, observations of teaching practice and continuing professional development for staff to ensure high-quality learning and teaching for students. The College is committed to enabling students to develop and enhance their employability skills through the curricula. The College exhibits strong partnerships at course level between the higher education team, students and teaching staff, with industry and employer contacts contributing to the development, delivery and enhancement of the curricula. The Expectation is met and the level of 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

2.29   Senior committees such as the HEAMG, QIC and Curriculum and Standards Executive (CASE) monitor policies and a range of indicators, including the National Student Survey outcomes, observation of teaching, learning and assessment, student attendance, reports on uptake of College support for disabilities, mid-module survey results and end-of-module reviews.

2.30   An induction is offered to all students each year to prepare them for their studies, confirm College expectations and introduce them to specialist resources and health and safety as appropriate. Students reported these inductions to provide all the information they needed, with the College's higher education entry and induction surveys indicating an increased satisfaction in all measures between 2012-13 and 2013-14. The College holds a 'pre-course forum' over the summer period for all distance learning students to create an online community with other students and staff before they start their courses.

2.31   Risk assessments are undertaken for all students for whom there are potential barriers to learning such that appropriate support can be put in place. All students are provided with tutorial support on an individual or group basis by course managers via timetabled and drop-in sessions where students are aided in the setting, monitoring and achievement of goals. The College has enabled students to access their grades online. This access provides students with the opportunity to maintain a clear view of their progress to date alongside their tutorial records.

2.32   A new Student Support Coordinator was appointed in June 2013. This individual is responsible for the assessment of students' specific learning difficulties (for example dyslexia) and ensuring inclusive and accessible curricula within the College appropriate for learners' needs, as well as providing information to prospective and enrolled students about changes in support from Level 3 to Level 4 and Disabled Students Allowance entitlements.

2.33   Student services provides a centrally located 'one-stop shop' for students with Health and Welfare Officers who provide support with health and welfare, equality and diversity matters and a multi-faith chaplain. Student services supplement the support provided by academic staff and provide learning resource inductions, and there are Academic and Professional Development/Skills modules designed to develop competencies at Levels 4 to 7, and subject benchmarks are used within modules to develop analytical and critical thinking. Students note the professional, useful support received from support staff and the good support they receive from their lecturers.

2.34   The College has made extensive capital investment in new facilities for Equine and Sports students, the STEM and Renewables centres, and the Technology and Skills building; refurbishment of the Higher Education Student Lounge and the Higher Education Learning Resource Centre; and a distinct higher education area, the Princess Anne Centre, with teaching rooms, staff offices and a Higher Education Lounge. The students recognise this large-scale investment in facilities with some students met by the review team noting that it was these specialist facilities that attracted them to study at the College.

2.35   The team reviewed a wide range of documentation provided by the College, including course handbooks, information on the College website and VLE, committee

minutes, admissions and induction procedures, and information about student support services and learning resources. Triangulation was achieved through confirmation at meetings held with support staff, academic staff and students.

2.36   The College has made a significant investment in resources and provides a good level of academic and pastoral support for its students to enable them to develop and achieve their potential. Deliberate steps are taken by the College which effectively support students' progression from further education to higher education, which is **good practice**. There is a clear plan for supporting students to make the transition from Level 3 to Level 4. The curricula are designed to support progression to higher levels. The College has also recently appointed a Progression Officer to provide support to students throughout their studies, including transition from further education to higher education.

2.37   Students feel that there are extensive learning resources available to them, including a dedicated Higher Education Learning Resource Centre, online library access, regular trips to the British Library, online access to UK higher education theses and hard copy books and journals in the main learning resources centre. A silent study area was also created in the Higher Education Learning Resources Centre in 2013-14. Students were generally positive about the 24-hour opening time, the availability of computers on campus and some of the specialist equipment available for use on their courses of study. Part-time students felt unable to take full advantage of these opportunities.

