



Higher Education Review of Exeter College

April 2015

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Exeter College. The review took place from 21 to 23 April 2015 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Miss Elizabeth Shackels
- Dr Philip Bassett
- Mr Neil Mackenzie (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

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

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

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

¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/quality-code.

² Higher Education Review themes: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106.

³ QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.

⁴ Higher Education Review web pages: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Exeter College

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations **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 Exeter College.

- The comprehensive arrangements and communication mechanisms in place to support prospective and new students during the admissions process (Expectation B2).
- The comprehensive and consistent academic support for students that enables students to fulfil their potential (Expectation B4).

Recommendations

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

By September 2015:

- ensure that the appeals processes are easily accessible and provide guidance on the grounds by which an appeal may be made (Expectation B9).

By December 2015:

- ensure that the College policy relating to the return of assignments and feedback is applied consistently and within stated deadlines (Expectation B6)
- ensure that all formal committee minutes are recorded in sufficient detail to reflect accurately actions and outcomes (Expectation B8)
- establish an effective communication process between senior management and the teaching and support staff (Expectation B8)
- develop a consistent and coordinated approach for students to contribute fully and effectively as partners (Expectation B5)
- coordinate and disseminate its approach to enhancement, and devise methods to monitor impacts and outcomes of defined initiatives (Enhancement).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The work being undertaken to standardise policy and practice for the management of Higher National programmes (Expectation A1).

Theme: Student Employability

Employability is a focus of Exeter College's provision from a strategic level across all of its provision, and it is a priority within both the College's strategic plan and the higher education strategy. Local need is considered when developing curriculum, and positive local employer engagement is prevalent through its programme requirements for work placements. Support for students around employability is provided through an Employability Coordinator and careers advice, supplemented by opportunities to develop employment skills or experiences via field trips. Teaching staff are encouraged to maintain industry links. The work and relationships Exeter College undertakes in the area of employability has resulted in very high employment success rates.

About Exeter College

Exeter College (the College) provides tertiary education for 10,000 to 12,000 students annually. The current number of higher education students is 550, studying on 30 courses delivered in partnership with four awarding bodies and an awarding organisation. The College has developed employer links through its dedicated engagement team with local and international employers. The College's mission statement reflects its local and community links as 'To be an outstanding, dynamic and thriving College, working with partners to provide inspirational education and training for our community.' The College's strategic plan includes four key aims of excellence, innovation, community and inclusivity.

Major changes to the College's higher education provision since the last review in 2010 include increasing the number of awarding bodies by two, which includes the development and delivery of a Foundation Degree in Aircraft Engineering with Kingston University, delivered collaboratively with the Flybe Training Academy based in Exeter.

Programmes delivered on behalf of the University of St Mark and St John have increased by three, which includes a BA (Hons) in English Literature with Creative Writing, which is the first full degree programme developed and delivered collaboratively with the University.

The oversight and management of higher education has changed with the merger of the Higher Education Office with the quality department, and the creation of a Higher Education Manager and Higher Education Administrator roles. Visible senior management presence for higher education is represented with the development of the Head of Performance and Higher Education role in 2014. The College has also introduced a Higher Education Adviser role offering information and guidance to students.

Resource developments for students include the introduction of a higher education study area and social space; extended opening hours of a pop-up learning centre; increased IT access and various property developments, including a radio station; a new sports hall; and an art exhibition area.

Key challenges facing the College with regards to higher education include the managing of various awarding bodies, and ensuring consistency of quality and the student experience. The College recognises the challenges and the accompanying competition arising from the removal of the student numbers cap in 2015.

The College works with four awarding bodies: the University of Plymouth, the University of Exeter, the University of St Mark and St John, and Kingston University. The College also delivers awards on behalf of Pearson, which, alongside Kingston University, is the most recent delivery partner. The College has established and maintained successful working relationships with all its delivery partners.

The College has been successful in addressing the recommendations arising from the last review in 2010, which include the introduction of a new student handbook for all higher education students, the increased availability of tutors through the Tutorial Policy, and the systematic approval and monitoring process for the accuracy of public information. The College also continues to build on the good practice confirmed at the last review.

