



# Higher Education Review of The College of West Anglia

March 2015

## Contents

<b>About this review .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Key findings.....</b>	<b>2</b>
QAA's judgements about the College of West Anglia .....	2
Good practice .....	2
Recommendations.....	2
Affirmation of action being taken.....	3
Theme: Student Employability .....	3
<b>About the College of West Anglia.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Explanation of the findings about the College of West Anglia .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations.....	7
2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities .....	19
3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities.....	40
4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities .....	43
5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability .....	46
<b>Glossary.....</b>	<b>47</b>

## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the College of West Anglia. The review took place from 3 to 5 March 2015 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mrs Heather Miller
- Miss Sarah Riches
- Mr Neil Mackenzie (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by the College of West Anglia 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](#) ( Quality Code)<sup>1</sup> setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

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

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

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

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

---

<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at:

[www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code).

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

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

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

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about the College of West Anglia

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at the College of West Anglia.

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

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at the College of West Anglia.

- The systematic engagement with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) in land-based programmes, which contributes positively to the design of student learning opportunities and employability (Expectations B1, A1, A3.4 and B10).
- The central higher education support team, which is highly effective in meeting the needs of a diverse higher education student population (Expectations B4 and B2).
- The development of a student-led cross-College higher education student representative group, which contributes to the enhancement of their educational experience (Expectation B5 and Enhancement).
- The strategic engagement with employers, which enhances learning opportunities for students (Enhancement and Expectation B4).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to the College of West Anglia.

By June 2015:

- formalise Assessment Board processes for Pearson provision (Expectation B6).

By July 2015:

- develop a policy to ensure that staff teaching on higher education programmes are appropriately qualified (Expectation B3)
- review and fully implement procedures for institutional oversight of Pearson external examiner reports to ensure effective and timely responses to issues raised (Expectations B7, A3.2 and A3.4).

By September 2015:

- ensure all Pearson requirements for the management of quality are clearly identified, disseminated and implemented, including the development of contextualised definitive records for Pearson programmes (Expectations A2.1, A2.2 and B7)
- make Pearson external examiner reports available to students (Expectation B7)

- put in place more formal controls to ensure all annual monitoring reports are robustly reviewed at course level (Expectation B8)
- review and fully implement the procedures for annual monitoring to ensure institutional oversight of Pearson programmes (Expectations B8 and A3.3).

### **Affirmation of action being taken**

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

- The steps being taken to develop a tailored training and development programme for higher education staff (Expectations B3, B1, B6 and Enhancement).
- The steps being taken to further develop the role of student representatives to enable them to engage as partners in quality assurance (Expectation B5).
- The development of a new process to oversee effective management of information for higher education students (Expectation C).

### **Theme: Student Employability**

The College has good strategic engagement with employers and is able to use its links with these and other local groups such as the Chambers of Commerce and the Local Enterprise Partnerships to enhance the development of employability skills for its higher education students. This is partly through the development of specialised vocational curricula, such as in the land-based and technology subject areas, and through the involvement of employers in work-based learning and work placement activities. Staff at course level maintain good links with local employers, and this further enhances student learning through the use of guest speakers, and opportunities to attend external events and participate in internal activities involving employer representatives.

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

## About the College of West Anglia

The College of West Anglia (the College) is a large general further education college based in West Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. The College has three main campuses in King's Lynn, Cambridge and Wisbech. It aims to provide as broad a curriculum as possible to local people in a predominantly rural area. The curriculum covers all funded subject areas and ranges from entry level to level 6 higher education. General further education provision is concentrated in King's Lynn and Wisbech, with land-based provision at the Cambridge campus.

The College's strategic ambitions are sevenfold: to inspire all learners to achieve their full potential; provide inspiring and relevant courses; develop excellence through partnerships; invest in buildings, facilities and systems; communicate effectively; promote a culture of equality and safety; and ensure the long term future of the College. The vision for higher education is to provide high quality opportunities to raise aspirations, promote social mobility through learning, and meet the skills needs of the local economy.

Since the QAA Summative Review in April 2010, the College has made a significant investment in infrastructure. A £40 million investment in a buildings strategy has included the refurbishment of existing buildings at both the King's Lynn and Cambridge campuses, enabling the provision of dedicated higher education delivery and recreational facilities. A further £2 million has been used to upgrade the information technology infrastructure, including the provision of wireless access across all sites. The College has applied for £6.5 million funding from the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to build a dedicated University Centre on the King's Lynn campus. Confirmation of full funding is expected imminently and the new University Centre should be open by September 2016. In addition, £6 million has been secured to complete the upgrade of the Wisbech campus to include additional and refurbished teaching spaces. This is due for completion by September 2015.

In May 2012 the College underwent a five-yearly institutional review with its main higher education partner, Anglia Ruskin University (the University). The institutional review focused on the operation and success of the partnership, and involved an examination of activities relating to both the partner college and the relevant areas of the University. The review resulted in a decision to continue the partnership for a further five years with no conditions attached. The review panel made four recommendations and gave four commendations.

The Cambridge campus has benefited from £975,000 investment funding from the University to provide an equine therapy and rehabilitation centre, a veterinary nursing centre, and a dedicated higher education common room, computing facility and quiet study room. This has enabled the joint delivery of equine, animal behaviour and veterinary nursing undergraduate programmes by the College and the University. Links have also been forged with the equestrian and veterinary communities regionally and nationally, and joint research projects are carried out at the campus.

Key challenges faced by the College include the local demographic, which is characterised by largely rural and low-skilled employment opportunities, and a predominantly low-skills base population. In addition, there are major subregional growth targets for housing, rail and road infrastructure developments, and new business within West Norfolk and Fenland. The local skills shortages in higher technical areas has led the College to identify the need to refresh and increase the range of provision, and grow areas of specialism that are already successful. While the challenge to increase the wider low aspirations, and low-skills/low-wage profile of the local community has made higher education recruitment generally more challenging, recruitment to the specialist land-based programmes at the Cambridge campus has increased. These curriculum areas are strengthening relationships

with the equine and animal care industries, and the provision is expected to continue to grow significantly over the next three years. The College acknowledges that this recent growth will require additional resourcing and has included this in its planning cycle.

Before 2006 the College worked with a number of higher education institutions. In 2006 the College entered into a single funding agreement with Anglia Ruskin University (at the time called Anglia Polytechnic University) to consolidate provision and establish a more consistent level of academic support and quality. In 2007 the College and the University established a Joint Venture Company to develop a strategic approach to the development of higher education provision that closely reflects the needs of the local economy and the population. The Joint Venture Company was initially called the University Centre King's Lynn. This venture has since been extended to encompass the specialist higher education provision at the College's land-based campus in Cambridge and now has the legal name of the University Centre West Anglia. The Joint Venture Company Board comprises the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor and the Secretary and Clerk of the University, and the Principal and Executive Director Curriculum and Learning of the College.

The College is structured into five faculties, and responsibility for higher education is located within four of these. The Manager of the University Centre West Anglia is line managed by the Executive Director Partnerships. He is responsible for coordinating and developing higher education provision and acts as the main link between the College and the University. All Foundation and Honours Degree programmes offered by the College are validated by the University; the College also offers a small number of Pearson Higher National programmes. Funding for all higher education programmes is received through the University.

The QAA review in 2010 identified three areas of good practice and made three desirable recommendations. There is evidence of the College building on good practice and, in particular, the strengthening of the link with the University. The College has made reasonable progress with the actions resulting from the recommendations. Reporting, analysis and review of key performance indicators is undertaken at Curriculum Standards Committees meetings, which meet termly and monitor this data. The Manager of the University Centre West Anglia reviews Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs) and writes an overall summary, which is presented to the Higher Education Steering Group before being forwarded to the University. This contains details from AMRs for all University provision but does not include Pearson programmes. The College has implemented a range of mechanisms to gather student feedback, some of which relate directly to feedback on the programme-specific student experience, as recommended by the QAA review.