2.38   The College has a tutorial support system in place via timetabled and drop-in sessions where students are aided in the setting, monitoring and achievement of goals. Students are able to monitor their progress against goals through an online portal so that they can work to enhance their learning. The feedback provided to each student in their assignments provides a critical analysis of their work highlighting strong points and giving feedback to aid attainment of a higher grade in the next submission, with assessment criteria made available to students in advance of their assignment tasks. An Academic and Professional Skills module is designed to develop competencies at Levels 4 to 7. Student services supplement the support provided by academic staff and provide learning resource inductions.

2.39   The College has made significant investment in resources and specialist facilities and put appropriate mechanisms in place to enable students to develop and achieve their potential. This is monitored, evaluated and overseen by the College's Senior Committees. Students are provided with a well received induction programme; tutorial support; the opportunity to monitor their progress through online access to their grades; and support from the centrally located student services, with two new appointments made to the College: a Student Support Coordinator and a Progression Officer. In addition, the College takes deliberate steps to support students' progression from further education to higher education. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.40   Students are represented on the College Board via the President of the Student Association, and the Senior College Committees, such as the QIC and the HEAMG.

2.41   Students are represented at course level by course representatives, who are members of Course Committees. Students are also engaged in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience through online mid-module and end-of-module surveys hosted on the VLE; a variety of student forums which include curriculum area/course-level student forum meetings each semester; Hospitality and Residential Hall Forums; and regular open forums held with the College Principal. In addition to providing module feedback at interim and end-of-module stages, students are consulted on the development of new courses and student representatives attend both QIC and Course Committees where new course proposals are discussed. Students on degree courses also complete the National Student Survey.

2.42   The College has put mechanisms in place to involve students in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience, through involvement in the development of new courses; representation on Course Committees, Senior College Committees and College Board; and through module surveys, student forums and the National Student Survey.

2.43   The team reviewed a range of documentation provided by the College, including the student submission, minutes of meetings involving student representatives, analyses of student surveys and forums. Triangulation was achieved through confirmation at meetings held with College staff and students during the review team visit.

2.44   The wealth of opportunities for, and the College's openness to, receiving feedback from students is **good practice**. The College's Senior Committees, the QIC and the HEAMG discuss, review, monitor and oversee student feedback and the results from all surveys, together with action plans created by tutors to improve the student experience in response to the student feedback and survey data. The low response rate for end-of-module questionnaires was discussed at the HEAMG, with response rates found to be generally higher for mid-module surveys. Staff identified that this might be the result of survey fatigue and students not accessing their student emails regularly. A cross-College working group that had been established to look into this issue had concluded that the College would make the mid-module questionnaire shorter to ask about overall satisfaction and then retain the existing end-of-module questionnaire. It was noted by the review team that this working group did not include student membership, and there was a mixed level of awareness among the students met by the review team of the current mechanisms in place for the College to respond to students on their feedback, particularly in relation to what information was made available on the VLE. The College provides feedback to students through the 'You said, we did' posters and service area i-learn pages and course pages. Student course representatives are also given time in class to give verbal feedback to students.

2.45   There is documentary evidence of the College responding to student feedback from student forum meetings, with several examples provided of actions taken at course level to respond to feedback from students and also at institutional level in response to student forum meetings and National Student Survey feedback. However, the students met on the

visit by the review team felt that there were too many surveys, with examples cited where the students felt that the points they had raised (in some cases on more than one occasion) had not been responded to by the College, such that the students concerned had chosen not to engage any further with the College's questionnaires and surveys. The review team **recommends** that the College review and evaluate the effectiveness of student engagement mechanisms.

2.46   Students met by the review team confirmed that course representatives had been invited to attend a training session, but noted that sometimes the training events and Course Committee meetings themselves were held on days when the students were not in College, making it difficult for them to attend and engage in the process.

2.47   To ensure the College responds to students on the points they have raised, the student forum meetings are minuted with the minutes given to course representatives and posted on the VLE for all students to access. Course representatives are also given allocated class time to feed back to their cohort. The review team heard from students and staff about the steps taken by the College to capture the student voice to enhance their educational experience.