Higher education provision at the College includes:

- HNC Electrical and Electronic Engineering
- HNC Manufacturing Engineering
- HNC Mechanical Engineering
- HNC Construction and the Built Environment (Civil Engineering)
- HNC Construction and the Built Environment
- HNC Business
- HND Business
- HND Computing Systems Development
- Foundation Degree in Applied Outdoor Adventure
- Foundation Degree in Football and Coaching Development
- Foundation Degree in Coaching and Fitness
- Foundation Degree in Sports Therapy
- Foundation Degree in Acting and Theatre
- Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care Studies
- Foundation Degree in Early Years
- Foundation Degree in Film and TV production
- Foundation Degree in Fine Art
- Foundation Degree in Graphic Communication
- Foundation Degree in Journalism and Practical Media
- Foundation Degree in Photography and Digital Arts
- Foundation Degree in Television Production
- Foundation Degree in Aircraft Engineering
- Foundation Degree in Public Services
- Certificate in Education
- BA Ordinary Degree Business Management
- BA (Hons) Degree Creative Writing
- BA (Hons) Degree Creative Writing and English Literature
- BA (Hons) Degree English Literature and Creative Writing
- BSc (Hons) Degree Health and Social Care
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education.

Explanation of the findings about Exeter College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College delivers foundation degree and full degree programmes in partnership with four awarding bodies, and Higher National qualifications on behalf of an awarding organisation. Overall responsibility in relation to the Expectation lies with the College's awarding bodies and awarding organisation.

1.2 All awards delivered by the College on behalf of all of its university partners are validated in accordance with the relevant awarding body's academic regulations. These take account of the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements to ensure that they are set at the right level, and that academic credit is assigned and awarded appropriately.

1.3 The awarding organisation is responsible for ensuring that the qualifications it has devised meets relevant external benchmarks. The College selects its units from those approved by the awarding organisation and does not devise its own units.

1.4 The College has been involved in the joint development of some programmes with its awarding bodies. This process makes use of the relevant pro formas and processes from the awarding body. These ensure that the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements are considered in the setting of academic standards.

1.5 The College's adherence to the policies and procedures of the awarding bodies and the awarding organisation allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.6 The review team tested the College's approach to the Expectation through considering the College's self-evaluation document and scrutinising evidence provided, including partnership agreements with awarding bodies and minutes of key meetings, and meeting with senior staff, teaching staff and students.

1.7 The review team found that the College was adhering to the processes and procedures of its awarding bodies, such as programme approvals and validations, annual and periodic reviews, and regulations on assessment. Programme and module documentation makes reference to relevant benchmarks, and College staff showed a good understanding of their responsibilities.

1.8 In regards to Higher National provision, the College meets the requirements of the awarding organisation and has taken steps to ensure that maintenance of standards is assured and consistent, through the development of an Academic Standards Facilitator role, which appears to be having a positive impact. The review team **affirms** the work being undertaken to standardise policy and practice for the management of Higher National programmes.

1.9 Through the College's adherence to the policies and procedures of the awarding bodies and the awarding organisation, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of 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

1.10 Ultimate responsibility for establishing academic frameworks and regulations to assure academic standards lies with the College's partner awarding bodies, in the case of degree level programmes, and the awarding organisation, for Higher National provision.

1.11 In reference to the foundation degree and full degree programmes delivered by the College, Partnership Boards are in place with each awarding body to oversee provision and ensure the maintenance of standards. These programmes are subject to the academic frameworks and regulations of the awarding bodies.

1.12 For Higher National programmes, the College applies the guidance within the Pearson Centre Guides, including internal and external verification and the holding of Assessment Boards.

1.13 All higher education level programmes delivered by the College are embedded within the College's Faculty structure. The Quality and Standards Committee has responsibility at an institutional level for the oversight and maintenance of standards, with the Senior Curriculum Group taking operational responsibility. The College's Higher Education Office has responsibility for the day-to-day management and implementation of academic framework and regulations.

1.14 The adherence to and application of the frameworks and regulations of the College's partners allows the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.15 The review team tested the College's approach to the Expectation through the consideration of the College's self-evaluation document and scrutinising evidence provided, including partnership agreements with awarding bodies and minutes of key meetings, and meeting with senior staff, teaching staff and students.