## Explanation of the findings about the College of West Anglia

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 delivers certificates and diplomas on behalf of Pearson, and Foundation and Honours Degree programmes on behalf of the University. The Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes in engineering and construction are designed by Pearson; the College does not deliver any centre-devised units. Pearson is responsible for ensuring that its qualifications meet the requirements of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and other external reference points. The College's degree programmes are validated by the University in accordance with its academic regulations, which take account of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The College's involvement in the design of the degree programmes varies. Where a programme is delivered by the University and one or more associate colleges, the programmes are designed primarily by the University, although individual colleges may seek approval to offer college-designed modules to meet local needs. Where a programme is delivered only by the College in association with the University, for example, land-based subjects, College staff are more heavily involved in the development and design of the programme. The University's regulations and codes, which take appropriate account of the FHEQ, the Quality Code and guidance on qualification characteristics, provide a detailed framework for setting and maintaining academic standards. The Foundation Degree programmes delivered by the



College all incorporate work-based learning and provide progression to specified Honours Degree programmes, either at the College or the University. These arrangements enable Expectation A1 to be met in principle.

1.2 The review team tested whether the College meets its responsibilities by reviewing documentation prepared for University approval processes, including validation documents; course specification and module definition forms; student handbooks; module guides and assessment briefs; and by meeting academic staff.

1.3 University validation documents and course specifications include references to national reference points such as qualification and Subject Benchmark Statements, and professional and sector body guidance. Programme level learning outcomes, which are benchmarked against the University's award definitions, are set out in course specification forms. Learning outcomes for each module are recorded on the module definition form; they are mapped against programme learning outcomes during the approval process. Module guides contain details of module learning outcomes, assessment tasks, assessment criteria and marking standards. The documentation for the University-validated programmes taken as a whole provides clear information about the volume of credit to be achieved for an award and the academic level of component modules. The College has not developed programme specifications for its Higher National qualifications, and student handbooks provide little information about how the programme has been designed to meet Pearson requirements for a qualification, and differences in academic level. Although the College has recently provided staff development on the Quality Code, academic staff who met the review team had little understanding of how external reference points such as the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements can be used to both set and maintain standards. Staff in land-based subjects take good account of the requirements of relevant PSRBs and associations in designing their curricula, and this has been identified by the review team as good practice in Expectation B1.

1.4 Taking into account the College's limited role in setting and maintaining standards, the review team concludes that Expectation A1 is met and the associated risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.5 In 2007 the College established a Joint Venture Company partnership with the University to manage the development of higher education programmes. The Joint Venture Agreement sets out the academic governance arrangements, and the responsibilities of the parties operating through their respective management and committee structures, for: academic standards, learning and assessment, the provision of learning resources, staffing, and student support. The arrangement is informed by the University's guide to Managing Collaborative Partnerships and the Senate Code of Practice on Collaborative Provision. The governance arrangements are designed to ensure that the College operates its degree provision in accordance with the University's regulations, policies and procedures, and that the University's academic and management structures take responsibility for the academic standards of degree programmes delivered by the College. College staff are members of relevant University committees and receive copies of minutes after each meeting.

1.6 The Board of Directors of the Joint Venture Company, which meets biannually, agrees new programme developments, student number targets and budgets; the Board can also veto the development of new Higher National programmes. Although in theory the agreement encompasses all higher education programmes delivered by the College, in practice the University plays a limited role in relation to Pearson programmes. The College's Higher National students are enrolled with the University but the College has full responsibility for quality assurance of Higher National programmes in accordance with the requirements of the Pearson awarding organisation.

1.7 The College operates a faculty system, four of which deliver higher education. The Executive Director Curriculum and Learning, who is a member of the Senior Management Team, line manages heads of faculties. Within faculties, programme Managers have responsibility for curriculum areas; Course Directors are responsible for the day-to-day management of programmes. The responsibilities of Course Directors are set out in the College's general quality documentation and the Higher Education Monitoring Procedure. The Manager of the University Centre West Anglia reports to the Board of the Joint Venture Company through the Executive Director Curriculum and Learning; the Manager plays a key role in ensuring the overall quality of higher education and liaising with the University.

1.8 The University's Academic and Assessment Regulations apply to the College's degree students. The College's delegated responsibilities are limited to granting extensions for the submission of coursework; the University retains control over the operation of academic malpractice and mitigating circumstances procedures. The academic framework for Higher National programmes is set out in a number of guidance documents published by Pearson. Pearson's requirements include the development and publication of assessment regulations dealing with matters such as late submissions, referrals, academic malpractice, appeals and the holding of Assessment Boards. These systems and processes allow the Expectation to be met in principle.

1.9 The review team tested the College's engagement with the academic frameworks and regulations of the University and Pearson by scrutinising the Joint Venture Agreement

and associated University documents; guidance provided by Pearson; College policies and procedures; and student handbooks; and by talking to staff and students.

1.10 The academic governance arrangements and frameworks in respect of degree programmes are detailed, comprehensive and well understood by staff and students. The College has general policies relating to assessment malpractice and appeals, but Pearson's specific requirements for Higher National programmes, including the development of assessment regulations, the holding of formal Assessment Boards and the development of contextualised programme specifications, have not been implemented. This is discussed further under Expectations A2.2 and B7. Staff demonstrated a limited understanding of Pearson requirements, and student handbooks do not clearly set out the academic regulations applicable to Higher National programmes. The review team **recommends** that the College ensures all Pearson requirements for the management of quality are clearly identified, disseminated and implemented.

1.11 The review team concludes that Expectation A2.1 is not met as the College has not established an effective system for implementing Pearson requirements. This presents a moderate risk to the maintenance of academic standards as the absence of clear assessment regulations and formal Assessment Boards creates the potential for the inequitable treatment of students.

**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**

1.12 The University retains the responsibility for the maintenance of definitive records of its validated programmes delivered by the College. The College has responsibility for the maintenance of definitive records for Pearson programmes. Links are provided to the standard Pearson BTEC Higher National qualification specifications, and a schedule of units offered during the programme is published for students on the virtual learning environment (VLE).

1.13 The review team reviewed the VLE to assess the completeness of the definitive records and discussed the production, monitoring and review of the records with staff and students.

1.14 The team found that the consistency and detail of the information provided for students as a definitive records of the Pearson programmes is variable. The College does not produce programme specifications for each Higher National on offer as required in the BTEC Centre Guide to provide additional information for students to contextualise the learning experience they will receive. The review team recommends that, as part of ensuring all Pearson requirements for the management of quality are clearly identified, disseminated and implemented, the College develops contextualised definitive records for Pearson programmes. See also Expectation A2.1.

1.15 The review team concludes that Expectation A2.2 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as the College has limited responsibility for the development of definitive records of programmes.

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.16 The University and Pearson have ultimate responsibility for the approval of programmes offered by the College. The majority of degree programmes are designed and developed by the University, and delivered at the University as well as at the College and other partner institutions. However, the land-based programmes were developed by the College in partnership with the University and are jointly delivered by the University and the College, solely to College students. The design and approval of these programmes makes use of the University's standard documentation, which ensures consideration of the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.17 The College has also been involved in the development of a number of modules to be delivered as part of the University's provision. The development of these modules makes use of the University's standard approval documentation that ensures consideration of the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and PRSB requirements as well as alignment with programme learning outcomes.

1.18 Internally, the College operates a programme approval system, requiring the approval of senior managers, prior to working with the University to develop and set academic standards at an appropriate level. These processes, and the use of standard University documentation, enable the College to meet this Expectation in principle.

1.19 For programmes designed and approved by Pearson, the College does not develop its own units.

1.20 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the College's procedures for the design and approval of programmes through scrutinising documentation, including programme and module approval forms, programme validations, and minutes of meetings from the College and the University, and by meeting with senior and academic staff.

1.21 The review team concludes that the College effectively fulfils its responsibilities for programme design and approval through its agreements with both the University and Pearson. This ensures that programmes are aligned to relevant external reference points. The College therefore meets Expectation A3.1, and the associated level of 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**

1.22 Pearson and the University have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that credit and qualifications are awarded based only on the achievement of relevant learning outcomes, and that both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.

1.23 For programmes validated by the University, the approach to assessment is defined in the Senate Code of Practice. Assessments on these programmes are either set directly by the University, or are developed by teaching staff at the College using standard University documentation before being granted final approval by the University. Module assessments are linked to module intended learning outcomes, which are in turn linked to programme intended learning outcomes. Departmental Assessment Panels, conducted by the University, are responsible for assuring this process.