2.48   The College has established a variety of different mechanisms to engage students in the quality assurance and enhancement of their learning, with student representation on Senior College Committees and the College Board. While the effectiveness of these mechanisms should be reviewed, the Expectation is met and the 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

2.49   The formal procedures for the assessment of students are within the authority of each University partner that validates the course and requires its academic procedures to be implemented. The validated course requirements are then published within the course specification. The College demonstrates compliance with the requirements of the FHEQ, the Quality Code, Subject Benchmark Statements and National Occupational Standards when designing courses. The setting of credit, levels and assessment tasks are tested during the College's internal processes and at the formal University partner validation event. Similarly, examination board processes and recognition of prior learning remain the responsibility of the awarding University.

2.50   The College has comprehensive processes for annual monitoring to keep standards constantly under review which include the production of annual course monitoring reports, an Annual Planning Review and termly in-year reviews by the Assistant Principal Higher Education and Quality, and the Higher Education Registrar and Quality Manager. Assessments are reviewed as part of this process and take into account the comments from external examiners and student evaluations. The College monitors submission and return dates to ensure compliance with their policy for the return of student work.

2.51   The team considered the College's use of its awarding bodies' regulations and procedures. It reviewed course specifications; the College's internal pre-validation approval event requirements; awarding body validation reports; annual monitoring reports and summaries; and the College's documentation on recognition of prior learning. The team's findings were tested at meetings with staff and students.

2.52   External examiner comments, received verbally at examination boards, are recorded and acted upon in annual planning discussions and in the annual monitoring process. Written reports from the examiners are responded to with an acknowledgement letter and an action plan. The responses are approved by the Assistant Principal Higher Education before despatch. Copies are sent to the validating University for inclusion within their own processes.

2.53   The College implements a number of processes at the pre-validation level to assure that courses are appropriate and meet all partner awarding body requirements. There are extensive monitoring procedures to review the efficiency of ongoing courses. Students have opportunities to comment on their course and modules through online and paper-based surveys.

2.54   The College operates a 15-day return of assignments to students and monitors this to ensure that the procedure is followed. There are a few instances of external examiners commenting on the bunching of assignment dates, the appropriateness of work assigned to the levels and the need for more developmental comments on the feedback provided to students and in the Partner College Quality Report for Annual Review Year 2012/13 Leeds Met.

2.55   Senior committees, including the HEAMG, the Strategic Leadership Group and the QIC, receive summary reports based on the external examiner comments and annual monitoring reports.

2.56   The processes and procedures are detailed. The awarding bodies provide the College with detailed requirements and undertake reviews in addition to the appointment of external examiners, to assure themselves that the College is operating effectively. The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.57   External examiners are appointed by the partner University but course staff at the College may identify a suitable nominee which, if approved by the QIC, is submitted as a nomination to the relevant partner for their consideration. Each course has an external examiner who will receive an induction and detailed documentation from the awarding partner and a separate induction to the College and the specific course. External examiner comments received verbally at examination boards are recorded and considered at annual planning discussions and within the annual monitoring process.

2.58   External examiner reports, using the appropriate awarding University templates, are received by the Quality Office where they are scrutinised by the Higher Education Registrar and Quality Manager before being distributed to the course team. Responses to the external examiner reports are verified by the Higher Education Registrar and Quality Manager, to ensure that all aspects have been addressed and then sent to the Assistant Principal Higher Education for final approval before being sent to the awarding University and the external examiner. The Higher Education Registrar and Quality Manager compiles a composite report, identifying any good practice and themes that require College-wide attention, for consideration at QIC. The Quality Office monitors and records the dates when external examiner reports are received, when they are distributed to the course teams and when the responses are received and sent to the external examiner and the awarding University. External examiner reports and the course team's response are made available to students via the College's VLE.

2.59   The partner Universities undertake periodic reviews of their validated courses and produce a written report that includes the findings of their external examiners and the confidence they have in the College's processes for addressing them. These reports are considered by the SLG, HEAMG and the QIC.

2.60   The team reviewed documentary evidence of external examiner comments at examination boards and awarding body requirements for the external examiner reports together with a number of external examiner reports. The team also reviewed the College's composite external examiners' report, responses to the external examiner reports, partner University periodic reviews and the College's HEAMG and QIC minutes that receive these reports.

