Higher Education Review of Fareham College

February 2015

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Fareham College. The review took place from 2 to 5 February 2015 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Ms Tessa Counsell
- Mr Ken Harris (student reviewer)
- Dr Abigail Hind.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Fareham 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 academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
  - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

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

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

The themes for the academic year 2014-15 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,[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 Fareham College

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

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following feature of **good practice** at Fareham College.

- The close working relationship between the College and employers, enabling engineering students studying Higher National programmes to progress within their employer apprenticeships (Expectation B4).

Recommendations

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

By August 2015:

- ensure annual monitoring reports are consistent in the level of detail provided and include the relevant sections of external examiner reports (Expectation B8).

By September 2015:

- ensure definitive programme records are created and maintained in line with Centre Guides, so that programme learning outcomes align with Pearson's expectations for Higher National Certificate and Diploma awards (Expectations A1 and A2.2)
- develop one set of College-wide assessment regulations, to include the terms of reference for Assessment Boards and the criteria by which all outcomes for student progression and awards are determined for Pearson higher education awards, taking account of its Centre Guides (Expectations A2.1, A3.2 and B6)
- explicitly reflect the needs of staff involved in higher education through the development of the Higher Education Guide which supports staff to work with the Quality Code (Expectations B3 and B4)
- implement the planned centrally coordinated induction programme (Expectation B4)
- clarify arrangements by which plagiarism-detection software is used as a tool for developing assessment literacy while also safeguarding academic standards (Expectation B6)
- ensure security and fairness in the assessment submission process (Expectation B6)

- ensure the Higher Education Board of Studies has oversight of all matters related to the security of academic standards, and complies with its terms of reference relating to annual programme monitoring (Expectations A2.1 and B8)
- clarify the roles delegated to other parties in admissions, delivery and assessment of higher education (Expectations B10 and B2)
- formalise partnerships with employers and mentors to support foundation degree students (Expectation B10).

By October 2015:

- strengthen the information, guidance and support given to student representatives in line with the Student Engagement Policy (Expectation B5).

By December 2015:

- create and maintain an admissions policy which takes account of all higher education entry routes and modes of study, including those sponsored by employers (Expectation B2)
- strengthen the College's policy on providing tuition fee information to enable prospective students to make informed choices about their courses (Expectations C and B2).

By January 2016:

- evaluate external examiner reports at College-wide level to identify and share good practice and items of concern (Expectation B7).

By April 2016:

- take deliberate steps at College level to improve the quality of learning opportunities (Enhancement).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The steps being taken to use the College internal course approval process for all new programme development (Expectations A3.1 and B1).
- The steps being taken to gather feedback from students, through focus groups, to enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices (Expectation B5).

Theme: Student Employability

Student employability is a key component of the College's vision, with an aim to produce 'a highly skilled and employable future workforce' and deliver 'a responsive curriculum that…supports the development of the local workforce and the local economy'. The College's higher education is employment-orientated and refers to working with employers, sector skills councils and local enterprise partnerships to meet its aims.

The College supports the development of employability skills through its programmes, and capitalises on many students already being in employment to contextualise learning and assessment. Personal development planning complements the development of employability skills, and students and alumni comment positively on the applicability of the skills they gain to employment. The close working relationship with employers in some curriculum areas benefits students' learning

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

About Fareham College

Fareham College (the College) is a small, general further education college located to the west of Central Fareham in Hampshire. It comprises a campus at Bishopsfield Road, currently undergoing development, and a new Centre of Excellence in Engineering, Manufacturing and Skills Training (CEMAST) based at Gosport. The College's mission and vision are to be an outstanding and responsive college that changes lives by delivering high quality teaching and a rich student experience, producing a highly skilled workforce through a responsive curriculum, providing opportunities for the local workforce and local economy. The College's higher education aims are to:

- develop full and part-time provision where the College has strengths and there is demand
- work with partnerships to develop programmes for priority areas in response to local needs
- ensure student progression from level 3 to level 4
- ensure high quality provision through quality assurance and enhancement, staffing and continuous professional development
- provide a distinctive higher education ethos.

The College's governing bodies maintain overall responsibility for the College and its finances. The College is supported by a number of committees, including a Teaching Students Curriculum and Quality Committee. The College's Senior Management Team provides leadership and day-to-day management of the College's activities, supported by bodies such as the Higher Education Board of Studies, which is remitted to maintain and assure standards, and review and evaluate course Assessment Boards, approve programmes and programme changes, and consider student appeals. The College Principal is also supported by the Senior Management Team, which comprises the respective Directors for Curriculum, CEMAST, Human Resources, Business Development, Students and Recruitment, and Teaching, Learning and Quality. The College has 12 subject sectors, of which three have higher education provision; these report to the Director of Curriculum, except for Engineering, which reports to the Director for CEMAST. The higher education subject areas have representatives on the Higher Education Board of Studies and the Higher Education Managers and Course Leaders Group. A representative from higher education participates in a cross-College Teaching and Learning Group, which identifies and shares good practice.

The College has over 100 higher education students studying in three discipline areas. The College has a partnership with Chichester University to provide a Foundation Degree in Early Childhood; it also has a partnership with Pearson to provide Higher National Certificates and Diplomas in engineering subjects, and Sports and Exercise Sciences. The engineering programmes have pathways in naval, aerospace, electrical and mechanical engineering, and a number of the programmes are integrated into apprenticeships with local employers.

Since the last QAA review in 2010, the College appointed a new Principal in 2011 and revised its management structure in 2014. It has opened a significant new campus specialising in engineering, CEMAST, which presents opportunities as well as the challenges of working across two campuses. It has introduced one new higher education programme since the last review, the Higher National Certificate/Diploma in Sports and Exercise Sciences.

The College identifies as its key challenges the need to identify unique selling points to maintain buoyant enrolment; operating on two campuses; developing and supporting a

strong student voice; and embedding and enhancing the new virtual learning environment (VLE).

The College has made progress in relation to recommendations from its last QAA review. It notes that work to improve the consistency of programme specifications is ongoing and will be revisited during the present academic year. The College has taken steps to improve the consistency of arrangements for submitting student work, which has become more similar, but acknowledges more could be done to align them. To this end the College is piloting plagiarism-detection software in the present academic year. The Higher Education Forum has become the Higher Education Board of Studies, which is supported by a subsidiary group, the Higher Education Managers and Course Leaders Group, although its contribution to enhancement is discussed in this report. Higher education has greater priority within the College and features in its Strategic Plan. A revised Teaching and Learning Strategy articulates the College's aims for higher education, and the training needs of higher education staff are supported by a Higher Education Learning Champion. The College has continued to monitor information for students and in addition has introduced a new website and VLE in the last year. The College specifies that Course Leaders maintain responsibility for information about their programmes.

Explanation of the findings about Fareham College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1   The College does not have degree awarding powers and is expected to support the maintenance of the academic standards of its two awarding partners. The Memorandum of Agreement with the University of Chichester (the University) and the supporting Collaborative Programme Handbook set out the ways in which the College supports this Expectation through the delivery of a university devised programme of teaching, learning and assessment. For Higher National awards, Centre Guides and Specifications provided by Pearson set out the framework within which its awards are to be managed and specified within locally devised programme specifications for each discreet award.

1.2   The QAA Summative Review of Fareham College, carried out in December 2010, recommended that the College review programme specifications to ensure that they are: free-standing, contain all necessary information, and are presented in a consistent format. The College developed a template for staff to use, covering the key areas for preparing programme specifications for its Higher National awards. The College uses the Pearson specifications as a further reference point in preparing its own Centre programme specifications.

1.3   The University prepares programme specification for the Foundation Degree in Early Childhood, which takes account of relevant national frameworks for levels, credit and qualifications, and Subject Benchmark Statements, as set out in its programme handbook. Working within these frameworks from the University and Pearson, the College should meet the expectation in theory.

1.4   The review team evaluated programme specifications for the College's awards, met senior staff and Course Leaders, and also reviewed University handbooks and Pearson Centre Guidance.

1.5   The programme specification for the Foundation Degree in Early Childhood is comprehensive, taking into account relevant reference points.

1.6   The College has a single programme specification covering all four of its engineering specialisms: aerospace, naval, mechanical and electrical engineering. These programme specifications do not differentiate between the various named awards in setting out distinct intended learning outcomes for these awards, in line with Pearson Centre Guidance.

1.7   For the Engineering and the Sports Exercise Science awards, the College's programme specifications cover both the Higher National Diploma (HND) award and the integrated Higher National Certificate (HNC) award. The programme specifications do not clarify the additional requirements of the HND award over and above those required for the HNC award, commensurate with the more challenging intended learning outcomes for the level 5 awards. For the Higher National awards, some learning outcomes do not consistently articulate the skills and knowledge expected of a successful student. During the review, senior staff referred to an intention to initiate an enhancement project to refine the College's approach in specifying its awards within the framework for higher education qualifications, and to ensure Pearson guidance is more closely followed. The review team **recommends** that the College ensure definitive programme records are created and maintained in line with Centre Guides, so that programme learning outcomes align with Pearson's expectations for HNC/D awards, by September 2015.

1.8   The programme specifications for the Higher National programmes do not positively define programme learning outcomes that differentiate between awards at levels 4 and 5, nor between distinct named awards in the four engineering disciplines, as required by Pearson Guides; as such, the College does not meet the Expectation. While learning outcomes are not articulated at a programme level, the review team was satisfied that the component units, derived from the Pearson specifications, are specified well, and as such there is no serious risk to academic standards. The articulation of programme specifications are broadly adequate, but have shortcomings in terms of the level of granularity at which they are written and the efficacy of the learning outcomes in defining what a successful candidate should demonstrate. As such the College's arrangements place insufficient priority on assuring standards in relation to these issues and represent a moderate risk to this Expectation.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.9   The Higher Education Board of Studies (HEBoS) is designated as the College's key committee for maintaining the oversight of awards and associated academic standards. The terms of reference for the HEBoS are wide-ranging, including: oversight of academic standards in programme approval, delivery and review stages; responsibilities for overseeing fair decision making; the consideration and approval of award recommendations arising from Assessment Boards; and key aspects of the student journey, including assessment, as well as consideration of the student voice.