1.24 For Pearson validated programmes the approach to assessment is set out in Pearson documentation, including the BTEC Centre Guide to Managing Quality, the BTEC Centre Guide to Internal Verification and BTEC Higher National delivery guides. The College is responsible for setting all assessments on these programmes. These assessments are subject to internal verification prior to their approval. In addition, the appropriateness of assessments is considered by external examiners.

1.25 The approach taken by the College enables it to meet this Expectation in theory.

1.26 The review team tested the College's approach through scrutinising relevant documentation, including minutes from meetings of College and University committees, external examiner reports and module definitions. They also met academic and senior staff, and students from across the College's provision.

1.27 The review team found that the College is following its internal procedures in relation to assessment through the use of University documentation, internal verification processes and interaction with University committee structures, including Departmental Assessment Panels. For Pearson programmes, internal verification and external examining assure the quality of assessment processes. There is, however, a need for the College to consider its approach to the oversight of Pearson external examiner reports to ensure timely and effective responses; the review team makes such a recommendation in Expectation B7.

1.28 For University provision, processes for the award of credit and qualifications are working effectively and are in line with both the College's and the University's requirements. There are systems and processes in place to assure standards of assessment and the

achievement of relevant learning outcomes on Pearson programmes. The review team concludes that Expectation A3.2 is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.29 Ultimate responsibility for the monitoring and review of the College's provision in reference to academic standards lies with the College's validating partners. The College's internal approach to monitoring is laid out in the Higher Education Monitoring Procedure.

1.30 University-validated degree programmes are subject to an annual monitoring process, overseen by the Board of the Joint Venture Company, in addition to University committee structures and frameworks, which are described in the Senate Code of Practice. Within the College, monitoring of key performance data takes place at a faculty level through Curriculum Standards Committee meetings and at course level through Course Management Committees, with AMRs considered by the Higher Education Steering Group.

1.31 For its Pearson provision, the College makes use of Pearson standard documentation and processes, including internal verification and external examiner reports, to monitor and review academic standards. Internally, review and monitoring takes place through faculty Curriculum Standards Committee meetings and at a course level through Course Management Committees.

1.32 The responsibility within the College for the monitoring and review of academic standards lies with the Executive Director Curriculum and Learning. The College's approach to monitoring and review of programmes enables it to meet this Expectation in principle.

1.33 The review team tested the College's approach to monitoring and review of programmes by examining documents, including minutes of the Higher Education Steering Group, Curriculum Standards Committee meetings and external examiner reports, and meeting staff and students.

1.34 For University-validated provision, the review team found that the course teams are engaging positively with University structures, and that AMRs are completed and considered by the Higher Education Steering Group, providing internal monitoring and review. Course Management Committees do not, however, formally scrutinise AMRs as described in their terms of reference.

1.35 For Pearson programmes, AMRs are completed but are not scrutinised through the College's committee structure, and do not form part of the annual review process at the Higher Education Steering Group, despite the terms of reference set out in the Higher Education Monitoring Procedure. In Expectation B8, the review team recommends that the College review and fully implement the procedures for annual monitoring to ensure institutional oversight of Pearson programmes.

1.36 Overall, the review team found that the College engages effectively with the monitoring and review requirements of the University. While there are some weaknesses in the operation of monitoring and review processes for Pearson programmes, these are limited to a small part of the total higher education provision and do not present any serious risks to the maintenance of academic standards. The review team concludes that Expectation A3.3 is therefore met and 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**

1.37 The College is actively involved in local employer organisations, such as the Chambers of Commerce and Local Enterprise Partnerships, and regularly invites employers into the College to discuss the potential for new programme developments. The responsibility for using independent external expertise in setting academic standards rests primarily with the University for degree programmes and with Pearson for Higher National programmes. However, where the proposed degree programme is unique to the College, for example in land-based subjects, staff draw upon the expertise of employers and professional bodies during the development phase. The selection of optional modules on Higher National programmes is designed in part to meet the needs of employers.

1.38 The University is responsible for the appointment of external members to approval panels in accordance with the Senate Code for Curriculum Approval.

1.39 The assessment process for degree programmes is managed by the University. In general, assessments are devised by University staff, although, in the case of land-based programmes, College staff have a significant input to assessment design, subject to approval by the University. College staff are also able to contextualise University assessments, where appropriate, to meet local needs. Assessment for Higher National programmes are designed by College staff in accordance with the awarding organisation's guidance and the College's procedures for assessment, internal and external verification.

1.40 The University is responsible for appointing external examiners for degree programmes. University heads of departments review external examiner reports, and actions in response to these reports are detailed in University AMRs. External examiners are not required specifically to report on associate colleges, although samples of student work from associate colleges are made available to be considered alongside samples from the University's core students. External examiners comment on the assessment process through their written reports and by attendance at University Departmental Assessment Boards or Awards Boards. If standards are deemed to be at risk, the University's Senate considers the report and the relevant University Head of Department responds. Good practice identified by external examiners is disseminated through the University's Annual Learning and Teaching Conference.

1.41 Pearson appoints external examiners for the College's Higher National programmes. External examiners attend the College and meet staff and students. Their reports are downloaded from the Pearson website by the Organisational Development and Quality Unit and are also often received directly by Course Directors. If standards are deemed to be at risk, Course Directors are required to develop action plans to address any issues identified. These are monitored by the Organisational Development and Quality Unit. Recommendations made by external examiners and the programme team's response are captured in AMRs. These arrangements enable the Expectation to be met in principle.

1.42 The review team considered the use of external expertise in setting and maintaining standards by looking at academic approval documents, University and College policies and procedures, external examiner and verifier reports, AMRs and talking to staff.

1.43 The College makes good use of its links with employers and professional bodies in land-based subjects to inform curriculum design and enhance the employment prospects of students. This is identified as good practice and explored further in paragraph 2.6 under Expectation B1. External examiners are in place for all of the College's higher education programmes. The College receives copies of external examiner reports for degree programmes from the University in a digital package during the autumn term. The reports are also available on the University's website. The reports are discussed at the University's Departmental Assessment Panel, the minutes of which are sent to programme leaders at the College. Despite these arrangements, the review team found evidence that programme leaders do not routinely receive copies of external examiner reports.

1.44 The effectiveness of the College's procedures for considering Pearson external examiner reports is considered in paragraph 2.67 under Expectation B7. The review team has identified a need for the College to consider its approach to the oversight of Pearson external examiner reports to ensure timely and effective responses; the review team makes such a recommendation in Expectation B7.

1.45 Overall, the review team concludes that the College makes appropriate use of independent external expertise in the maintenances of academic standards; the Expectation is therefore 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

1.46 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook.

1.47 The College works effectively with the University and Pearson in the maintenance of academic standards. The Joint Venture Company, the University Centre West Anglia, underpins the close working relationship between the College and the University, and enables effective liaison at strategic and operational level. The majority of the College's provision comprises Honours and Foundation Degree programmes validated by the University, and these are subject to all the University systems and processes for the maintenance of academic standards. The Higher National programmes validated by Pearson are subject to Pearson quality processes, and the College has largely effective mechanisms to ensure standards are maintained.

1.48 With the exception of Expectation A2.1, all Expectations in this area are met in principle. Expectation A2.1 has a moderate associated risks; all other risks are deemed to be low. The moderate risks relate to Pearson programmes and the need to ensure all Pearson requirements for the assurance of quality are met. The review team makes a recommendation that relates to the identification, dissemination and implementation of all Pearson processes for the management of quality, including the development of contextualised definitive records for Pearson programmes.

1.49 Links to other recommendations in this section relate to annual monitoring processes and oversight of external examiner reports for Pearson programmes. These recommendations do not present a moderate or serious risk to the maintenance of standards, although they do present moderate risks to the quality of student learning opportunities under Expectations B7 and B8.

1.50 The review team identified good practice in the systematic engagement with PSRBs in land-based programmes; this impacts on the maintenance of academic standards as well as the quality of student learning opportunities.

1.51 Taking into account the limited responsibility the College has for academic standards, and in particular for the maintenance of standards for the University-validated provision, and on the basis that six of the seven Expectations are met, and that the recommendations do not individually or collectively present any serious risk to the management of this area, the review team concludes that the College **meets** UK expectations in the maintenance of the academic standards of awards it offers on behalf of the University and Pearson.