2.61   The College has comprehensive processes for annual monitoring to keep standards constantly under review. This includes the production of annual monitoring reports that address the external examiners' comments, from which an action plan is produced that contains a review of the progress made against the previous year's actions.
College processes include an Annual Planning Review and termly in-year course reviews by the Assistant Principal Higher Education and Quality, and the Higher Education Registrar and Quality Manager. Senior committees, including the Higher Education Academic Management Group, the Strategic Leadership Group and the QIC, receive summary reports based on the external examiners' comments and the annual monitoring reports to assure themselves of progress against any issues identified in the quality cycle.

2.62   The University partners appoint the external examiners and provide them with a comprehensive role and responsibility set of requirements. The University partners receive copies of the external examiners' reports and the College's responses. The College

supplements the induction of the external examiners and has a detailed set of processes and procedures for monitoring the reports and their requirements.

2.63   The Expectation is met and the risk level is low. All processes accord with the Quality Code. The awarding Universities appoint and monitor the external examiners and their reports. The College has appropriate processes to monitor the actions and issues arising from the input of the external examiners and receives composite reports at the senior-level committees HEAMG and the QIC.

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

2.64   All courses are reviewed annually, facilitated by Annual Planning Days which are held for each scheme. Course teams review course specifications, course/module handbooks and assessments annually. The process of annual monitoring provides data-driven in-year monitoring and completion of the reports is tracked by the College. The annual monitoring report uses the awarding partner's pro forma and is approved prior to submission to the partner by an internal panel. In the case of the Royal Agricultural University, the link tutor provides an annual report. The Higher Education Management Group, QIC and strategic leadership group each have a role in maintaining institutional oversight to secure continual improvement. Action plans in annual monitoring reports are reviewed by the Curriculum and Quality Review meetings and quality improvement plans are approved by the HEAMG. The quality improvement plans identify areas for development and highlight areas of strength.

2.65   The validating partners, in discharging their responsibilities, ensure courses remain fit for purpose with their own annual monitoring and review processes. An institutional review report is submitted to validating partners and an institutional summary of actions presented to the strategic leadership group. Course monitoring and review is firmly established in the quality cycle with mechanisms to gather feedback from stakeholders; student feedback is sought throughout the year through both formal and informal mechanisms.

2.66   Externality in the monitoring process is secured in two ways. External examiners are nominated internally and appointed by the validating partner. Their reports are considered as part of the annual monitoring process, and incorporated into the annual reports. The College also makes its employer engagement and feedback from employers to monitor the continuing relevance of the courses.

2.67   Compliance with the monitoring and review processes of the validating partners is confirmed in the University of Hull's Partner Quality Enhancement reports, Scheme Board minutes and via the annual review meeting and link tutor annual report. Defined monitoring and review systems provide strategic oversight internally. Examination of these demonstrated that courses are monitored and reviewed internally using the annual monitoring systems of the relevant awarding body and internal systems using quality management tools such as the European Framework for Quality Management and dashboard, the Annual Planning Days and quality improvement plans. The institution provides a PQER report which is signed off by the Strategic Leadership Group and the University of Hull provides the partner feedback on this. Documentary evidence shows that internal monitoring and review are data driven and this supports the review processes of the awarding bodies. Discussions with staff, senior managers, employers and students supported the assertion that monitoring and review are firmly embedded and fitness for purpose is emphasised from the Principal downwards.

2.68   There are a number of established internal review mechanisms underpinned by the European Framework for Quality Management which is used as a tool for quality improvement and fitness-for-purpose reviews. Use of the European Framework for Quality Management has allowed the College to select key performance indicators and tailor the

monitoring process to suit its needs by reviewing dashboard data at predetermined points in its quality cycle.

2.69   There is ample evidence of review and monitoring at all levels with defined roles and responsibilities and this feeds into improvement plans and enhancement agendas.

2.70   The regular and systematic internal and external monitoring mechanisms, which are firmly embedded in the culture of the partner, ensure that this Expectation is met and the 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

2.71   Students are provided with the academic regulations concerning their course, the degree-awarding institution and the College during induction and via handbooks and online materials.