1.10   The Memorandum of Agreement with the University specifies that the Foundation Degree in Early Childhood operates within the academic framework of the University. The Course Handbook outlines the assessment arrangements by which academic standards are judged. The detail within the Handbook is comprehensive, covering all aspects of assessment regulations, from the design and submission of work; the arrangements by which work is marked; progression; and award decisions.

1.11   The Pearson Centre Guide to Assessment specifies that each centre should have a published set of regulations for its Assessment Boards. The Higher National Engineering Handbook and Sports Exercise Science Handbook include bespoke arrangements covering assessment regulations. The Handbook for Engineering covers unit and award grading, as well as other aspects of assessment, such as mitigating circumstances, late submission and misconduct. The Handbook for Sports and Exercise Science covers grading arrangements and late submission regulations, and includes brief coverage of assessment matters. The College directed the review team towards its College-wide Assessment Policy for more comprehensive detail on how assessment is managed.

1.12   These arrangements indicated that the College may not be meeting the Expectation; at the time of the review visit, there were no published assessment regulations relating to the operation of Assessment Boards and the arrangements by which decisions on progression and award are made.

1.13   To test the Expectation, the review team evaluated Course Handbooks, external verifier reports, BTEC Assessment Guidance, HEBoS minutes and Assessment Board minutes. The team also met senior and teaching staff, and students.

1.14   The minutes from the HEBoS provide occasional summaries of course-level progression, without showing analysis of outcomes from Assessment Boards, external examiners' reports or annual monitoring reports. As such, they provide limited evidence that the HEBoS fulfils its terms of reference in overseeing, at college level, the academic standards of higher education awards. There was also no evidence from review of the minutes that the HEBoS terms of reference in relation to assessment decisions had been fulfilled. Scrutiny of minutes also indicated that neither annual monitoring reports nor self-evaluation reports were consistently available in time for consideration at the scheduled HEBoS meetings. The review team **recommends** that the College ensure the HEBoS has oversight of all matters related to the security of academic standards, and complies with its terms of reference relating to annual programme monitoring, by September 2015.

1.15   The University oversees the assessment arrangements by which the Early Childhood programme is managed. Student progression and award decisions are managed effectively at Assessment Boards, and in line with the published arrangements in the Course Handbook and Collaborative Programme Handbook.

1.16   The review team evaluated the assessment decision-making process for Higher National students. It heard that assessment and progression arrangements for Higher National students are covered in the College-wide Assessment Policy, and the Admissions and Progression Policy. The review team also heard that since the collapse of the College VLE in 2013-14, the College has used the Pearson Guide to Assessment as a reference point for staff and students; it noted the College's Assessment Policy, but concluded there had since been no published Centre assessment regulations covering the Higher National courses, as required by Pearson. The 2013-14 Engineering external examiner reported that the College required essential action to ensure greater transparency in the fairness and consistency of assessment decisions, as there were no published assessment regulations. The 2014-15 Engineering Course Handbook was revised to address this recommendation, although minutes do not indicate that the HEBoS considered this matter. Course handbooks in the two Higher National programme areas contain distinct sets of progression criteria.

1.17   The College confirmed that Assessment Board terms of reference did not currently include the need for a Chair independent from the curriculum team. The review team heard about arrangements by which borderline Higher National award profiles could be upgraded, which did not align with Pearson expectations. Arrangements for the submission of student work differed between Engineering students and Sports and Exercise students, despite the last 2010 review report recommending that such arrangements should be consistent.

1.18   As a consequence of the absence of published assessment regulations which are applicable to all Higher Education programmes, as well as variable assessment practice, the review team **recommends** that the College develop one set of College-wide assessment regulations, to include the terms of reference for Assessment Boards and the criteria by which all outcomes for student progression and awards are determined for Pearson higher education awards, taking account of its Centre Guides, by September 2015.

1.19   Based on the information provided by the College, the review team concludes that there are shortcomings in the extent to which the HEBoS meets its terms of reference, and that College assessment regulations are lacking. As such, the Expectation is not met. The associated level of risk is moderate, due to insufficient priority being given to assuring standards, and weaknesses in the College's governance of academic standards.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

1.20   The College's academic governance arrangements for higher education awards are set out in the University Memorandum of Agreement and Collaborative Programme Handbook, and the Pearson guides. The Foundation Degree in Early Childhood is approved through the University process; Engineering programmes and the Sports and Exercise Sciences programme are approved via Pearson. The University generates a Programme Quality Handbook template which contains the programme specification and module records.

1.21   The College provides programme specifications as the definitive record and reference point for each programme. The specifications articulate the level of the programme, the intended learning outcomes, and assessment arrangements, and refer to Subject Benchmark Statements. The University approves the programme specification for the Foundation Degree in Early Childhood at validation. The provision of programme specifications should in theory enable the College to meet the Expectation.

1.22   The review team tested the Expectation by evaluating programmes specifications, with reference to the agreements with the University and BTEC Centre Guide to Managing Quality. The review team also met senior and academic staff.

1.23   The provision of programmes specifications, online and in student handbooks, meets in part the requirements of the Pearson Centre Guide to Assessment; however, it does not provide a full level of detail. The team noted that there was a recommendation in the 2010 review report on the detail and consistency of programme specifications. The review team found that the programme specifications for the Higher National awards did not disaggregate the learning outcomes for the certificate and diploma awards, and did not specify programme-level learning outcomes. It also found that a single generic handbook covered the four specific engineering specialisms. These findings support the recommendation in paragraph 1.7.

1.24   The review team explored the development of programmes specifications with the College and did not hear of a process by which the College manages and maintains its programme specifications for Pearson programmes. The programme specification for the University Foundation Degree is managed by the University. The College's draft process for approving programmes requires the programme team to develop a specification before approval.

1.25   The College has processes in place to provide a documentary reference point for the delivery, assessment, monitoring and review of its programmes of study, and the provision of records. The processes for managing programme specification for University awards are appropriate, but there are shortcomings with the level of detail in the programme specifications for Pearson awards. The review team concludes that the College meets the Expectation through provision of programme specifications available to staff and students, as required by its awarding bodies. However, the team also concludes that there are shortcomings in the College's arrangements to manage programme specifications and the

level of detail contained in them. Therefore, the associated level of risk is moderate, as, while the College's arrangements are broadly adequate, they indicate insufficient emphasis is given to assuring standards in programme planning.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.26   The College processes for the University programme are approved by the University's validation policies and practices, as set out in the Memorandum of Agreement and the University's Collaborative Programme Handbook. The University also operates annual and periodic review processes to ensure continued adherence to the standards set at approval. The College's annual review process aligns with that of the University, with the College's HEBoS responsible for oversight of standards across all higher education programmes. The University designs assessments for its franchised Foundation Degree to ensure assessment against the programme learning outcomes set at the time of approval of the award, and appoints the external examiner for the programme at the College. The University undertakes a four-yearly periodic review of the programme, with the most recent carried out as an institutional re-approval in July 2014, resulting in three items of good practice and four recommendations, which the College is addressing in an action plan.

1.27   The College has recently developed an internal course approval process, only used for a proposed new Bachelor of Art (BA) degree to date. The Pearson Higher National programmes delivered at the College did not use the internal course approval process, but comprised units selected from and devised by Pearson.

1.28   The College is reliant on the guidelines of the awarding body and the Pearson-appointed external examiners for the maintenance of standards on the HNC/D programmes. Currently, the College does not have a process of periodic review of the Pearson HNC/D programmes, nor does it have a higher education-specific academic framework and regulations. The College's participation in the academic frameworks of its awarding partners for the approval of programmes means it meets the expectation in theory.

1.29   In testing this Expectation, the review team scrutinised a range of documentation, including the College Teaching and Learning Strategy, the new internal course approval form, minutes from meetings of the Assessment Boards, HEBOS and the higher education Managers' and Course Leaders' Group, and met with senior and academic staff.

1.30   The review team found that the processes laid down by the University for the setting of standards for the franchised Foundation Degree are adhered to by the College and confirmed by external examiner reports.

1.31   External examiner reports also confirm that the College largely adheres to the Pearson guidelines for maintaining standards. However, the review team found the HNC/D in Engineering has three named pathways but one overarching programme specification, without the college-devised specificity for the differing award titles and levels required by Pearson. This specificity for award titles and levels is also absent in the specification for the HNC/D in Sports and Exercise Science. The processes laid out in the Pearson guidance for designing HNC/D programmes are not adequately used to enable staff and students to readily identify the specific qualification and level of each programme pathway.

1.32   The new internal course approval process includes a template for programme specifications which, if used correctly, would ensure all new programmes adhere to the requirement for programmes to have a clear specification indicating course and overall programme learning outcomes. This College has started using this approval process, and the review team **affirms** the steps being taken to use the College internal course approval process for all new programme development.

1.33   The absence of a process to date means that some of the risks arising from the lack of an approval process have been realised in the issues identified regarding the specificity of programme specification. Based on the evidence provided by the College, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met, supported by the development of a course approval process to mitigate the risks. The team also concludes that the introduction of the course approval process will allow the College to meet the Expectation more fully, and that the associated 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

1.34   The College is responsible for ensuring that unit, module and programme learning outcomes are assessed in line with the approved descriptors, published by the respective awarding partners. The College's Assessment Policy sets out the approved arrangements by which assessment and verification of marked work is managed.