## 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 All higher education provision at the College is subject to the overview of the Joint Venture Company Board. The University has overall responsibility for the approval of programmes and is able to veto the development of any new Pearson-approved programmes at the College. The College does not deliver any locally devised units for Pearson validated programmes and has no plans to do so.

2.2 The College undertakes an internal course approval process, which considers the rationale and resource implications, and requires the approval of the College Leadership Team to progress. Design and approval of programmes makes use of the University's standard documents, regulations and guidance. Land-based programmes have been developed in partnership with the University and are jointly delivered. Other University-validated programmes make use of existing optional modules to deliver a distinct College pathway. In addition, and subject to University regulations, the College has been involved in the development of a limited number of modules for these programmes that have then been added to the stock of modules available across the University's approved provision.

2.3 For Pearson programmes, optional units that make up the College pathway are selected on the basis of local employer need and student consultation to ensure the relevancy of the programme.

2.4 The College's approach to the design, development and approval of modules enables it to meet this Expectation in principle.

2.5 The review team tested the College's approach through examining documents relating to programme and module design and approval, and met a range of staff and students from across the College.

2.6 The review team found that there is good engagement by the College staff with the University's processes in the design and approval of programmes. The College is effective in its engagement with local employers and local need in the development of programmes it delivers. An example of this is the inclusion of a new small business module on the BA (Hons) Business Management programme to meet the needs of the local employer community, which constitutes mainly small to medium-sized enterprises. The College's involvement in the development of the land-based programmes, in partnership with the University, displayed excellent engagement with the requirements of PSRBs. In addition to programme development, the positive engagement with PSRBs goes beyond simply meeting the PSRB requirements, and ensures all students have good opportunities to develop practical and academic skills. The review team considers that the systematic engagement with PSRBs in land-based programmes contributes positively to the design of student learning opportunities and employability and is **good practice**.

2.7 In discussions around the College's approach to the design, development and approval of programmes, both academic and senior staff displayed a limited knowledge of relevant external reference points that should be considered, with the exception of those in relation to PSRBs. However College staff are involved in validation processes undertaken with the University that take account of relevant external reference points such as the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. In Expectation B3, the review team affirms the steps being taken to develop a tailored training and development programme for higher education staff, and the continuation of this should enable staff to develop a better understanding and engagement with relevant external reference points in internal programme design and development processes.

2.8 Pearson programmes are viewed positively by students and employers, and the needs of the locality are considered in the development of the pathways at the College, resulting in programmes that are relevant, current and support student employability.

2.9 The review team concludes that the College meets the requirements of the Expectation, and that the positive engagement with PSRBs in the design and development of land-based programmes is good practice. The associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.10 The College's approach to the admission of students to its University higher education programmes is outlined in the Senate Code for Admissions and in the College-defined application and enrolment process. Admission criteria are set by the University and reviewed as part of the programme approval process. The recruitment process for Pearson awards, including the setting of admission criteria, is managed by the College. The Head of Marketing and Student Services, supported by an administrative team, is responsible for all student application and enrolment processes. The admissions complaint process is outlined in the Code for Admissions and the College complaints procedure, and is overseen by the Head of Organisational Development and Quality to provide impartiality. This approach enables the College to meet the Expectation B2 in principle.

2.11 The review team assessed the College's admission practices by scrutinising the implementation of the operating processes, reviewing guidance provided for potential students, and meeting staff and students to discuss the admission procedures.

2.12 The College has a commitment towards widening access, and an accessible and transparent admission process is part of this strategy. The marketing and academic teams work closely to provide a substantial number of opportunities for potential students to obtain information about courses including open days, visits to local schools and joint events with the University. Students commented that they value the subject specific advice provided by academic staff at these events, which assists them in making course choices and completing applications.

2.13 The review team found that the process for applications and enrolments has been delegated by the Head of Marketing and Student Services to the Manager of the University Centre West Anglia and the higher education support team, who provide a centralised higher education admission system within the overall college admission processes.

2.14 Full-time students apply using UCAS; the College process is carefully managed by the higher education support team, who liaise with academic and support staff to oversee offers and maintain records of decisions. The College has made considerable investment in ensuring that this process is responsive to applicants, with a new clearing process introduced in September 2014 to assist students in making informed decisions.

2.15 Admission criteria are stated clearly on course literature and are easily accessible to potential students. These are used by the higher education support team to issue offers and manage the interview process. All records are held centrally by the higher education support team. There is an efficient screening process as part of the application process to help identify those requiring additional support. The higher education support team links with course teams to discuss exceptional entrants and monitor the selection process to provide additional advice to meet the needs of a diverse higher education student population; this contributes to the good practice identified in Expectation B4.

2.16 Part-time applications for Pearson programmes are made online directly to the College, and the recruitment and application process is managed by the Faculty of Technology. Applications are considered by the Course Director, who provides individual advice and guidance for prospective students.

2.17 Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of the Accreditation of Prior Learning process for full and part-time admissions; these are implemented responsively and sympathetically to meet the needs of students.

2.18 Recruitment processes are reviewed and monitored in the higher education Self-Assessment Report and discussed at the Higher Education Steering Group. While comprehensive in reviewing the effectiveness of marketing communication and events, the application process is not included as part of this process. The higher education support team confirmed that this was being addressed by a current review of the implementation of the application process for higher education.

2.19 The review team concludes that the College is operating its admission processes fairly and consistently, and therefore Expectation B2 is met. While the application and enrolment procedure document does not reflect operational management of the system by the higher education support team, the College is supportive towards potential applicants, and where issues arise it is responsive in finding a solution. The associated level of risk is therefore deemed to be low.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.20 The College's approach to learning and teaching is articulated within the College's Learning Strategy, its Curriculum Policy and the Higher Education Strategy. The Learning Strategy, which applies to the College's further and higher education provision, sets out ten principles underpinning quality learning, teaching and assessment, and provides guidance for teaching teams on their use. The Higher Education Steering Group is responsible for overseeing the delivery of the higher education curriculum and the Course Management Committees are responsible for overseeing 'academic standards for teaching, learning and achievement' at programme level. Although the Learning Strategy does not state how its effectiveness will be measured, in practice, the College evaluates the success of the Strategy through analysis of student retention, achievement and success data; student surveys; and feedback from student representatives.

2.21 The College has in place a staffing policy, and policies and procedures for the recruitment, induction, development and appraisal of staff. Staffing is discussed at Curriculum Standards Committee meetings. There is an induction programme for new teaching staff, who are expected to have a teaching qualification or acquire one within five years. The University's validation procedures include the consideration of the qualifications and experience of teaching staff, and changes in staffing on degree programmes are subject to the approval of the Chair of the relevant University Faculty Board. Although the University's procedures provide some assurance in respect of degree provision, the College itself does not have a formal policy on the academic or professional qualifications required for teaching at higher education level. The review team **recommends** that the College develops a policy to ensure staff teaching on higher education programmes are appropriately qualified.

2.22 Individual development needs are identified through the appraisal process or as a result of lesson observations, which take place annually. Some subject teams also engage in peer observations. The College holds two corporate annual training days for staff. Higher education staff may also attend the University's Annual Learning and Teaching Conference and discipline network groups, which bring together staff in a particular subject from the University and associate colleges. Teaching staff are entitled to five days study leave a year to pursue scholarly activity.

2.23 The learning resources available to higher education students include dedicated teaching and social space; specialist facilities for land-based, engineering and construction courses; and learning resource centres at each campus. Students have access to online resources through the College and the University's respective VLEs.

2.24 The College's commitment to fairness and accessibility is set out in the Equality and Diversity Policy, which is monitored by the Equality and Diversity Committee, and in a range of policies covering such matters as fair assessment, disability and additional support for students. The College's arrangements have the potential for Expectation B3 to be met in principle.



2.25 The review team tested whether the Expectation is met in practice by scrutinising College strategies, policies and procedures; staff induction and development programmes; details of staff qualifications; a selection of staff CVs; and minutes of meetings; and by meeting senior staff, teaching and support staff, and students. The College also provided access to material on the VLE.