2.72   Academic appeals are considered directly by the appropriate degree-awarding body, with information provided by the degree-awarding bodies regarding the grounds and process for academic appeal clearly accessible online via the hyperlinks given in the course handbooks. Students are able to discuss informal appeals with course managers prior to examination committees.

2.73   The College handles its own complaints via its own College complaints procedure, with an appeal to the degree-awarding body and then finally onto the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. The QIC monitors and records the details of all appeals and the outcomes provided by the partner University.

2.74   All complaints are logged on the Customer Service database, with the process followed and outcomes reached both recorded in the system. Areas for attention and improvement are highlighted and reports made to the SLG and to the QIC.

2.75   The College operates its own complaints procedure, with academic appeals considered directly by the appropriate degree-awarding body. Details about the process and timeframes for both complaints and appeals are made available to students and the College keeps records of academic appeals, complaints and their outcomes.

2.76   The team thoroughly reviewed documentation provided by the College on the complaints and appeals processes. The team tested their findings in meetings with students, and through review of the VLE.

2.77   Students met by the review team felt that their College lecturers were their first point of contact to raise any complaints or to appeal an academic decision. Students are referred to the College website and the Higher Education Handbook for information about complaints and appeals. The Handbook does not clearly distinguish between complaints and academic appeals, and makes only slight reference to matters concerning coursework or assessments under the section headed 'comments'. The section on academic appeals refers students to the validating partner's academic regulations but does not provide further information on the nature of an academic appeal. On i-learn, a URL is provided for each University to link to that institution's appeals pages, but again does not provide further information on what constitutes an academic appeal.

2.78   The College has in place its own complaints procedure and through its partner degree-awarding bodies, and appropriate academic appeals procedures. While these are not easy for students to find, and complaints are not clearly distinguished from appeals, the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low, as all the relevant information is available and students would be guided through it by College staff if required.

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

2.79   Each partner University provides the College with a set of requirements that delineate responsibilities for the management, delivery and quality assurance of the course. The responsibilities vary depending upon the partner.

2.80   The partner Universities validate provision, approve course modifications, appoint external examiners and conduct all award and progression boards. The University of Hull provides feedback on the College's annual quality report, indicating areas of strength and where development can be achieved.

2.81   The College has taken the decision to include either a placement or work-based learning as compulsory modules for all foundation degrees and the majority of its higher education courses, to provide opportunities for students to contextualise their theoretical learning and enhance their employability skills. Senior staff and course teams have developed extensive networks with a wide range of organisations, and engage with these on a variety of levels to liaise over course development and the appropriateness of existing courses.

2.82   Students are responsible for sourcing their placement, although the College does have a number of commercial enterprises where the students may also find a placement, and maintains a database of organisations that offer work placements that have been considered ethically appropriate partners for the College. Course teams also construct their own list of placement providers. All students are assisted in finding a placement if they experience difficulty in sourcing one for themselves.

2.83   The team considered documentation provided by the College, including the responsibility checklists for each awarding body, annual quality reports from the awarding Universities, placement and work-based learning guides, modules, and additional information following meetings with staff. Processes for approving and monitoring work placements were discussed at meetings with staff, students and employers.

2.84   The College-wide engagement with national and local employers contributes significantly to the development of the curricula, provides opportunities to enhance student learning, and is regarded by the team as **good practice**. The placement and work-based learning modules are supported by specific module guidance documentation and a health and safety check, graded according to the level of risk assigned to each placement provision. High-risk placements are assessed by an annual visit from the Placement Manager and lower-risk placements are assessed by a visit every three years with a provider assessment submitted annually.

2.85   Placement guides demonstrate mainly generic reflective assessments and a portfolio on the experiences that the students were able to undertake, and did not specify requirements in terms of skills that students should develop or activities they should engage in and be assessed against. The review team **recommends** that the College introduce a mechanism for specifying the skills and learning development to be achieved on each placement.