1.35   The Memorandum of Agreement with the University, the University Collaborative Programme Handbook, the College's Assessment Policy and the College's higher education External Examining Policy set out the processes for ensuring that credit and qualifications are awarded appropriately. They include appropriate reference to the assessment of learning outcomes, the role of the external examiner and the University Liaison Tutor. In theory, the approach by the awarding bodies and the College leads to the Expectation being met.

1.36   The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing the University, Pearson and the College's documentation regarding assessment and external examining, external examiner reports from all programmes, and met with the relevant staff from the College. The team found that the College's responsibilities regarding assessment on the University Foundation Degree are adhered to in full, and that academic standards are met on all programmes.

1.37   Regarding the Pearson HNC/D programmes, the team found that the programme and level-specific learning outcomes are not designated appropriately on programme specifications, therefore mapping of the overall programme learning outcomes to unit learning outcomes on assessment briefs is not fully appropriate.

1.38   The College does not have assessment regulations for its higher education programmes that include detail on progression and award criteria, and terms of reference for Assessment Boards. This is contrary to Pearson requirements for published assessment regulations for Assessment Boards, and also to the recommendations of the 2013-14 engineering external examiner report. Academic staff met at the review visit confirmed the continuing absence of assessment regulations, and that the specific comment in the external examiner report had been interpreted by the College to relate specifically to assignment submission, as opposed to the absence of assessment regulations. The College also did not meet the requirement for Assessment Boards to be independently chaired. This supports the recommendation in paragraph 1.18.

1.39   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met, as the College adheres to University requirements for the Foundation Degree programme; threshold standards are also met for Pearson programmes through mapping unit-level assessment outcomes, and confirmed by external examiners. The team also concludes that the College's arrangements represent a moderate risk, due to the lack of overall assessment regulations covering

student progression and terms of reference for Assessment Boards, representing weakness in the operation of the College's academic governance structure, and a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.40   Pearson and the University are responsible for appointing external examiners for the College's higher education programmes, whose annual reports cover the extent to which academic standards are met. These reports are incorporated into course level annual monitoring reports. For the University programme, the annual monitoring report at programme level feeds into the University's annual departmental 'health check', at which the College Programme Leader may also attend or be represented by the University's Liaison Tutor, as laid out in the University's Collaborative Programme Handbook For the College, the 'health check' report is also incorporated into its programme annual monitoring cycle.

1.41   For the Pearson HNC/D programmes, each Course Leader is responsible for completing an annual monitoring report on a College template, including discussion on: student and course team feedback; achievement data; external examiner comments on a 'top sheet'; resources; and quality of the information about the course.

1.42   On completion of the annual monitoring reports by the Course Leaders, the reports feed into the Programme Manager or Head of Department for validation, and then inform the departmental self-assessment report. The Programme Manager or Head of Department presents the departmental self-assessment report to a validation panel, including the College's Senior Management Team, a Governor and the Student President. These processes and systems enable the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.43   The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing annual monitoring reports for all programmes and background documentation provided by the College, including the notes from the annual monitoring report validation meeting.

1.44   Where annual monitoring reports viewed by the team identify issues relating to standards, such as external examiners recommending more emphasis be given to correct referencing practice, or the use of contextualised grading criteria, these issues have been addressed effectively in action plans and in practice. The outcomes of each annual monitoring report do not currently feed into an overall annual College higher education report and action plan in order to enable identification of cross-College higher education issues and any good practice, but the departmental self-assessment reports do feed into the overall College-level self-assessment and quality improvement plan.

1.45   There is a clear process for periodic review of University programmes, and the University has also recently completed a successful institutional re-approval of the College. The College does not currently have a periodic review process for its Pearson higher education programmes, using instead the College-wide annual monitoring and departmental self-assessment processes.

1.46   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met, as the College's annual monitoring report process and external examining arrangements address whether standards are achieved and are aligned. The associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.47   The responsibility for the design and approval of programmes and associated academic standards setting lies with the College's awarding partners, although the College is permitted to design its own assessments for Higher National awards, within the constraints of Pearson specifications.

1.48   Each award has an independent external examiner assigned to it by the respective awarding partner. The external examiners review samples of student work annually and provide confirmation, or otherwise, that the academic standards of the awarding partner are being maintained in line with UK threshold standards.

1.49   The College aims to develop employer-responsive programmes and seeks input from employers in designing its Higher National Engineering awards. According to the College's recently introduced internal programme approvals process, proposed programmes and programme specifications are approved by the HEBoS, which includes two external representatives from Universities. The College's arrangements for external examiners, and the involvement of externals in programme design and approval, means the expectation is met in theory.

1.50   The review team met staff and employers and reviewed programme approval forms, external examiner reports and the minutes of the HEBoS.

1.51   At the time of the review, only one proposed top-up programme in Early Childhood was under development within the newly introduced internal approval process. The template form had recently been used to prepare the proposal to the HEBoS, although it had not yet met to consider it. The inclusion of external members on the HEBoS provides an additional means for the evaluation of proposed programme specifications and intended learning outcomes at an early stage of development, to help secure academic standards.

1.52   The reports from external examiners for 2013-14 confirm that the standards are set appropriately, and that the College's arrangements to support standards and the work of externals are sound. Plans by the University to appoint a specific external examiner to the College's programme, rather than the current arrangement by which the College's programme shares an external examiner with other consortium members, should facilitate greater granularity of independent external advice on the extent to which the awarding body's and UK threshold standards are met.

1.53   While the College does not formally incorporate employers into its approval or assessment processes for gathering advice on the achievement of academic standards, many of its engineering programmes are developed in direct response to employer requests, in relation to the selection of individual units, within the constraints of Pearson specifications.

1.54　　　The review team concludes that the arrangements by which the awarding partners' and UK threshold standards are judged, including the use of external and independent expertise, are appropriate. Therefore, and in light of the completion of activity already underway in a small number of areas, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation:　Met
Level of risk:　Low

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

1.55   In reaching its judgement on the maintenance of the academic standards of awards the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.56   The College works within the agreements with its awarding partners to maintain the standards set for its awards. The College processes for monitoring academic standards and externality are effective and complement those of its awarding partners. The College has processes for ensuring that programmes meet threshold academic standards.

1.57   The review team concludes that five of the seven Expectations are met, and two are not met. Of these two, both have moderate associated risk. Expectation A1 is not met, as programme specifications for HNC/D awards do not specify programme learning outcomes at each level, and the engineering programme specification does not differentiate between distinct named awards in line with Pearson requirements. The review team makes a recommendation in relation to this Expectation, and considers the associated level of risk to be moderate, as the College's arrangements place insufficient priority on assuring standards for HNC/D awards.

1.58   Expectation A2.1 on academic governance arrangements is not met because the evidence provided does not demonstrate that the HEBoS is meeting its terms of reference for maintaining and assuring standards. The review team found that the College no longer had assessment regulations covering Higher National courses as required by Pearson, and that Assessment Boards did not have independent Chairs. As such there are doubts over the College's academic frameworks and regulations for managing higher education provision, and the review team makes a recommendation on this. The team concludes that this represents a moderate risk through an insufficient emphasis and priority being given to assuring standards.

1.59   Of the five Expectations that are met, three have low associated risk and two have moderate associated risk. Under Expectation A2.2, the review team identified issues with programme specifications that did not align with Pearson requirements. These issues support a recommendation under Expectation A1. The associated level of risk is considered moderate because the arrangements indicate insufficient emphasis is given to assuring standards in programme planning. Under Expectation A3.2, the review team noted issues with assessment regulations that supported a recommendation under Expectation A2.1.

1.60   In making a judgement on this area, the review team noted that most Expectations are met, and those that are not present moderate risk to academic standards. In addition, three of the Expectations that are met represent a moderate risk. The team concludes that the issues identified indicate the College gives insufficient priority to assuring standards, and that there are weaknesses in the College's governance of academic standards. The team also noted that the College's plans to address problems, for example, to enhance programme specifications, were under developed. The review team therefore concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 The Higher Education Strategy details the strategic aims and objectives regarding the development of higher education programmes. Both the College's awarding partners are responsible for the approval of their programmes delivered at the College and for the definitive documentation, with Pearson requiring that the College develops programme specifications following the selection of specific units appropriate to each programme at HNC and HND level. The processes in place for the design and approval of the higher education programmes at the College mean that the Expectation is met in theory.

2.2 The review team evaluated the College's arrangements for programme design, development and approval by reviewing course approval documents, minutes of the HEBoS, and by meeting with senior and academic staff.

2.3 The College has had little participation in the development of the University Foundation Degree, but the review team understands that other colleges and employers feed into the programme's development through the University. The programme fits well with the College's overall strategy to deliver work-based higher education befitting the local area.

2.4 There is a newly instigated internal course approval form indicating the process to be followed when planning any change to the curriculum offer. The College does not require employer or student input at this stage, but there have been informal discussions with current foundation degree students in planning to introduce a BA top-up in Early Childhood. The HEBoS has external members who could participate in programme development, including student representatives, and a member from a local university. Programme proposals are also considered by Governors, including a student Governor and another representative from a local university.

2.5 To date, the College has not used the internal course approval process for Pearson programmes. The programme specification template appended to the course approval form appropriately requests learning outcomes to be stated for each level of the programme, which are currently lacking in the Pearson engineering programmes. The review team found that the process is also designed to support both programme design and the development of existing programmes, which supports the affirmation in paragraph 1.32.