2.26 Staff teams contain an appropriate mix of qualified and experienced staff. Staff teaching on degree programmes are required to hold a first degree or higher and must be approved by the University. The review team found some instances of staff teaching on degree programmes who do not themselves have degrees. The College explained that these staff hold relevant professional qualifications and deliver practical input on veterinary or equine programmes. Support is available for staff who wish to enhance their qualifications from the Advanced Professional Development Fund. Some staff are engaged in scholarly activity and undertake research leading to publications. Students commented positively on the knowledge and experience of academic staff, which ensures that the curriculum is up-to-date and vocationally relevant. The College provides an extensive range of training and development opportunities, which are focused primarily on general corporate requirements. Although the Higher Education Strategy states that 'the existing staff development policy for HE will be reviewed and updated', the review team was informed that this referred to the general College staff development policy rather than a specific policy for higher education staff. The review team was provided with some evidence of staff development for higher education staff. Best practice in teaching, learning and assessment is shared at sessions that follow on from Higher Education Steering Group meetings. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to develop a tailored training and development programme for higher education staff.

2.27 Students confirm that learning becomes more challenging as they progress through their programmes and they are encouraged to become independent learners. The College has invested significantly in its estate, with support from a number of external agencies; students particularly appreciate the improvements in the technical facilities available to them. Full-time students the review team met raised some concerns about the adequacy of the College's library resources. However, all of the College's higher education students, including those studying on Pearson programmes, have access to the University's library, both in person and electronically. Key documents and learning resources are made available on LEARN, part of the College's VLE, and students on degree programmes also make use of the University's VLE. The review team identified some variability in the use of LEARN by programme teams, which is still under development. Learn comprises the College's student portal and learning platform, personal development plan and portfolio.

2.28 Overall, the College has a sound approach to learning and teaching, which enables students to develop as independent learners. Staff have access to a range of development opportunities and there is an increasing focus on the specific needs of higher education staff. Notwithstanding the lack of a formal policy on the qualifications for teaching at higher education level, the review team concludes that Expectation B3 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.29 One of the College's strategic ambitions is 'to inspire all learners to achieve their full potential'. Student-related targets such as progression and success rates are set for the period of the strategic plan and on an annual basis. Student development and achievement is discussed at Curriculum Standards Committee meetings and at Course Management Committees, with formal monitoring of higher education taking place through the College's Self-Assessment processes and the University's annual monitoring procedures.

2.30 All students receive an induction during Welcome Week, which is delivered jointly by Course Directors and the higher education support team. During induction students are introduced to the content, delivery and assessment of their programme. They are also briefed on the resources, facilities and support available, which, as a result of enrolment with both the College and the University, includes access to University resources, such as the University learning resource centre, careers advice, and events and conferences.

2.31 Module staff are responsible for the development of students' academic skills; in addition, learning resource centre staff publish guides and deliver workshops on higher education study skills, including referencing, numeracy, communications, and making presentations.

2.32 Students' entitlement to tutorial support is set out in the Tutorial Policy and delivered either through timetabled tutorial sessions or bookable appointments. Personal development planning is used to guide students' personal development, either as part of the programme or on a voluntary basis, and is available online via LEARN. Module tutors and Course Directors monitor the progress of individual students through the tutorial programme, and any concerns are discussed at Course Management Committee meetings. Any personal difficulties can be addressed by changes in students' mode of attendance; intermission of studies; extensions of deadlines; requests for consideration of mitigating circumstances, undertaken within the context of the University's and Pearson's regulations; and the College's delegated authority.

2.33 Students can access help from Higher Education Student Advisers, who provide specific higher education-related advice, and from the College's team of general student advisers. The Higher Education Student Advisers are based at the Kings Lynn campus but visit other campuses on a regular basis. The higher education support team holds scheduled surgeries and are available by appointment. There is a dedicated member of staff who deals with applications for the Disabled Students' Allowance and meeting the needs of disabled students. The Information, Advice and Guidance Policy and Procedures commits the College to providing impartial advice on programme choice, progress review and progression, including careers. The College has a Careers Education, Advice and Guidance Policy; careers guidance is delivered by programme teams who can provide vocational expertise, with support from the University careers service and the College's learning resource centres. Employability is fostered through various mechanisms, including the use of group-based research projects and presentations; opportunities to achieve additional professional certification; placements; and guest speakers, field visits and student exchanges.

2.34 The College's approach to enabling student development and achievement allows this Expectation to be met in principle.

2.35 The review team evaluated how well the College's approach works in practice by discussing the arrangements with students and staff; and by examining College strategies, policies and procedures; the minutes of relevant meetings; student handbooks; and other documents.

2.36 The College articulates clearly its commitment to raising the low participation rates in higher education within its catchment area, and to the development and progression of students. Targets for student progression and achievement are set and monitored on a regular basis, with interventions taking place at programme level and on an individual basis where appropriate. The transition into higher education is managed effectively through pre-enrolment advice and guidance, and induction activities. The central higher education support team is highly effective in meeting the needs of a diverse student population and this is **good practice**. Students the review team met commented positively on the accessibility of their tutors and the support they provide. The provision of a range of opportunities to enhance employability, and the strategic engagement with employers, enables students to develop personally, academically and professionally, and contributes to the finding of good practice in Enhancement.

2.37 The review team concludes that the College meets Expectation B4 and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement**

**Findings**

2.38 The responsibility for student engagement rests with the Executive Director Partnerships, reporting to the Senior Management Team, which takes an active interest in the development of student engagement. The College defines student engagement through the Higher Education Strategy and Student Charter by providing a commitment to create a framework where students feel able to raise issues and contribute to the development of the learning environment.

2.39 The College is evaluating further possibilities for student engagement through the Student Voice Strategy, which makes a clear commitment to systematically collect feedback from students through an annual cycle of internal surveys, focus groups and module evaluations, to inform the annual monitoring and review process.

2.40 The College has recently renewed efforts to establish a system of class representatives to include the complete student body. The process facilitates attendance of student representatives at deliberative committees, including staff-student forums and during relevant agenda items at Course Management Committee meetings. The Higher Education Representative Committee brings the student representatives from all campuses together, and a student can sit as a full member on the Higher Education Steering Group.

2.41 These arrangements enable the College to meet Expectation B5 in principle.

2.42 The review team looked at how well these arrangements are working in practice by considering the impact of the Higher Education Strategy, the reports of annual monitoring activity, and the feedback from surveys; by reading the minutes of forums where student representatives are members; and by talking to staff and students about the effectiveness of arrangements to engage students.

2.43 Full and part-time students whom the review team met stated that informal processes are frequently used to raise issues of concern and that College staff encourage discussion and are quick to provide a response. Attendance by students at Course Management Committee meetings and the Higher Education Strategy is infrequent, and students showed limited awareness of the purpose of these meetings. The annual monitoring review process provides an opportunity to formally report on issues raised by students but this varies in quality and scope.

2.44 The Manager of the University Centre West Anglia chairs a student-led cross-College higher education student representative group, which is effective in highlighting and addressing issues of concern. The students shape the terms of reference, the twice-yearly agenda and the type of staff representatives to be invited to attend. Through this forum students have worked closely with College staff to address issues that contribute to the enhancement of their learning experience, including opening hours of the learning resource centre, provision of information technology and access to the VLE. The outcomes of the discussions are monitored through an action plan, where progress is tracked and deadlines set for completion. The review team considers the development of this student-led cross-College group to be **good practice**.

2.45 As part of the renewed commitment towards developing student engagement, the College has defined the role of student representatives to include both support and

academic issues. Training for student representatives is provided as part of a recently introduced annual student conference. The training is yet to provide a focus on issues specific to higher education or on developing students as partners in quality assurance. However, the review team **affirms** the steps being taken to further develop the role of student representatives to enable them to engage as partners in quality assurance. Student representatives have limited engagement with external examiners reports and do not have a clearly defined role within the annual monitoring process or approval of student information. They view their influence as limited to support issues.

2.46 The Student Voice Strategy for 2014-15 is an action plan to systematically collect issues from students and report the findings to the College Leadership Team, who will monitor further actions. The results have informed the College Leadership Team, who are aware of the need to further develop the role of student representatives and of addressing the difficulties in ensuring that part-time students are represented.