2.86   The Expectation is met but there is some moderate risk. There is no assurance for the equity of experience for all students. Greater attention needs to be given to ensuring that students have the appropriate placement to progress their knowledge and achieve the demands of each academic level. There could be more formal review of placement provision to assure the College that placements are fully used to support student learning and development.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.87   The College has effective mechanisms for quality assuring students' learning opportunities in all areas. There is significant good practice in the areas of teaching and learning, student support, and employer engagement in the design, development and delivery of the curricula. The College could further consider the learning outcomes students achieve through their placements to take full advantage of the opportunities offered. There are extensive opportunities for continuing professional development for staff in the area of subject expertise and industry-updating, but the College could provide a greater focus on staff development in pedagogies to support student learning. The team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

3.1 The College's website and printed prospectus provide information for potential students and the general public. Information on the website is internally checked and updated. Publications that must adhere to the requirements of validating partners are appropriately signed off. The College's VLE provides information for staff and current students, giving them one-click access to course materials. The College produces an HE Handbook in addition to course and module handbooks which all contain information for staff and students. In addition, staff also have access to a dashboard which contains information relevant to them.

3.2 There is a higher education charter that details the expectations of the students and what the students should expect from the College. Course leaders and staff contribute text for their relevant pages, and all information is signed off by the Assistant Principal Higher Education. The College has set up a new data management system (funded by JISC) to ensure that College data is centrally available, and collates all different kinds of statistics and information such as Key Information Sets data.

3.3 The College provides information for staff and students, such as policies and procedures. For example, students are provided with the College complaints and appeals policy during induction week. The Higher Education Handbook is available to staff and students and outlines the College procedures and policies. The higher education College charter is also available for students and staff, and includes information on academic regulations as well as the student code of conduct and disciplinary procedures. Staff are also provided with information regarding the College's policies and procedures.

3.4 There are internal and external processes for checking and approving information, which ensure that information produced by the College is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The validating partners produce guidelines and templates for some published material, and with regard to marketing material. There are systems in place for the College to send information to its partners for approval before publication.

3.5 The student submission and self-evaluation document outline the different policies and procedures that are made available to staff and students. Documents provided for staff and students regarding policies and procedures were examined. These documents appeared to be fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.6 University partners carry out audits of publicity material. Internally, individual pages of the prospectus supplied by course managers are approved by the Curriculum and Learning Manager or the Higher Education Programme Leader and are signed off by the Assistant Principal Higher Education.

3.7 Students reported that the website provides an accurate guide for them and the wider public, including updates on higher education news at the College. Students were complimentary about the VLE and the materials available on it.

3.8   The 2010 Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) had an advisable recommendation for implementing a formal system to check the accuracy, currency and completeness of literature available for students on the VLE, with named responsibilities picked up in the IQER action plan. The review team was advised that curriculum teams are responsible for checking and updating their own teaching areas, with CALMs and Higher Education Programme Leaders responsible for ensuring the accuracy of information. The Director of Planning and Performance is responsible for overall oversight of the VLE.

3.9   Students are provided with comprehensive information about modules and courses in handbooks. The mapping of lectures and assessment tasks to the intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria in module guides provides students with clear and current information on the learning opportunities and support available to them. Each course has an Academic and Professional Skills module designed to develop competence in working at Levels 4 to 7.

3.10   The processes in place to check information are effective in ensuring that all information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.11　　The College is clear about its responsibilities for publishing information about the learning opportunities it offers. It has thorough internal processes for producing, monitoring and checking information, which is then signed off by its awarding partners before publication. The team concludes that the quality of the 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 There is strong evidence for a strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities, with strategic aim 1 of the College's Strategic Plan to 'provide an outstanding learning experience for all'. The College states that it has a strong and deliberate strategic approach to ensuring that all students have the best experience and achieve to their full potential. The 2014-17 Operating Plan for the College sets a key performance indicator as 90 per cent good or better, and zero per cent inadequate teaching and learning grades across the curriculum area for the quality of teaching and learning (currently 70 per cent good or better) by June 2015. The College also has a strategic drive to develop technology-enhanced learning in the curriculum through the appointment of VLE coaches in February 2014. These coaches provide staff development in technology-enhanced learning and promote and facilitate the sharing of good practice. The approach to enhancement is led by the Principal and includes the development of the curriculum, the establishment of applied research centres, and commercial partnerships which assist in the development of the employability of College students.