2.6 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met because the College has a formal process which allows it to consider programme design and development, and ultimately approve new programmes or changes to existing programmes. The associated level of risk is low because the implementation of the new approval process represents the completion of an activity that is already underway that will enable the College to meet the Expectation more fully.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.7   The College receives all of its full-time applications to its higher education courses via UCAS, and entry to engineering courses is via acceptance onto an industry partner's apprenticeship programme. Part-time students apply by contacting the College directly. The College has an admissions team of trained Student Advisers, which administers the process, and Course Leaders review and approve applications. Students are interviewed as part of the admissions process by an admissions tutor, or in the case of engineering students, by the Head of Department or Programme Manager. Students on the Early Childhood Foundation Degree are required to submit references, a written task, and proof that they are in employment. The admissions team reviews rejected applications to ensure fairness and consistency. There is provision for students to appeal the admissions decision. The admissions processes are set out on the University Collaborative Programme Handbook, the full-time Admissions and Progression Policy and Procedure, prospectuses, and on the College website. The processes that the College have in place allow for the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.8   The review team looked at the University Collaborative Programme Handbook; the College's Full-Time Admission and Progression Policy and Procedure; the complaints procedure; the HEBoS minutes; and the Fees, Equality and Diversity, and Data Protection Act policies. The team also looked at interview invites and record templates, induction activity, prospectus and online information, recognition of prior learning documents, programme handbooks, the student submission, and Teaching and Learning Group minutes. The review team also met staff, current students and alumni.

2.9   The College has practices, and numerous policies and procedures, in place that support fair admission. This includes a policy for recognition of prior learning and equality and diversity, both of which are current and reviewed at strategic level. The College received only one official complaint regarding admissions in 2014-15, which involved course fees: this was resolved by the Principal. The review team was satisfied with the outcome of this and that the correct procedures were followed. Students were also aware of the admissions process.

2.10   The review team checked that admissions processes were applied consistently across all provision. The team found that admissions were contextualised for two of three College programmes, whereby admission to the Foundation Degree involves the awarding body. Admissions to Engineering HNC/D awards involved students being accepted onto industry apprenticeships programmes and automatically enrolled at the College as part of the programme. In testing the admissions process across all of the provision, the review team was aware of some issues within engineering courses where the admissions processes may lead to unfair processes for students due to staff not being formally trained. The review team learned of one student who had been admitted onto the apprenticeship by their employer, despite lacking one of the College's entry requirements, revealing that some responsibilities for admissions had been devolved. The College described the remedial support provided to the student. This finding supports the recommendation in paragraph 2.84.

2.11   The College delivers a number of induction activities as part of the enrolment process which appropriately informs students about their programme of study and requirements of their course. The College has a dedicated Student Adviser for higher education who administers the College's UCAS pages and supports higher education admissions. Students confirmed that they received and welcomed the information, advice and guidance from the College prior to admissions.

2.12   In reviewing the Full-Time Admission and Progression Policy the review team found that the admissions policy is intended to cover both further and higher education admissions. It lists the courses available and entry requirements, but omits higher education programmes. It does not contain information for higher education students on admission through UCAS, or on awarding body involvement in admissions. It does not refer to where part-time students might find information available to them. The review team **recommends** that the College create and maintain an admissions policy which takes account of all higher education entry routes and modes of study, including those sponsored by employers, by December 2015.

2.13   The HEBoS is remitted to consider admissions, induction and enrolment; minutes indicate that it received an enrolment report in the autumn term and that it has invited student feedback on induction. Further exploration of reviewing the recruitment processes was evaluated by looking at the College's collection of student feedback by surveys, module evaluations and informal conversations with students. The surveys cover the application process and induction, and demonstrate that overall student satisfaction is positive. The Teaching and Learning Group has discussed induction feedback from staff and instigated actions.

2.14   The College publishes some of its fees online and via the prospectus, although some of this information is not easily available. The College's Fees Policy stipulates that fees are published online after being set by the Fees Policy Group in May each year and approved by the Board of Governors. As this process happens late in the application cycle, it was revealed that this can cause some ambiguity of course fees for certain students. The fees for only some programmes are published. For example, the fees for the Foundation Degree in Early Childhood and the Engineering programme are published in the part-time 2014-15 prospectus, but not the full-time 2015-16 prospectus. Fees for the Sports and Exercise Sciences programme are stated on the website, but are not listed in the prospectuses or on its UCAS page. The review team concludes that the College does not consistently publish fees information, meaning students do not receive clear information on fees that enable them to make informed decisions about their application to the College, and risks fair admission. This finding supports the recommendation in paragraph 3.9.

2.15   The review team concludes that the College meets the Expectation because it has broadly appropriate policies and processes for admissions, and that it works within the requirements of its awarding partners. The associated level of risk is moderate because the admissions policy is not fully contextualised for higher education students, and fee information is not consistently accessible, indicating that the College gives insufficient emphasis to assuring quality in its admissions process.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.16   The College outlines its approach to learning opportunities and teaching practices through the Teaching and Learning Strategy, which aims to 'drive up standards of teaching and learning', and includes an aim specific to higher education: to 'develop a Fareham College Higher Education Guide'. This latter aim is linked to a recommendation arising from the last Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review 'to reflect the needs of staff involved in teaching higher education explicitly in the future development of the…Strategy'. The objectives to be incorporated in developing the Guide are to: appoint a Higher Education Learning Champion; define the College's approach to higher education delivery; enable tutors to identify good practice; use student feedback to inform strategy; develop shared expectations amongst staff and students; and create opportunities to use external expertise.

2.17   The College has recently started operating across two sites, the Bishopsfield Road Campus (BRC), which is undergoing redevelopment, and CEMAST. The Early Childhood and Sports Exercise Science programmes are located at BRC and the Engineering programmes at CEMAST. Each site has a Director of Curriculum that works with Curriculum Managers to ensure that the tutor staff base and specialist learning resources sufficiently support programmes. The Director of Learning and Teaching strategically manages the VLE, library, and additional learner support services. These post-holders are members of the HEBoS, along with relevant Heads of Department, Course Managers and student representatives.

2.18   The College expects tutors to be qualified to a level above that at which they teach. The College has recently created a Higher Education Learning Champion post, which works alongside other further education champions through the Teaching and Learning Group to progress the objectives set out in the Teaching and Learning Strategy. This includes the dissemination of good practice.

2.19   The Director of Learning and Teaching has strategic responsibility for the continuing professional development for tutors who work at all academic levels. The College organises three staff development days, which are complemented by occasional internal and external activities intended to improve teaching, technology-enhanced learning and subject-based development. The College is considering how its higher education tutors might benefit from the UK Professional Standards Framework.

2.20   Feedback from students on the quality of learning opportunities has, until recently, been primarily elicited through surveys. Student feedback is incorporated into programme annual monitoring reports, which include student progression and achievement data, and external examiner feedback. These reports are considered by the HEBoS. Summarised versions are reported through departmental self-assessment reviews, which are considered at Senior Management Team and Governor level. Students also provide feedback on individual units, through informal in-class feedback, and through formal membership of the HEBoS, the agendas for which include a standing Student Voice item.

2.21   The College's strategic approach to learning and teaching, its arrangements for student support and to develop teaching staff, alongside opportunities for students to provide feedback, mean the College meets the expectation in theory. The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with students, alumni and staff at all levels, including tutors and professional support staff. It reviewed the VLE, annual monitoring reports, student survey and focus group outcomes, and minutes of the HEBoS and the Teaching and Learning Group.

2.22   The College seeks student feedback on the quality of learning opportunities and teaching practices, although in the most recent College-wide higher education survey, responses were overwhelmingly from one programme area and thus provided limited data on which to base improvement plans. The student submission suggested that, while HEBoS provided an excellent forum in which students can raise issues, the College could be more proactive in responding to student feedback. At the time of the review, the College had initiated a series of student focus groups, facilitated by staff outside the curriculum area, to identify aspects of the College's arrangements that worked well and those that needed remedial action.

2.23   The failure of the College's VLE in 2013-14 hampered the College's ambitions to provided blended learning opportunities for all students. It relaunched the VLE in 2014-15, and the review team saw and heard evidence of its use as a repository. The College had completed a basic audit of the VLE to establish expectations for future use by staff and students as a basis for more effective blended learning.

2.24   Students from all three curriculum areas and alumni from Early Childhood expressed generally positive views on the learning environment and opportunities they had access to. They confirmed they were supported by well qualified and effective teachers and staff, and the College proactively addressed concerns when raised informally.

2.25   The Teaching and Learning Group brings together the learning champions and professional services staff that support student learning to identify and disseminate good practice. A Higher Education Learning Champion joined the Group in 2014-15. Minutes confirm the group discussed practice relating to induction, learning technology and scholarly activity, but did not inform good practice relevant to the higher education programmes. The College introduced a new Peer Observation Policy in 2014-15, and the Higher Education Learning Champion is responsible for establishing a peer observation plan intended to identify professional development needs. In addition, the College works with three other colleges to perform joint lesson observations. This work is at an early stage of development. All but one tutor has a combination of further and higher education responsibilities, and this is reflected in the nature of the continuing professional development activity logs of individuals.

2.26   At the time of the review the Higher Education Guide was still in its early stages of conception, and associated initiatives intended to support programmes and the development of higher education tutors were also in their infancy. This has resulted in relatively slow progress, with coordinated planning of continuous professional development specifically in support of higher education learning. Given that the Guide is intended to drive the College's strategy for its higher education programmes, the review team **recommends** that the College explicitly reflect the needs of staff involved in higher education through the development of a Higher Education Guide which supports staff to work with the Quality Code, by September 2015.

2.27   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met because the College's learning and teaching intentions are strategically articulated, and learning and teaching is supported by processes for peer observations and student feedback. Students confirmed

that they are satisfied with learning and teaching and that the VLE enables their learning. There is low associated risk, as completion of the activity planned in the Teaching and Learning Strategy is already underway. These include the completion of the Higher Education Guide, the VLE implementation plan, and the use of focus groups to elicit meaningful feedback from students to inform enhancement plans.