2.47 There is an effective system of collecting student feedback, including the National Student Survey and module reviews. Satisfaction levels are monitored closely through the AMR and module reviews, where there is a follow-up process if results fall below a specified level.

2.48 The College is committed to addressing the challenges of student engagement by seeking out opportunities to collect and take action on student concerns. The review team concludes therefore that Expectation B5 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.49 The College's approach to assessment for University-validated programmes is defined in the University's Senate Code of Practice and uses University regulatory processes. The approach for programmes validated by Pearson is laid out in Pearson documentation: the Centre Guide to Managing Quality, the programme-level delivery guides, and the Guide to Internal Verification,

2.50 Assessments for University-validated programmes are either set directly by the University, or are developed by teaching staff at the College using standard University documentation before being granted final approval by the University. Assessments are linked to module intended learning outcomes, and tracked to programme learning outcomes. Assessments are moderated through Departmental Assessment Panels at the University.

2.51 Accreditation of Prior Learning is through a University process. College staff make students aware of this opportunity and support students to engage with the process where appropriate.

2.52 For Pearson-validated programmes the College is responsible for setting all assessments. These assessments are subject to internal verification by designated College staff prior to their distribution. In addition, the appropriateness of assessments is considered by external examiners.

2.53 Students are supported to understand assessments and develop their skills through tutorial support, material on the VLE and the support of tutors where requested. Academic feedback is the responsibility of the College for all programmes, and written feedback is provided on all assessments within a maximum of 28 working days.

2.54 The processes described by the College in its documentation and through meetings with staff enable it to meet Expectation B6 in principle.

2.55 The review team tested the College's approach by examining College, University and Pearson documents, including module definitions, the Senate Code of Practice on Assessment, and the Pearson guides to managing quality and internal verification, and through meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, support staff, and full and part-time students.

2.56 The review team found that processes for awards validated by the University are working effectively and in line with both the College's and the University's requirements. There is positive engagement with the University in the design of assessments and the contextualisation of the assessments to the College's delivery. College staff reported engaging constructively with University Departmental Assessment Panels. Staff are involved in the dissemination of good practice around assessment, and feedback through course meetings and University network discipline groups.

2.57 For Pearson programmes the College implements its processes to ensure that assessments are appropriate. However, external examiners have noted issues in relation to assessment, for example, the provision of Assessment Boards and the contextualisation of merit and distinction criteria. Although the College had set a date for a Pearson Assessment Board, there is no evidence that the College is developing regulations for these Boards, covering such matters as terms of reference, membership, their operation and scheduling, as required by Pearson. The review team **recommends** that the College formalise Assessment Board processes for Pearson provision.

2.58 The review team identified a need for specific staff development in relation to assessment on Pearson programmes. Staff stated that, while there are formative assessment opportunities on Pearson programmes, they do not formally make use of formative assessment to support summative assessment as described in the Pearson Guide to Assessment. In addition, Pearson external examiners have identified the need to further develop the contextualisation of grading criteria and the standardisation of grading. The affirmation in Expectation B1 to continue the development of a tailored training and development programme for higher education staff will enable these issues to be addressed.

2.59 Students are very satisfied with the support provided to enable them to achieve on their chosen course. Feedback was described as very helpful in enabling academic development and is provided to students in a timely manner.

2.60 Notwithstanding the need to formalise Assessment Board processes for Pearson provision, the review team concludes that, overall, the College's processes for the assessment of students meets Expectation B6 and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.61 The University is responsible for the appointment of external examiners for the degree programmes delivered by the College. The University's Senate Code of Practice on External Examiners defines the purpose of external examining, the role of external examiners, the procedures for nomination and appointment, their induction, and the production and consideration of annual reports. External examiners are identified in module guides.

2.62 External examiners have access to samples of work from associate colleges, in addition to assessment material for core University students. The University uses a standard reporting template; sections of the template relating to curriculum delivery and assessment require the examiner to make specific reference to collaborative partner institutions, identifying the location of good practice and any concerns. Responsibility for responding to external examiner reports rests with the University Head of Department, in respect of Departmental Assessment Panels, or the University Director of the Academic Office, in the case of Awards Boards. Issues identified by external examiners and actions in response are captured in AMRs. The arrangements for College access to external examiner reports is set out in paragraph 1.43.

2.63 Pearson appoints external examiners for the College's Higher National programmes in accordance with its procedures. External examiner reports are circulated to the Head of Organisational Development and Quality, the relevant Head of Faculty and Course Director. The Principal receives only external examiner reports by exception. The Head of Organisational Development and Quality prepares an action plan detailing issues giving cause for concern and ensures that actions are completed. External verifier reports are circulated to academic and support staff, and considered as part of the annual monitoring procedures.

2.64 These arrangements enable the Expectation to be met in principle.

2.65 The review team considered whether the College meets Expectation B7 in practice by reviewing its procedures for considering reports; external examiner, annual monitoring and self-evaluation reports; programme handbooks; module guides; and minutes of meetings; and by meeting staff and students.

2.66 Although the University's template encourages external examiners to identify the location of features of good practice or concerns, few do so in practice. The lack of differentiation between delivery centres limits the opportunities for the College to use external examiner reports to enhance its provision.

2.67 The College's arrangements for responding to Pearson external examiners are not effective. As explained in paragraph 2.57, a recommendation that the College holds Assessment Boards, first made in 2012, had not been implemented fully by the time of the review visit. In April 2014 the College received an external examiner report containing six essential recommendations. The College did not treat the report as raising matters of serious concern, as the external examiner had not withheld certification, and consequently it was not brought to the attention of the Head of Organisational Development and Quality but dealt with at faculty level. An action plan has been developed and this is currently being monitored by the Executive Director Curriculum and Learning in consultation with the Head of Faculty.



The relevant AMR did not include all of the external examiner's recommendations, nor did it provide details of actions taken or planned: there is no evidence that either the external examiner report or the AMR was considered by the relevant Course Management Committee. Although the College did not follow its own procedures for dealing with external examiner reports as set out in the Quality Manual, the review team is satisfied that action is being taken by the College to address the external examiner's recommendations. The review team **recommends** that the College reviews and fully implements its procedures for institutional oversight of Pearson external examiner reports to ensure effective and timely responses to issues raised.

2.68 Students who met the review team had a limited understanding of the role of the external examiner; none had met an external examiner or read a report. External examiner reports for degree programmes, and the responses thereto, are available to staff and students through the University's intranet. There is currently no equivalent arrangement for students to access Higher National reports through the College's VLE. The review team **recommends** that the College makes Pearson external examiner reports available to students.

2.69 While the College's management of Pearson external examiner reports is not as effective as it could be, it has taken steps to address issues raised by external examiners and these have been dealt with satisfactorily at faculty level. The College has limited opportunity to make scrupulous use of University external examiner reports, as it does not receive them and individual associate colleges are rarely cited. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met but that the lack of institutional oversight of Pearson external examiner reports and responses presents a moderate risk to the quality of learning opportunities. Issues raised by Pearson external examiners are not routinely picked up by senior Managers or College systems and processes; monitoring of resultant actions is therefore not systematically undertaken.

**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**

2.70 The College has a structured hierarchy of processes to ensure effective monitoring and review of the programmes it delivers, which is described in the Higher Education Monitoring Procedure. Strategic oversight of programme monitoring and review is provided by the Higher Education Steering Group, which is required by its terms of reference to consider annually a written overview of local delivery in each subject. At faculty level, monitoring and review takes place through Curriculum Standards Committee meetings, which take place once a term. Course level monitoring and review takes place at the Course Management Committees, where AMRs are developed and should be considered on a regular basis.

2.71 Student representatives are included in the membership of Curriculum Management Committees and are invited to attend Higher Education Steering Group meetings. In addition, student feedback is considered in monitoring and review through student representative meetings, and student surveys at both the College and the module level. Where issues arise through these student voice processes they are considered at Curriculum Management Committees and are picked up in AMRs.

2.72 The processes described by the College enable the Expectation to be met in principle.

2.73 The review team tested the College's approach by examining documentation, including minutes from committees and management meetings, procedures and policies. In addition, they met a range of staff and students.

2.74 The review team considers that the College engages positively with the University, in respect of the monitoring and review of the University-validated programmes that it offers. AMRs are completed and are considered at an institutional level through the Higher Education Steering Group.