4.2 Employability and curriculum developments in response to needs from industry are seen by the College as main features for the enhancement of students' learning, and as such courses are designed to develop and enhance the students' learning and employability skills. Before the submission of new course proposals to the validating partner, all courses must prove that they are designed to promote student employability, are supported by industry contacts and include an element of work experience.

4.3 There are a number of mechanisms in place to identify and disseminate good practice across the institution: external examiners' reports; observation of teaching, learning and assessment processes reporting into the QIC; the informal peer observation process; 'Learning Walks'; annual 'Ideas Days'; the Annual Teaching and Learning Conference; the College's 'Inspiring Excellence' staff development programme; and sharing of practice between further education and higher education through the joint further education/higher education QIC.

4.4 There is an expectation through the Performance Development Review that staff enhance their practice throughout the year and take advantage of available staff development, with a specific section of the Performance Development Review form focused on individuals' training and development. Staff can also apply for external development activities. The promotion and enabling of staff to develop and update their practice-based knowledge and skills is **good practice**.

4.5 The College has made a significant capital investment in its physical resource to enhance the student learning opportunities through the development of state-of-the-art specialist teaching facilities, such as the commercial mixed farm and equine therapy facilities, a dedicated Higher Education Centre, and the Higher Education Learning Resource Centre. The learning environment continues to be enhanced with the capital spend on new buildings, library resources including e-books, access to dissertations and through the College's Wi-Fi, webinar and VLE facilities. The top floor of the Higher Education Learning Resource Centre has been re-zoned as a quiet study space at the request of students.

4.6   There are a number of quality assurance procedures in place to ensure continual enhancement. The College has adopted the European Framework for Quality Management Model to ensure continuous quality improvement, with the QIC holding responsibility for ensuring continuous quality improvement in the College. There is good evidence of the structures and mechanisms in place (for example the HEAMG) to collect and analyse appropriate data to ensure the enhancement of learning opportunities and teaching practices: Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey data; review of module surveys by the Curriculum and Standards Executive (Higher Education); and annual review of observation of teaching, learning and assessment. Annual monitoring and review is also undertaken for all courses and tutors develop action plans to enhance the student learning experience which are discussed, monitored and overseen by the QIC.

4.7   While the College states that the review and enhancement of learning opportunities occur through annual monitoring and review and the periodic review of courses, it does not offer a written definition for enhancement, or provide any specific policy, procedure or strategy documents to give guidance. College staff demonstrated differing understandings of enhancement and good practice in the review meetings. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College articulate and ensure a shared understanding of the terms enhancement and good practice.

4.8   There is evidence of a strategic drive to enhance the College's VLE, with the appointment of VLE Champions in February 2014 and the establishment of bronze, silver and gold criteria to encourage development of the sites. The VLE coaches work with Higher Education Course Leaders and Curriculum and Learning Managers to improve the quality and variety of resources on the VLE through an audit of content against College criteria for bronze, silver or gold, and through staff development and the sharing of good practice. The student submission refers to continuous improvements to the implementation of the VLE, such that it is always accessible both on campus and off site, and students met by the review team confirmed that the VLE was accessible both on and off campus.

4.9   The student voice is captured through a variety of means and used to enhance curricula, for example with course representatives appointed for each course; a variety of staff/student forums held each year as referred to in detail in section B3; Student Representatives on Senior College Committees such as QIC; student feedback on entry/induction; and student feedback on modules both mid-module and end of module, overseen by University committees and HEAMG respectively. The significantly lower response rate for end-of-module questionnaires relative to mid-module questionnaires has been considered by a cross-College working group which has made recommendations to address this issue as outlined in section B5.