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

2.28   The College aims to provide an employer-responsive curriculum, intended to develop high levels of employability skills within successful students. The College recently amalgamated its Higher Education Manager's Group and Course Leaders' Group to form a single Higher Education Manager's Group, remitted to consider information, advice and guidance to students. The Group includes Course Leaders and those who manage advisory services for applicants and students, such as the Student Services Manager and Marketing and Recruitment Manager. The Director of Learning and Teaching chairs, and has general oversight of higher education programmes and the Additional Learning Support Team.

2.29   The College runs higher education open sessions to advise prospective students on the available courses which lead to qualifications at level 4 and above. It has an Information, Advice and Guidance Tutor specialising in the College's three higher education curriculum areas; the Tutor is available to counsel those external to the College and those interested in progressing from level 3 from within the College.

2.30   The Director of Learning and Teaching strategically manages the VLE and the library, which is based at the BRC. The librarian responds to tutor requests for specific resources, with such suggestions deriving from student feedback or proactive planning by tutors. Novel ways of securing access to specialist resources for relatively small student groups have been explored by entering into agreements with local universities. The VLE is considered of strategic importance, as a means by which all students have a blended, and therefore, inclusive, learning experience. Failure of the VLE in 2013-14 has delayed the College's ambitions, although champions were appointed by the Learning Technology Manager to augment a departmental-based training programme to relaunch a new installation in 2014-15. The College has recently completed a basic audit of activity to provide a basis for future planning, to improve coverage of interactive learning resources.

2.31   All students are expected to participate in an interview session before enrolment and attend an induction. The arrangements for admissions, induction, diagnostic assessment and personal tutorials vary by curriculum area. Course Managers and other tutors counsel students on the changing demands of the course when they progress from level 4 to 5 and when they are briefed on assessment tasks.

2.32   The College meets the Expectation in theory, based on its provision of resources for learning and teaching, student information advice and guidance, and arrangements for induction and transition. The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with staff, students, alumni and employers, as well as by reviewing student feedback, induction programme outlines, job descriptions, the Strategic Plan, and minutes of the Teaching and Learning Group and Higher Education Managers Group.

2.33   The programme Annual Monitoring Report template prompts Course Leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of resources that support students. Staff explained how the annual monitoring report process enabled resource needs to be identified and innovative approaches to satisfying students' learning needs considered. In 2013-14, Early Childhood students reported problems with access to sufficient books, which have been, in part, overcome by enabling students' access to the University library. The Engineering Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) for 2013-14 covered the programme's relocation to CEMAST,

noting the College had met requests for quiet study space, although the review team heard that students would welcome the relocation of all the texts they need to the site. The Sport and Exercise Sciences AMR noted the College responded to an action to purchase new texts.

2.34 Student induction is delivered within curriculum areas, although recent internal discussions have indicated that an induction programme, consisting of a more coordinated schedule of centralised guidance, might benefit students in line with a similar programme provided for further education students to orientate them to each campus, their peers and their course of studies. Professional support staff that help students with their academic writing and digital literacy, or provided additional learning support, were extremely supportive of a common approach to induction to ensure all students are informed of, and able to make effective use of, the support available. The review team **recommends** that the College implement the planned centrally coordinated induction programme, by September 2015.

2.35 The College's arrangements for providing additional learner support received positive comment from Ofsted, and these arrangements extend to higher education students. Students have access to additional learner support, where need has been identified. The Teaching and Learning Group includes the Additional Learning Support Manager, and the Group discusses ways in which support for learners, learning technology, and induction arrangements, can be enhanced. Students also have access to personal tutorials, although arrangements by which students access these vary between curriculum areas. The internal survey feedback provided in 2013-14 indicates that arrangements to support admissions, induction, academic support, teaching, and assessment are considered effective by most students.

2.36 The review team heard examples of effective working between Course Leaders and support services to support students' transition from level 3 to 4. Students and staff in two curriculum areas spoke positively of support for transition from level 4 to 5, and of local opportunities to progress to level 6. Responsibility for the effective support of students is vested in the Course Leaders. In view of the breadth of Course Leaders' responsibilities, which include responsibilities for further education students, the proposed Higher Education Guide should enable staff to benchmark arrangements in their own curriculum areas against external reference points, and support the provision of distinctive features of higher education. This supports the recommendation in paragraph 2.26.

2.37 Employers, alumni, staff and students with whom the review team met were positive about the ways in which the College's higher education programmes support the employability skills of students through work-related activities and assessment, incorporating teaching qualifications, work practice or a work-based learning module. The Early Childhood and Sports Exercise Science curriculum areas make effective use of personal development plans to support students' skills development. In particular, the review team found that the close working relationship between the College and employers, enabling engineering students studying Higher National programmes to progress within their employer apprenticeships, is **good practice**.

2.38 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met because the College provides, and has arrangements to monitor and evaluate, support for students' induction, transition, academic skills development, and learning needs. The associated level of risk is low because the recommendation for a centrally coordinated-induction programme relates to the completion of an activity about which the College has recently initiated discussion and that will allow the College to meet the Expectation more fully.

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

2.39   The College has a student representatives system in place that provides opportunities for the student voice to be considered in the assurance and enhancement of higher education courses. The Higher Education Student Engagement Policy outlines the role of student representatives and sets out a framework for engaging students in the enhancement of their programme. It includes a job description for the student representatives and clearly defines their role. Representatives from each course are members on the HEBoS, and students are represented on the cross-College Student Board. The College canvases students' opinions through the annual Higher Education Survey. The processes and policies in place in theory allow for the Expectation to be met and for students to engage as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

2.40   To explore this Expectation, the review team looked at a number of documents, including: the Higher Education Survey; student submission; Higher Education Forum minutes; minutes of the HEBoS; the Higher Education Strategy; the Higher Education Student Engagement Policy; prospectus; Course Handbooks; the Higher Education Forum minutes; and the College website. The review team met senior staff, support staff, academic staff, students and alumni.

2.41   The College Higher Education Student Engagement Policy provides a framework for students to effectively engage in the quality assurance of their learning, and deliberate steps are taken to engage students, as evidenced by the inclusion of students in the HEBoS, the annual Higher Education Survey and the availability of course reps across subjects. Minutes of College meetings where students are members confirm students take part in discussions and are able to raise issues about their learning experience through standing agenda items. Students, including those who were not student representatives, commented on the openness of staff that enabled them to raise issues directly and see them resolved.

2.42   The review team looked for evidence of change as a result of student comment and found multiple examples, such as changes to the VLE, more learning resources and additional tutorials. The College engages in a dialogue with students to resolve issues quickly and informally within tutorials. The College uses a number of surveys, such as a Higher Education Survey and induction survey, to capture the experiences and concerns of students. The review team found that despite the low participation of students with these surveys the College recognised the need to further engage with students in order to capture their comments across subjects. The review team therefore **affirms** the steps being taken to gather feedback from students through focus groups to enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices.

2.43   The review team explored the support for student representatives and found that the College does not provide support materials or training beyond the role description given in the Higher Education Student Engagement Policy. In view of these findings, and to ensure student representatives are prepared and supported in their roles, the review team **recommends** that the College strengthen the information, guidance and support given to student representatives in line with the Student Engagement Policy, by October 2015.

2.44   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met because the College provides a strategic approach to student engagement, and found evidence of students

participating in committees, student surveys, focus group and confirmation from students on the College's responsiveness to issues they raise. The associated level of risk is low because the recommendation relates to the provision of support for student representatives, an activity that will allow it to meet the Expectation more fully.

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

2.45   The College Assessment Policy covers assessment of both further and higher education programmes, with the exception of the University Foundation Degree, and makes specific reference to the Quality Code. There is detail in the Policy on all aspects of assessment apart from the recognition of prior learning, where awarding organisation requirements are stated as the reference point. The College has no published assessment regulations for higher education, but the recent Malpractice and Maladministration Policy informs staff and students of good academic conduct and procedures if students are found at fault. The University manages the assessment process for the Foundation Degree in Early Childhood. Marking and moderation of assessment is undertaken in line with the University's expectations.

2.46   Information on assessment for staff and students is generally described in sufficient detail in programme handbooks. The programme handbook for the University Early Childhood programme contains good detail on the whole assessment process, as do those for the HNC/D Engineering programmes. The handbook for Sport and Exercise Sciences contains only a brief outline of assessment.

2.47   The College's approach lacks elements, such as published assessment regulations, to guide staff in decision making, which lead, in theory, to the Expectation not being met. The review team tested the Expectation by meeting staff and students. It evaluated programme handbooks, external examiner reports and Assessment Board minutes.

2.48   Students are provided with written and verbal details regarding what is expected of them in relation to matters such as schedules, deadlines, mitigating circumstances and academic misconduct, as well as grading criteria and the requirements to achieve their intended award. Students confirmed they were aware of all the information when met at the review visit.

2.49   External examiners' reports viewed by the review team confirm the range and suitability of assessment used on the programmes, with detailed comments regarding the assessment of learning outcomes and use of internal moderation processes. The most recent report for the University programme confirmed standards and identified no recommendations. Recent action points in the Engineering report include: the creation and publication of assessment regulations to improve the transparency of consistency in progression and award decisions; the introduction of formal feedback stages for students; and the need to improve the internal verification of assessment design.

2.50   The College's process for the submission of student work is inconsistent across higher education programmes. On the Sport and Exercise Science HNC/D, assignments are submitted online on the College VLE, which is clearly set up to state the hand-in deadline and date of actual submission. Students confirmed they are unable to submit work later and if a deadline is missed it results in an automatic fail, subject to the consideration of mitigating circumstances. Assessment on the Early Childhood Foundation Degree has clear deadlines, and students submit assignments via the University's VLE, using plagiarism- detection

software as part of the submission process. On engineering programmes, students submit a hard copy of each assignment to one named tutor; there is no use of online hand-in, nor the use of online plagiarism-detection software. The review team found in meetings with students and staff that this practice can lead to frustration on the part of students wishing to submit assignments by the deadline when the tutor can be unavailable, and can potentially risk loss of hard copy assessments from the tutor's desk, indicating a risk to the security of assessment. The College asserts that it plans a College-wide roll out of the plagiarism-detection software. The review team **recommends** that the College ensure security and fairness in the assessment submission process, by September 2015. Further, the review team **recommends** that the College clarify arrangements by which plagiarism-detection software is used as a tool for developing assessment literacy, while also safeguarding academic standards, by September 2015.