2.75 The College does not always implement its processes for the development and consideration of AMRs at course level through Course Management Committees across both its University and Pearson-validated provision. While staff confirmed that this is the case, there was no evidence of the discussion of AMRs at Curriculum Management Committees. At the review visit the College acknowledged the need for greater oversight of AMRs in line with the College's existing procedures. The review team **recommends** that the College put in place more formal controls to ensure all AMRs are robustly reviewed at course level.

2.76 The review team also found that the College's approach to monitoring and review of Pearson programmes does not match the approach described in the Higher Education Monitoring Procedure. Annual monitoring of programmes is not thorough. The Curriculum Standards Committee meetings do not consider AMRs as part of their monitoring and review. Individual AMRs for Pearson programmes are not considered at the Higher Education Steering Group and thus not considered at an institutional level. The review team **recommends** that the College reviews and fully implements the procedures for annual monitoring to ensure institutional oversight of Pearson programmes.

2.77 There are variations in practice with regard to annual monitoring at course level that do not follow the College's stated procedures and there is a lack of institutional oversight of Pearson AMRs. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B8 is not met and the associated level of risk is moderate. The recommendations relate to quality assurance procedures, which are broadly adequate but have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied. The overall risk in this area is that lack of oversight and rigorous application of annual monitoring and review procedures will lead to issues not being fully addressed and/or monitored, and this in turn may have a negative impact on the quality of student learning opportunities or lead to opportunities for enhancement being missed.

**Expectation: Not 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**

2.78 The responsibility for appeals and complaints is shared with the University and Pearson. Students on degree programmes follow the appeal process within the University student regulations. There are College-devised academic appeal procedures for Pearson programmes, which encourage an early informal resolution but do provide a clear process to escalate the issue where necessary. The policies are communicated through student handbooks, the VLE and during induction.

2.79 The approach to student complaints is outlined in the Student Charter and formalised in the Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Procedure, which is devised by the College and covers all programmes. The process is managed by the Head of Organisational Development and Quality and a monthly report is collated. There is a Make a Complaint page on the website; the complaint process is included as part of student induction.

2.80 The arrangements allow the College to meet Expectation B9 in principle.

2.81 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the policies and procedures for handling complaints and appeals by reviewing student handbooks, the VLE, and reports of annual monitoring, and by talking to students and staff about their experiences in lodging and handling complaints and appeals.

2.82 Although the student submission had expressed some concern over awareness of the appeal and complaints process, discussions with students and a review of the evidence confirmed that information about the appeals and complaints process is available through the VLE for Pearson programmes and student handbooks for University programmes.

2.83 There are inconsistencies in the detail and quality of information provided to students on academic appeals. Some University course handbooks have links to appeals information and contextualised information, while others refer generally to University regulations or make reference to the Undergraduate Student Handbook. Some handbooks make no reference to the process at all. There are links on the VLE from University programmes to the College academic appeal process rather than the University processes.

2.84 Staff and students confirmed that complaints are generally dealt with informally at the local level and the escalation of an issue to a formal appeal is unusual. Support is available from the higher education support team should students wish to raise an appeal or complaint. Students reported that they felt confident of being heard should they wish to follow the process.

2.85 There is an effective reporting and monitoring process for student complaints, and responsiveness is tracked through regular reports to the College Leadership Team and the Board of Governors.

2.86 The formal and informal procedures used by the College in partnership with the University and Pearson demonstrates a responsiveness to students and willingness to engage and resolve issues raised through the academic appeal and complaint processes;

the review team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and the associated 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**

2.87 A key objective of the College's Higher Education Strategy is to strengthen its relationships with employers. All of the College's Foundation Degree programmes incorporate work-based learning, and several Honours Degree programmes feature placements with employers and/or work-based research projects. Students on the Veterinary Nursing with Applied Animal Behaviour programme must complete 70 weeks of work placement in a recognised veterinary practice, and are assessed in the workplace in accordance with criteria set by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the professional body which accredits the programme. The Early Childhood Professional Studies programme incorporates practitioner modules involving work placements as core modules at levels 4 and 5. This positive engagement with professional bodies to support work placement and the development of practitioner skills contributes to the good practice identified in Expectation B1.

2.88 The College's arrangements for work placements and work-based learning enable the Expectation B10 to be met in principle.

2.89 The review team tested the College's arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with employers and supporting students by examining guidance for students and employers, and other working documents, and by talking to students and staff.

2.90 The approach to managing work-based learning on degree provision is determined by the University rather than the College. Placements are sourced either by the College or by students, but in all cases the suitability of the placement is checked by College staff. Some programme teams identify a work placement coordinator to ensure that requirements are met. In most instances, students are visited while on placement. Detailed guidance for students is made available through programme and module guides.

2.91 The review team concludes that the College manages its arrangements with employers for student placements effectively; therefore, Expectation B10 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

### **Findings**

2.92 The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

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

2.93 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook.

2.94 Of the 10 relevant Expectations in this area, nine are met and eight have low associated risk. Expectation B8 is not met, with a moderate risk associated with lack of oversight of Pearson AMRs and the need to more robustly review all AMRs at course level. Expectation B7 is met but with a moderate risk related to the lack of institutional oversight of Pearson external examiner reports.

2.95 The review team makes in total six recommendations, three of which address the weaknesses associated with the moderate risks outlined above, and three to cover the need to develop a policy on staff qualifications, formalise Assessment Board processes for Pearson programmes and make Pearson external examiner reports available to students. The review team affirms the steps being taken to develop higher education training and development and to further develop the role of the student representative.

2.96 In coming to its conclusion, the review team took into consideration the nature and scope of the College's higher education provision. The majority of programmes are validated by the University, and for these programmes quality assurance and enhancement processes work well. The College has a strong link with the University through the Joint Venture Company, which also benefits Higher National students who enrol with the University and have access to their resources. The College has no plans to develop further Pearson provision; the Joint Venture Company would have to approve any such development and has the right to veto new Pearson programmes should it consider this appropriate.

2.97 Overall, the review team concludes that the College **meets** UK expectations in its management of the quality of student learning opportunities. Expectation B8, which is not met, and the two moderate risks identified, do not present any serious risk to the management of this area either individually or collectively. The recommendations relate mostly to omissions or oversights, and actions to be taken should not require or result in any major structural, operational or procedural change.



### 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 to prospective students through its prospectus, website, partner University website, UCAS portal, and a calendar of information and advice sessions. Information on learning support, financial support, programme costs, transport and childcare is identified across publications. Current students on University courses are provided with course and module handbooks, which are prepared by University course and module leaders, and contextualised to the needs of students by College course teams. These can be accessed in hard copy and through the VLE. Students enrolled on Pearson awards are provided with course information prepared by the course team through the VLE.

3.2 The Joint Venture Agreement clearly sets out the responsibility for marketing information as part of the joint venture between the College and the University. To promote consistency and accuracy of information, the College has a Communication Policy, a flowchart showing the approval process of new information for higher education and a design template for management of course website pages. Higher education information is reviewed by the Higher Education Steering Group and by course teams.

3.3 The College's approach to the management of information enables the Expectation to be met in principle.

3.4 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's management of information about its higher education provision by reviewing the College website, prospectus, student programme and module handbooks, and the VLE. They also explored with staff how information is produced, verified and published, and asked students whether they regarded the information they receive as fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.5 The Joint Venture Agreement aims for close working as far as is practicable to review marketing materials and manage information on the website. The University and College marketing and academic staff follow a template for the production and checking of information on the website to ensure that it is accurate and comprehensive. However, the review team found that the materials on the College website, VLE and prospectus for Higher National programmes do not consistently define the awarding body for the qualification.

3.6 The College acknowledges that the current processes to develop, approve and publish public information are underdeveloped and is developing a new process to oversee effective management of information for higher education students, which the review team **affirms**.

3.7 The student handbooks for University programmes are wide-ranging, detailed and generally contextualised to College delivery. Module guides are provided by the University, or the College if it is a centre-devised unit, and the Course Directors work with students to ensure understanding of the information and to discuss any updates that are made. There is some inconsistency in contextualising and updating the information and the level of detail varies between programmes, but this is being addressed through the new process being developed, which will include a signing-off process by the Manager of the University Centre

West Anglia prior to publication. Students felt that they understood where to find the information that they needed, and that it was reliable and fit for purpose.