4.10   The College has put various mechanisms in place to feed back to students on the points they raise, including meeting minutes circulated to course representatives which are additionally posted on the VLE for all students to access, allocated class time for course representatives to feed back to their cohort and 'You Said, We Did' posters for display on campus. The College's Senior Committees and the HEAMG discuss, review, monitor and oversee student feedback and the results from all surveys, together with action plans created by tutors to improve the student experience in response to collected student feedback and survey data. The College has a strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities, as articulated in its strategic plan, with strong links to industry and employers in the design and delivery of curricula. The promotion and enabling of staff to develop and update their practice-based knowledge and skills is **good practice**, and there has been a strategic approach to the enhancement of the VLE. The College has made a significant investment in resources to enhance the students' learning experience and has various mechanisms in place to capture student feedback. While there is evidence of informal sharing of practice, together with formal and informal opportunities to reflect on and

review practice, the College could monitor and evaluate more fully the impact of enhancement activities on student learning. Similarly, there was no clear College-wide definition of enhancement or good practice, such that it is recommended that the College articulates and ensures a shared understanding of these terms.

4.11 There is clear evidence of close working partnerships with a range of employers and industry experts, with, for example, the provision of guest lecturers; applied research opportunities; and hosting events such as the Northern Farming Conference and the Annual Higher Education Showcase, at which students disseminate their dissertation research via a poster presentation to employers. Some students additionally undertake specialist short courses and industry-driven skills certificates, for example British Horse Society qualifications.

4.12 Students met by the review team felt that they had extensive learning resources available to them, and appreciated the 24-hour opening of the Learning Resource Centre.

4.13 Good practice is noted through annual monitoring reports and the observation of teaching. However, the impact of identified elements of good practice on student learning does not appear to be monitored and/or evaluated in a systematic way, so the review team **recommends** that the College monitor and evaluate more fully the impact of enhancement activities on student learning.

4.14 The College demonstrates a clear strategic approach to enhancement, with a considerable number of mechanisms for enhancing students' learning opportunities through the continual monitoring and development of the curriculum, the involvement of industry expertise in teaching and learning, and the significant enhancement in learning resources available to students. The College actively seeks student, employer and sector views on the relevance and quality of its courses. The Expectation is met, and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.15   The College demonstrates a clear strategic approach to enhancement which is embedded throughout the College. The main approaches to enhancement are through engaging with industry and employer contacts to design, develop and enhance the curricula. All courses include an element of work-based or employment-related learning to enhance students' employability. The College has a number of mechanisms in place to identify and disseminate good practice across the institution. Staff are expected to continually enhance their practice through relevant training and development, which the team considered to be good practice.

4.16   There are a number of quality assurance procedures in place to ensure continual enhancement, based on the European Framework for Quality Management. However, the College does not clearly define what it means by enhancement and does not provide guidance on how it intends to achieve it. It is therefore recommended that the College articulate and ensure a shared understanding of the terms enhancement and good practice.

4.17   The student voice is captured through a variety of means and used to enhance the curricula and teaching and learning. It also has various mechanisms to feed back to students on how it has responded to their feedback. While the College has a number of ways of engaging with students, it does not clearly monitor the effectiveness of its responses to feedback on student learning. It is recommended that the College monitors and evaluates more fully the impact of enhancement activities on student learning.

4.18   The team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1   The College places employability at the centre of its mission and strategic aims. The College places an emphasis on establishing commercial partnerships to further this aim with work placements and work experience. The commercial partnerships are also integral to the College's applied research activity, including extensive farm and other trials of work, involvement in student dissertations and projects, and curriculum developments.
The College emphasises its role as a vocational provider and in offering employment opportunities which extend to offering jobs to students via technician posts. The emphasis on offering employment opportunities at all levels is also reflected in its introduction of a staff graduate trainee scheme for lecturer posts.

5.2   The College's strategies to promote student employability include work placements and work-based learning; opportunities for student enterprise and entrepreneurship; events with employers; students entering external competitions; and the continued professional development of staff.

5.3   There are regular meetings between course teams and employers, and employers are also canvassed for their views on the College. The College actively engages with employers and the Employer Workplace Guide details what is expected of employers offering placements, but also emphasises opportunities at the College for continuing professional development. The College hosts the Northern Farmers' Conference (organised by its partner Agrii) and its links with dealerships and Kubota feature in promotional material, which all articulate sector needs and potential careers for students in the land-based sector.

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning

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

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

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

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

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