2.51   Processes for the marking of assessments, internal moderation and feedback to students are detailed in the College's Assessment Policy and the University Collaborative Programme Handbook; the review team found that the College adheres to these policies. Students were aware of the process for internal moderation and second marking, and were generally complimentary regarding the amount and level of feedback received on their work. As with the submission of assignments, Sport and Exercise Science students obtained feedback through the VLE, with subsequent one-to-one verbal discussion with programme staff.

2.52   The 2012-13 engineering external examiner report noted that the internal verification of assessment decisions was carried out after work had been handed back to students, and made a recommendation on this which was omitted from the programme AMR. The external examiner the following year found this practice had improved in the subsequent year, but still noted the need to improve the internal verification of assessments.

2.53   For the Foundation Degree in Early Childhood, progression and award decisions are made at the University Board, for which the arrangements and processes are secure. The College organises Assessment Boards to consider the results, progression and awards of higher education students on Pearson programmes. From Assessment Boards minutes, and in meetings with academic staff, the review team found that the College had not taken account of the Pearson Guide to Centres, in particular to have a published set of regulations for Assessment Boards, and to publish and adhere to the terms of reference for Assessment Boards and the criteria by which all outcomes for student progression and award are determined, for example relating to the independence of the Board Chair. The team explored with senior staff the statement in the Engineering Programmes Handbook that the Assessment Board 'has the power to upgrade student results provided that all members of the Board agree that the quality of the student's work deserves an overall upgrade'. Both senior and academic staff stated that any decision to upgrade was exceptional and subject to the presence of mitigating circumstances; they confirmed that the external examiner did not attend the Board and was therefore not involved in any decision to upgrade student results. The issues identified here support the recommendation in paragraph 1.18.

2.54   Regarding the assessment and recognition of prior learning, while the awarding partners' policies are stated as being used, and are incorporated in the recent College Recognition of Prior Learning Policy, the team found that there were no examples of the policies being used by students or prospective students. The College informs prospective students at interview of the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.

2.55   Due to the weakness evident in the consistency and security of the College's assessment submission process, the inconsistent use of available plagiarism-detection software, and the fact that assessment processes are not guided and protected adequately by published academic regulations, the review team concludes that the Expectation is not

met. The associated level of risk is moderate because the College's arrangements indicate weaknesses in the operation of the College's academic governance structure, and that insufficient emphasis is given to assuring quality.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.56   External examiners are appointed by the College's awarding partners to each programme. The College's Assessment Policy refers to the role of external examiners and the use of their reports. The University sets out its arrangements for external examiners in its academic regulations and which are provided to new external examiners upon appointment. These arrangements include a prompt for comments where courses are delivered at partner colleges as well as within the University. The Collaborative Programmes Handbook and the Memorandum of Agreement confirm that the University maintains overall responsibility for external examiner arrangements. Pearson is responsible for external examiner arrangements for its programmes at the College and published guides covering expectations of external examiners.

2.57   The College's role in external examiner arrangements is to ensure marked work samples are available to externals, to arrange meetings with staff and students, and to provide a response to each external examiner on the action planned or already taken. Samples of marked student work are reviewed by external examiners once they have been internally verified. Pearson external examiners routinely meet students and, although this is not the case for the University course, the external examiner has expressed the desire to do so.

2.58   Each external examiner provides a written report that provides feedback on the quality of learning opportunities, on whether approved arrangements have been followed, and on the security of academic standards set and achieved, as well as any identified good practice. Since the relaunch of the VLE in 2014-15, external examiner reports are available to students, and students confirm they have seen them.

2.59   The external examiner reports are sent to the Director of Learning and Teaching, who circulates them for action, using a template top sheet. The recommendations from each report are incorporated into AMRs prepared by Course Leaders with a summary of action taken or planned. The College's arrangements, and those of its awarding partners, to meet with and provide student work to externals, and the College's processes for receiving and responding to reports, means the expectation is met in theory.

2.60   To test the Expectation, the review team met staff and students. It reviewed external examiner reports, annual monitoring reports, the VLE, awarding partners' regulations, email correspondence, and the minutes of the HEBoS and the Teaching Standards and Quality Committee.

2.61   The review team found external examiners' reports to be generally thorough and that they provided an appropriate balance of identifying concerns and good practice. It saw the correspondence by which Departmental Heads confirm with Course Leaders that actions are progressing on a routine basis. Scrutiny of AMRs indicate that Course Leaders are generally diligent in responding to external examiner recommendations, although the team found an example where the practice of paraphrasing examiner reports resulted in the omission of one recommendation. College staff agreed it would be helpful to include the complete external examiner's report as an annex to the AMR, not only for transparency but also to safeguard against errors as noted in paragraph 2.68.

2.62   External examiner reports for the Early Childhood programme have, despite the prompt to identify partner-specific matters, given brief consideration to arrangements at the College. The University has approved the introduction of separate reporting for the College, so that it can provide a more detailed independent evaluation of the College's maintenance of standards and the quality of learning opportunities, and support the College's enhancement.

2.63   The College has no serious concerns procedure for externals, but recommendations arising from external examiner reports are circulated to the College Principal who signs the summaries to confirm that he is aware of the reports' recommendations.

2.64   While individual curriculum areas make effective use of external examiners reports, scrutiny of minutes at a more senior level indicates that the College does not consider a synthesis of the findings across curriculum areas to identify recurring items of concern or good practice for dissemination. The review team **recommends** that the College evaluate external examiner reports at College-wide level to identify and share good practice and items of concern, by January 2016.

2.65   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met because the College adheres to the arrangements for working with externals specified by its awarding partners. It also has its own arrangements for supporting externals, and evaluating and responding to their reports. Furthermore, external examiner reports are shared with students, and are used as a core part of the course monitoring processes. The associated level of risk is moderate because procedures are broadly adequate but have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.66   The College has annual monitoring process intended to assure and enhance quality. Course leaders for higher education programmes complete annual monitoring report templates reflecting on student and course team feedback, achievement data, external examiner comments (copied onto a 'top sheet'), resources, strengths, areas for improvement, and information about the course. The process includes the completion of an action plan for each programme. The College's annual monitoring report for the University Foundation Degree feeds into the University's monitoring process.

2.67   Completed AMRs are considered by Programme Managers or Heads of Department at validation, and are summarised in departmental self-assessment reports. The Programme Manager/Head of Department presents the departmental self-assessment report to a validation panel including the College's Senior Management Team, a Governor and the Student President. These processes for programme monitoring, including the development of an action plan and reporting at a senior level, enables the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.68   The review team tested the Expectation by meeting students and senior staff, and reviewing AMRs for all higher education programmes and background documentation provided by the College, including the notes from the AMR validation meeting. There is an opportunity for Course Leaders to identify areas of good practice, but little has been identified in the reports seen by the team. The AMRs lack consistency in the detail of reporting, with the 2013-14 reports for the Engineering and Early Childhood programmes showing particular detail; reports for Sport and Exercise Science lacked detailed narrative on course statistics, student feedback, and the accuracy and completeness of published information about the programme. The reports do not include the full external examiners' reports, and only include selected comments, which vary in the level of detail. The review team found an instance of an action from an external examiner report relating to the publication of assessment regulations that had not been copied onto the AMR, and had not been carried out by the College. The review team **recommends** that the College ensure annual monitoring reports are consistent in the level of detail provided, and include the relevant sections of external examiner reports, by August 2015.

2.69   While student feedback informs the annual monitoring process, students themselves are not involved directly. Staff confirmed that the spring meeting of the HEBoS considers the AMR action plans, as per its terms of reference, with the added opportunity for students to comment; however, HEBoS minutes show that discussion is not evident beyond brief verbal updates. This finding supports the recommendation in paragraph 1.14.

2.70   The outcomes of each AMR do not currently feed into an overall annual College higher education report and action plan in order to enable identification of cross-College issues and any good practice, but the departmental self-assessment reports feed into the overall College-level self-assessment and quality improvement plan.

2.71   There is a clear process for a departmental periodic review of University programmes, and the University has recently carried out a successful institutional re-approval of the College as part of this process. The College does not currently use a periodic

review process for its Pearson higher education programmes beyond the AMR and departmental self-assessment processes.

2.72 The review team concludes that the College has processes in place which allow for regular monitoring and review of programmes, so that the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is moderate because of inconsistencies in detail in the AMRs. The level of discussion at the HEBoS indicates that insufficient emphasis and priority is given to assuring quality in the College's deliberative processes.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.73   The College has a complaints procedure which covers all students and provides a clear definition of a complaint, timeframes and stages of the procedure illustrated by a flow chart. Students are also able to appeal admissions decisions. The process has an informal route that allows students to raise issues before the need of a formal complaint. The College allows for informal issues to also be raised through student surveys, by student representatives, or by the external examiners. Formal complaints are investigated by the Senior Management Team and Principal, and upon receiving a response students are able to appeal the outcome. Students on the University programme are covered by the University's procedures for academic issues. Students on both Pearson and University programmes are covered by the College's complaints procedure, which is available online and in Course Handbooks.

2.74   The College provides information about the processes for academic appeals through the VLE, induction, the website and in Course Handbooks. The College's four-stage appeals process allows for formal written appeals to be considered by the relevant Course Team Leader in the first instance. If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome they can escalate the appeal to the Head of Department, Director of Faculty, and Deputy Principal in turn. The process sets out clear timescales for the handling of appeals. Students on the University programme are directed to use the University's appeals process.