3.8 Programme information for Higher National qualifications can be found on the VLE. A template is not used for the production of student handbooks, however, a similar format is used across Higher National programmes, with a course guide site and separate learning and assessment sites, which contain the modules to be studied by year. The course guide sites contain general information but assessment planners, list of units to be studied, programme plans, schemes of work and course regulations are not always present or lack detail.

3.9 Guidance on module content, delivery and assessment are inconsistent between modules and programmes, including level 3 assessment regulations and links to further information sections, which are incomplete. The College primarily relies on online distribution of this information and could not easily provide hard copies of course guides for Higher National programmes. Some consideration may need to be given to the provision of different forms of publication should students require it.

3.10 The development and content of the learning and assessment VLE programme sites varies. The majority are used as a repository for learning information and for some of the programmes to upload assignments. The students value the information held on the VLE and find it useful in supporting their learning. Students commented that access to resources offsite is of benefit, and that the VLE provides useful articles and guidance for reading, as well as practical guides to refresh and extend learning.

3.11 Overall, the review team concludes that Expectation C is met. The associate level of risk is low, as the College has been working to develop a new process to further assure the effective management of information for higher education students, and to ensure, under the overall responsibility of the Manager of the University Centre West Anglia, that it is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

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

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

3.12 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook.

3.13 Information provided on the quality of learning opportunities is largely trustworthy, fit for purpose and accessible. The Expectation in this area is met low risk. The review team makes no recommendations, has identified no good practice and affirms the steps being taken to develop a new process to better oversee information management for higher education students.

3.14 The review team concludes that the College **meets** UK expectations in respect of the quality of the information produced about learning opportunities.

## 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 does not have a defined overall enhancement strategy but its approach is articulated through the Learning Strategy, the Quality Manual and the Quality Improvement Strategy. The oversight of enhancement activity is through the Higher Education Steering Group.
- 4.2 There is a variety of processes at the College to enhance learning opportunities and disseminate good practice. At institutional level, the Higher Education Steering Group has a standard agenda item for the sharing of good practice identified at a course level. At course level, discussion takes place at the Course Management Committees, with good practice being shared between course teams.
- 4.3 Staff development is provided across all the College's provision, with a limited range of specific sessions for higher education staff. Staff are encouraged to undertake scholarly activity, including enhancing their academic qualifications, and are able to apply for five days a year for this activity. College staff can also attend training and development events at the University to support enhancement of learning opportunities.
- 4.4 The College engages effectively with employers in both the development and enhancement of delivery, through employer panels, and engagement with professional bodies. This was evident throughout the land-based programmes, in the development of a new business module in relation to small businesses and in consultations on unit selection for the Pearson programmes.
- 4.5 Student representatives are invited to attend committees and to be involved in discussions around enhancement of learning opportunities. The student voice is heard through representative meetings and consideration of survey data, and this is considered carefully by the College. These processes enable the Expectation to be met in principle.
- 4.6 The review team tested the College's approach to the enhancement of learning opportunities by scrutinising documents, including minutes of committees and policies, and meeting with staff and students from across the College's provision.
- 4.7 While there is no overarching definition of enhancement, there is a culture of enhancement across the College's provision. There is evidence of the discussion of good practice at both the institutional and the course level, and staff discuss examples of good practice being shared and developed through these processes. These include the use of flipped classrooms and best practice in student feedback.
- 4.8 Staff development is in place to support staff delivering on higher education programmes. This is on an individual basis, informed by staff appraisal and teaching observations, rather than at a strategic level, and there is a need for the College to continue its development of a tailored higher education staff development as affirmed in Expectation B3. There is clear evidence of support available for individual scholarly activity and of staff understanding and engagement with this process.
- 4.9 The College's strategic approach to engaging with employers in relation to its higher education provision was described positively by senior staff, teaching staff and students.

The review team considers that the strategic engagement with employers, which enhances learning opportunities for students, is **good practice**. This strategic engagement is further described in the commentary to the theme of Student Employability in section 5.

4.10 In addition, the engagement of students in enhancement was confirmed in meetings with students and course staff. The College shows a clear commitment to listening to the student voice and has developed a cross-College student representative group to engage with students and contribute to enhancement. This is identified as good practice in Expectation B5.

4.11 While there is no overall formal strategy, and integration of enhancement activities is not fully embedded, there is a culture of enhancement and of sharing good practice across higher education programmes. The review team concludes that the College meets the Expectation on the enhancement of student learning opportunities and that the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

4.12 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook.

4.13 The Expectation on enhancement is met a low associated risk. The review team makes no recommendations and has identified the strategic engagement with employers that enhances students' learning opportunities as good practice. There is a link to the good practice in Expectation B5 regarding the development of the student-led cross-College student representative group, and the review team also notes the need to continue the development of a tailored higher education staff development programme, which is affirmed in Expectation B3.

4.14 The College has no overall strategy for enhancement and as a result the integration of enhancement initiatives in a systematic and planned manner at provider level is not fully developed. Nonetheless, there is a clear culture of enhancement, and several varied opportunities for sharing good practice, engaging the student voice and using quality assurance procedures to identify opportunities for enhancement. The review team therefore concludes that the College **meets** UK expectations in this area.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Findings

5.1 The College states that its approach to employability is both integral and ad-hoc. Students are encouraged to develop their knowledge, skills and attributes in order to make them more employable. Transferable skills, such as team-working, problem-solving, communication, digital literacy, numeracy and business self-management, are all developed within the context of a vocational curriculum and students' intended career paths. Students are supported by the provision of workshops and resources developed and delivered by learning resource centre staff. Some programmes, for example the part-time HNC in Construction and the Built Environment, place a particular emphasis on group-based project work and presentations reflecting students' work environments.

5.2 Applicants for Veterinary Nursing with Applied Animal Behaviour programmes must provide evidence of relevant work experience as a condition of entry onto the course, to ensure that they understand the nature of their intended career. These students must complete 70 weeks of practical work placement in a Veterinary Practice and are assessed in their work placement in order to meet the requirements of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. All of the College's Foundation Degrees include work-based learning modules. Work-based project modules are a particular feature of Early Years programmes. Computing students have participated in an Erasmus Plus exchange programme, involving work placements in Germany.

5.3 Students are encouraged to attend relevant practitioner conferences taking place at the University or the College. The College recently hosted an event in which the University's specialist in outdoor play presented his research to an audience of staff, students and Early Years professionals.

5.4 Other curriculum enrichment activities include the use of guest speakers and field visits. The College's Higher Education Strategy includes as one of its key objectives the aim 'to strengthen and formalise links with employers in the provision of higher education'. The strategy identifies the provision of two new technology buildings as a driver to build levels of engagement with employers, particularly in engineering. The College is actively involved with local Chambers of Commerce and Local Enterprise Partnerships, supporting the development of the local economy by addressing higher level skills shortages. The Employer Engagement Team plays a leading role in identifying the needs of employers. Employer groups are regularly invited to the College to discuss labour market trends and explore options for vocational education and training. The College has recently established a focus group at a local Royal Air Force station, a large local employer, to identify and support its training needs. The College is in the early stages of developing a degree in Data Analytics to support the development of a new Science Park in nearby Downham Market. The College has particularly strong links with land-based and Early Years employers, who provide support for curriculum development, and delivery includes the provision of work placements and opportunities for work-based projects. The College also sponsors five academies, two of which are primary schools, and is in the process of establishing an academy trust, thus providing a secure supply of placement opportunities for Early Years students.

## Glossary

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

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

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

### **Academic standards**

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

### **Award**

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

### **Blended learning**

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

### **Credit(s)**

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

### **Degree-awarding body**

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

### **Distance learning**

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

See also **blended learning**.

### **Dual award or double award**

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

### **e-learning**

See technology enhanced or enabled learning



### **Enhancement**

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

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

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

See also **distance learning**.

### **Framework**

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

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

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

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

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

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

**Programme specifications**

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

**Public information**

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

**Quality Code**

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

**Reference points**

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

**Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

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

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

**Threshold academic standard**

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

**Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

**Widening participation**

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

**QAA1211 - R4071 - May 15**

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2015  
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

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

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786