2.75   The College's complaints procedure and arrangements for appeals allow the Expectation to be met in theory. The review team looked at a number of documents, including a log of complaints, examples of complaints, the complaints procedure, and information on the College website and VLE. The team also held meetings with staff and students.

2.76   In addition to being available online and in handbooks, the complaints and appeals procedures are also available to students through the VLE, and students are advised of them at induction. Students and staff confirmed that the College's informal approach to capturing student complaints results in issues being resolved at the early stage by way of tutorials and staff contact. Students confirmed that they were aware of the formal complaints procedure and their entitlement to use it, although some had no recourse to do so as they had only recently enrolled. External examiner reports comment positively about the complaints procedure and that students were aware of it. The review team concludes that the complaints procedure is current and fit for purpose; the complaints procedure is scheduled for review in 2016. Meetings with support staff revealed that there was some confusion over the differences between complaints and academic appeals.

2.77   The College complaints log details complaints and the outcomes determined by the College. The College received only one official complaint in 2013-14 regarding admissions and course fees, which was resolved by the Principal. The review team was satisfied with the outcome and that the complaints procedure was followed.

2.78   The review team met students and staff in order to test the availability and relevance of the appeals procedure. The team found that the appeals process is available online and on the VLE within Course Handbooks, and the College informs students of the

processes during induction. The team were satisfied that despite no students using the formal appeals process, students knew of its existence and were confident that they knew where and how to access the information.

2.79   In evaluating the evidence, the review team found that the College has a complaints procedure and appeals policy, students are aware of it and the information is wide ranging and accessible. Students and staff confirmed they are able to make use of the procedure without disadvantage. The review team concludes that the College has appropriate procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of their learning opportunities, and they are accessible to students. As such the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.80   The College's three higher education programmes are considered by the College to be employer-responsive. The review team heard that Engineering employers work closely with the College to identify the Pearson units that should comprise the College's Higher National awards. Many of these Higher National awards are component parts of these employers' workplace apprenticeship schemes so that all students are in employment during their study. Discussions with employers informed the design of the new engineering campus.

2.81   Students on the Early Childhood Foundation Degree are required to undertake at least twelve hours a week voluntary or paid employment in an early years setting, which is verified by a letter of support from the employer. The Course Handbook refers to the role of the work-based mentor.

2.82   Students on the Sports and Exercise Science programme have a curriculum that is enriched by a work-based learning unit and occasional access to various places of employment to undertake project work, but there are no requirements for students to be in work or undertake extended periods of work placements beyond that required for the work-based learning unit.

2.83   Each curriculum area works with employers in different ways, with no strategic oversight of these arrangements or readily available documentation setting out the respective responsibilities for each party. The arrangements with employers at a programme level are not well articulated beyond programme handbooks, meaning there are doubts over whether they can be securely managed, and that the Expectation is not met in theory.

2.84   The review team tested the Expectation by meeting staff, employers and students, as well as by reviewing Course Handbooks and minutes of meetings between College staff and employers.

2.85   The close relationship with Engineering employers enables apprentices and others to undertake level 4 and 5 qualifications directly related to their career aspirations. The review team heard of close working relationships between the Engineering teaching team and employers in monitoring the progress of individual students. However, there were a number of issues arising from these relationships. The team heard that one student was admitted to a programme by an employer without meeting the admissions criteria and their lack of preparation was not identified until several months into their studies. The review team also heard of an occasion where the employer had been asked to apply disciplinary action to a student, which they believed to be the responsibility of College staff. Employers are invited to comment on the quality of major projects, although they are not trained in assessment at higher education level or formally involved in assessment design or marking. The review team concludes that the College, students, and engineering employers would be better served with documented responsibilities of respective partners. Accordingly, the review team **recommends** that the College clarify the roles delegated to other parties in admissions, delivery and assessment of higher education, by September 2015.

2.86   University staff involved in the Foundation Degree in Early Childhood outlined an example of how an employer had informed the design of assessment in a specific module and in personal development plans by incorporating classroom observation and reflection into the programme, although employers do not participate in the assessment process. Following changes to funding, the College no longer engaged employment-based mentors to provide feedback on students and the curriculum, and could no longer support the Course Leader's workplace observations of students. Students also confirmed that the College no longer has a formal relationship with employers who are providing workplace settings. The review team found that this revised arrangement is not aligned with the description in the Course Handbook nor with the expectations of the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark*, in which a stronger relationship is promulgated. The review team heard that the Course Manager is considering ways to strengthen the links with employers and work-based mentors. Accordingly, the review team **recommends** that the College formalise partnerships with employers and mentors to support foundation degree students, by September 2015.

2.87   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met through adequate working relationships with employers at programme level. The associated level of risk is moderate because, while arrangements are broadly adequate, there are some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which requirements are applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.88   As the College does not offer research degrees, this Expectation does not apply.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.89   In reaching its judgement on the quality of student learning opportunities the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.90   The review team found that the College has appropriate arrangements for programme design, approval and changes to programmes, and for the selection and admission of students, of which the latter is contextualised for students on some programmes. The College's approach to learning and teaching is strategically articulated and valued by students, who are enabled to develop and achieve through tutorials and feedback on their work. Students are able to engage in the assurance of their programmes through the HEBoS, surveys and focus group participation; the College's responsiveness to students is evident. The College has appropriate arrangements for supporting external examiners in their role and considering their feedback through processes aligned with annual programme monitoring and action planning. Complaints and appeal processes are clearly articulated and effective. Arrangements to engage with employers in the delivery of programmes are adequate.

2.91   The review team identified good practice in the close working relationship between the College and employers, enabling engineering students studying Higher National programmes to progress within their employer apprenticeships.

2.92   The review team found that of the 10 applicable expectations, nine are met and one is not. Expectation B6, on assessment of students and recognition of prior learning, is not met because the evidence available to the review team demonstrates that the College's assessment submission process is inconsistent and may not be secure, and that assessment processes are not guided and protected by published academic regulations. This indicates a weakness in the operation of the College's academic governance structure, and that insufficient emphasis is given to assuring quality; as such, this represents moderate risk.

2.93   Of the nine Expectations that have been met, five have low associated risk, and four have moderate associated risk. The review team identified issues in relation to admissions because the College's policy is not fully contextualised for higher education students, and fee information is not consistently accessible. The review team makes a recommendation on this and considers the arrangements to present a moderate risk to the Expectation being met. It found that external examining arrangements represent a moderate risk because while reports are processed appropriately at curriculum level, there is no cross-College synthesis of all reports to identify concerns or items of good practice.

2.94   Two issues were identified in relation to programme monitoring and review: one regarding inconsistencies in the level of detail in AMRs, and the risks of losing information copied from external examiner reports; the other regarding the lack of discussion of AMRs at the HEBoS. Together these issues indicate that insufficient emphasis and priority is given to assuring quality in the College's deliberative processes, and that risks to the Expectation being met are moderate. The team also identified two issues in relation to arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with others: one regarding the problems arising from the lack of definition of roles between the College and employers; the other regarding the cessation of work-based mentors for students. These issues represent shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which the College meets requirements.

2.95   In making a judgement on this area, the review team notes that most Expectations are met, and those that are not at present are moderate, and not a serious risk to the quality

of learning opportunities. Where Expectation B6 is not met, the review team believes that without action the issues could lead to serious problems over time with the management of assessment. Plans the College presented at the review to address some of the issues were underdeveloped, and as such the College may not be fully aware of the significance of certain issues described in B6. Previous response to external review activities suggest that it will respond appropriately. The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** 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 provides information about its higher education provision through prospectuses for both full and part-time courses, the College website and a number of printed publications. Course leaders and the marketing department work together according to a defined process to provide current and accurate information to prospective and current students. Information for current students is provided through the VLE and Course Handbooks given to students upon enrolment. The College's mission and vision is communicated in its Strategic Plan 2014-17, and its aims for education are articulated in a Teaching and Learning Strategy and a Higher Education Strategy, although these are unavailable on its website.

3.2 The College is responsible for communicating information about its higher education programmes, as set out in agreements with its awarding partners, although some of the information, such as information leaflets and induction information, is prescribed by the University. The College has processes for managing information about its higher education provision. For example, Heads of Departments submit information on programmes to the marketing team in line with an agreed production schedule; the University ensures students are invited to give feedback on information available to them through module evaluations. The information provided by the College, and the processes and polices it has in place, should allow for its intended audiences to find the College's information fit for purpose, accessible and reliable, so that the Expectation is met in theory.

3.3 The review team evaluated this expectation by considering a number of sources of information, including the College website and VLE, printed material, online prospectus, Course Handbooks, Higher Education Strategy, the Strategic Plan, the Learning and Teaching Strategy, and the student submission. During the visit, the review team met a number of students across different courses, and academic and senior staff.

3.4 Students spoke positively about the information the College provides about their courses and support services, noting that academic requirements are clearly communicated. The website and printed materials contain essential information and guidance required for both prospective and current students, such as course entry requirements, modes of study, facilities, types of assessment, course location, and information about timetabling. The VLE includes links to wider support services such as study skills and student support, including links to the library.

3.5 Programme handbooks are made available to all students, in print and online, and contain the course specification, learning outcomes and reading lists, and information on assessments, academic misconduct, submission of work and support available. Students confirmed they are satisfied with the handbooks and refer to them as a useful reference point. There is evidence that staff review programme handbooks at the HEBoS and some additional checking for accuracy is undertaken by Course Leaders.

3.6   The College website is used to make available its policies on data protection, complaints, fees, academic misconduct, equality and diversity, and bullying, alongside minutes from the College's senior committees. The review team considered the College's Strategic Plan, an accessible document presenting the College's aims for the coming years, alongside statistical data on the student demographic and employability rates. The College produces an internal general information leaflet for students, including useful information on the student voice and progression into higher education.

3.7   In evaluating information for students, the review team found the presentation of tuition fee information inconsistent. College staff stated that fee information for the current academic year was accessible online; however, the team found inconsistencies with some pricing not being available across online and printed sources. The prospectus for part-time courses 2014-15 contains fee information for the Early Childhood programme and Engineering courses, as do the respective web pages. The prospectus for full-time courses 2015-16 does not contain course fee information for any of the higher education programmes, and neither do the respective web pages, with the exception of the web page for the Higher National in Sports and Exercise Sciences. The College lists the Higher National in Sports and Exercise Sciences and the Foundation Degree on the UCAS website and no fees are given.

3.8   In addition, the review team found that course information continued to have inconsistencies across print and online sources, such as conflicting course names for the Foundation Degree in Early Childhood, and this could cause confusion for prospective students. In the 2015-16 prospectus and some web pages it is listed as 'Foundation Degree in Childhood Studies', whereas other web pages and the part-time prospectus list the course as 'Early Childhood Foundation Degree'. The UCAS website lists the course as 'Childhood Studies' but incorrectly states the validating body as Pearson, and lists a separate Foundation Degree in 'Early Years' validated by the University.

3.9   The review team heard conflicting information about the setting of fees. In one meeting they were told that this occurs at the start of the academic year but in another that fees are set in May. The Fees Policy confirms fees are reviewed in May each year, however, this means that fees are not set for higher education programmes until after students have applied via UCAS, so that fee information is not accessibly available to students when they begin making key decisions. As noted, fee information is also not consistently presented. The review team **recommends** that the College strengthen its policy on providing tuition fee information to enable prospective students to make informed choices about their courses, by December 2015.

3.10   The review team considered the management of information and found that the evidence demonstrated there was an effective process involving course teams and senior staff to collect and check published information. The admissions policy is reviewed annually.

3.11   The review team concludes that the College has adequate processes to manage the information it provides about its higher education courses, so that it is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Students have confidence in the information provided by the College. Based on this, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The level of risk is moderate because the current weaknesses in providing information are confined to a small part of the total information provided by the College.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

3.13   The College has specific processes for managing information about higher education that the review team found appropriate. Students confirmed that information is fit for purpose and supports their learning. The review team found the College's information broadly accessible and trustworthy, making a recommendation on the provision of information about tuition fees.

3.14   In making a judgement on this area, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The level of risk is moderate because current weaknesses are confined to a small part of the total information provided by the College. The review team concludes that the quality of information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

4   Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1   The College's Higher Education Strategy states that the College aims to 'ensure high quality provision through quality assurance and enhancement, staffing, and continuous professional development (including encouraging scholarly activity)'. The 2014-15 Teaching and Learning Strategy encompasses further and higher education at the College, and includes a stated aim to produce a Higher Education Guide, which, among other content, will be designed to enable teachers delivering higher education in a further education setting to establish good practice and glean student feedback. Beyond this, there is no specific strategy for enhancement. While the College considers the HEBoS the key deliberative committee for higher education, the terms of reference do not include the discussion of enhancement or an enhancement strategy, while the recently updated terms of reference for the higher education Managers' and Course Leaders' Group now includes the responsibility to 'to propose enhancement initiatives/activities to the HEBoS for approval and oversee their operational progress and effectiveness'. The job description for the Director of Teaching and Learning includes responsibility for the overall College Quality Improvement Plan but does not refer directly to higher education enhancement, while that for the Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Quality makes reference to cross-College quality assurance systems.

4.2   The Higher Education Strategy, the Higher Education Managers' and Course Leaders' Group, and the HEBoS together are not coordinated in a strategic framework for the enhancement of students' learning opportunities at the College, nor does the College integrate enhancement initiatives in a planned fashion. Based on these arrangements, the College does not in theory meet the Expectation that deliberate steps are taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

4.3   The review team tested the College's understanding of enhancement in the self-evaluation; the student submission; the current overall College Quality Improvement Plan; minutes of meetings of the Higher Education Managers' and Course Leaders' Group, the HEBoS, and the Teaching and Learning Group; and in meetings with senior and academic staff, support staff and students. The College's description of enhancement prior to the review is brief, and cites development of the College VLE and its specific higher education section, and the appointment of a learning technology manager as examples, as do students. In addition, students are complimentary about enhancement, specifically the College's effective mechanisms for capturing the student voice, citing student representation on the HEBoS as an example. However, it also notes that students do not always receive sufficient feedback when requests are made in the HEBoS and other forums.

4.4   In reviewing the minutes of College committees with responsibility for quality assurance, the Higher Education Managers' and Course Leaders' Group, the HEBoS and the Teaching and Learning Group, the review team found that none took formal responsibility for strategic enhancement of higher education students' learning opportunities. The HEBoS in particular does not discuss enhancement or the identification and dissemination of good practice, but the structure and membership could enable this. The September 2014 meeting of the Higher Education Managers' Group mentions enhancement projects briefly; when the review team requested details during the visit in the meeting with senior staff, this was seen as embryonic, as was the development of the Higher Education Guide. Senior staff cited the annual monitoring cycle as giving opportunities for the

identification of good practice as an aspect of enhancement, with AMR outcomes summarised in the overarching College Quality Improvement Plan. However, on viewing the Quality Improvement Plan, the team found that only three items relate to higher education, and that these lack reference to strategic enhancement. The team concluded that the AMRs reflect programme-level enhancement and did not constitute deliberate steps taken at provider level.

4.5   The review team explored enhancement with academic staff and were given examples of activities which improve the student learning experience, for example, visits and guest speakers. However, while valuable, the team considered that these do not in themselves demonstrate enhancement in a systematic and planned approach at provider level.

4.6   Overall, the review team found that there is limited College-level strategic leadership of enhancement, and a lack of processes to drive enhancement, therefore it **recommends** that the College takes deliberate steps at provider level to improve the quality of learning opportunities, by April 2016.

4.7   The review team concludes that the Expectation for enhancement is not met and the associated level of risk is moderate, due to the weakness in the operation of part of the College's governance of higher education relating to enhancement, and the insufficient emphasis given by the College to enhancement at provider level.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.9   Despite the College's aims to ensure high quality provision through enhancement, the review team found no specific strategy for enhancement of how these aims would be achieved. The College was able to provide examples of how it had improved the student experience but was unable to articulate the deliberate steps it takes at provider level to enhance learning opportunities, how these steps are informed and decided, implemented, reviewed and evaluated. Responsibility for leading the College's enhancement approach is ambiguous as it is not designated to any particular person or committee.

4.10   In making a judgement on this area, the review team concludes that the Expectation is not met. The level of risk is moderate because of weaknesses in the operation of part of the College's governance of higher education relating to enhancement, and the insufficient emphasis given by the College to enhancement at provider level. The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The College's vision for 2017 is outlined in the Higher Education Strategy. It includes producing highly skilled and employable workforce members, supporting the local economy, working in partnership with employers and the local enterprise partnership. The Strategy refers to partnership working with employers, sector skills councils and local enterprise partnerships to help meet the Strategy's aims. The College has recently appointed a Higher Education Manager to support work to identify opportunities to develop additional part-time, employer-responsive higher education programmes.

5.2 The College outlined the various ways in which work experience is built into programme design to provide opportunities for practice and reflection, and students and alumni confirmed the College's arrangements work well. These include drawing on the experiences of those students already employed in the sector and the development of transferable skills required in the workplace through classroom participation, assessment arrangements and student involvement in decision making. Staff, students and employers characterised the College's approach to employability skills development, within all programmes, as putting theory into practice.

5.3 Each curriculum area has its own approach to developing student employability. Engineering students are typically either in employment or undertaking their programme as part of an apprenticeship. Mathematical and design concepts are applied to projects that are informed by workplace practice. Early Childhood students are required to work in an early years setting for at least twelve hours a week, so that they have an appropriate context within which to base their assessments. The curriculum for Sport Exercise Science students is organised so that level 5 students are required to draw on the science and principles learned in level 4, in completing 'real-world' assessments. Sports students, none of whom are in extended work placements, are given the opportunity to work with level 3 students and to undertake coaching qualifications to extend their planning, communication, and leadership skills. Students and alumni spoke positively about the contribution that personal development planning makes to their employability and self-employment skills.

5.4 The College intends that its relaunched VLE will ensure programmes are accessible to those in work and who wish to develop their employability skills further through study.

5.5 The students with whom the review team met were aware of the College's Employability Hub, but none had made use of its services to assist them in finding employment. The review team heard that the College intends to participate in the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey to assist in its evaluation of the employability of its alumni and develop its alumni network to provide support for current students. The College has also launched an Employability Scheme of Learning, although its reach is currently restricted to its further education students.

5.6 Working relationships with employers are organised differently in each curriculum area, with key responsibility for liaison vested in the tutoring teams. These working relationships inform curriculum and assessment design to enhance the employability skills delivered through the programmes. Engineering staff work very closely with employers to design Higher National awards, using bespoke combinations of units to meet employer needs that form key components of apprenticeships and other training programmes. Employers are also involved in selecting students for admission onto some programmes, as part of the selection process for apprenticeships. The review team also heard how employers help inform tutors' approach to assessment design and marking, although they are not given responsibility for assessment. Some employers make weekly visits to the

College to review the progress of apprentices that they sponsor and provide additional support to them if necessary. The design of the new CEMAST facility was informed by employer needs to reflect the facilities and equipment experienced in employment settings, and thus support employability skills development in a systematic way.

5.7 The working relationships with employers in the Early Childhood programme have recently been weakened because of a reduction in funding to support workplace mentors, although the Course Manager is considering ways to overcome this difficulty. Nonetheless, the review team saw and heard evidence of how assessments are informed by local education authority needs and are authentic in that they relate to the workplace setting in which each student must be based.

Glossary

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

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

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.