1.16 The review team found that the College applied the relevant frameworks and regulations in relation to the relevant awarding bodies. Staff at the College understood their responsibilities in relation to the awarding bodies' requirements and described their positive interaction with the university committees and structures. This is further supported by the system of link tutors provided by awarding bodies to support teaching staff at the College.

1.17 In relation to Higher National provision, the College makes use of the relevant guidance documents produced by the awarding organisation, and these are applied. The College has recently appointed an Academic Standards Facilitator with a focus on supporting this element of their provision. There is a comprehensive Programme Manager's Handbook in place to support staff in understanding their responsibilities.

1.18 Staff demonstrated a good understanding of frameworks and regulations, including an understanding of the College's areas of delegated responsibility and those that require referral to awarding bodies.

1.19 The College adheres to the regulations and frameworks of its partners, supported by College staff awareness of their responsibilities in relation to following the partner's

requirements. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.20 The College's awarding bodies and awarding organisation are responsible for maintaining a definitive record of the programmes and qualifications they approve, and provide details of the College's responsibilities in the checklist provided to the College. For all programmes, the College is required to produce a Programme Specification, mapped against subject level and qualification benchmarks, and a Student Course Handbook, which are reviewed annually. Where it is necessary for alterations to be made to the programme, the appropriate permitted changes procedures (depending on the awarding body) are followed, which are then approved by the relevant awarding body before implementation.

1.21 The College's awarding bodies receive annual programme monitoring reports from the College and undertake periodic programme reviews every three years. Although not a requirement of the awarding organisation, the College has adopted its own procedure for Higher National programmes that reflects the process followed with validating partners. Awarding bodies are responsible for the issuing of transcripts and final award certificates to their students.

1.22 The College's adherence to the requirements of the awarding bodies and the awarding organisation for the maintenance of definitive programme records allows the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.23 The review team tested the Expectation by considering documentation provided by the College, including the checklists from the awarding partners, the College's Quality Cycle, and the guidance offered to staff in the Programme Manager's Handbook. The review team also met College senior and academic staff.

1.24 The Higher Education Office of the College, reporting directly to the Senior Management Team and the Governing Body, is responsible for maintaining the records of all higher education programmes, and for liaison with each awarding body and the awarding organisation. The day-to-day course management of each higher education programme ultimately lies within Heads of Faculty, but it is the Higher Education Office's responsibility to ensure that these practices are consistent with the awarding body and awarding organisation's requirements. Staff demonstrated a sound understanding of the requirements of their awarding partners and the internal quality processes.

1.25 The College has processes in place to ensure that it meets the requirements of its awarding bodies, supplementing these with its own internal programme approval and annual monitoring processes. There is proactive engagement with the designated university link tutors and external examiners from the awarding bodies, and the Regional Quality Manager for the awarding organisation, together with the Subject Verifiers, all of whom are valued in promoting and maintaining academic standards of the awards delivered by the College.

1.26 The College complies with the requirements of its awarding partners, and has introduced policies and procedures to conduct its own programme pre-approval, monitoring

and review. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.27 College awards are developed and designed through a formal approval process in accordance with the academic framework and regulations of the College's awarding bodies.

1.28 The Senior Curriculum Group, and the College Quality and Standards Group, have formal oversight of the approval process within the College. College Faculties, through their programme managers, forward applications for approval to the Higher Education Office, which are then internally scrutinised by the Quality and Standards Group before being submitted to the relevant awarding partners.

1.29 The Assistant Principal for People and Performance, and the Higher Education Manager, liaise with awarding partners through partnership meetings to ensure that the College's provision is compliant with awarding partner procedures. Link tutors or Academic Liaisons from the respective awarding bodies, and the Regional Quality Manager for the awarding organisation, provide an effective support function to ensure that programmes and awards are developed in accordance with the academic framework and regulation of the awarding body and organisation.

1.30 The College has appropriate processes in place to enable it to adhere to the requirements set out by the awarding bodies and organisation, which allows the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.31 In testing the Expectation, the review team scrutinised a number of documents, including handbooks, specifications, approval processes, minutes of meetings and assignment briefs. The review team also met teaching teams, senior academic staff, professional staff and students.

1.32 All programmes and programme specifications have been designed with reference to *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), relevant quality descriptors, credit values and Subject Benchmark Statements. Module pro formas relevantly identify aims, intended learning outcomes and assessment tasks. To support the embedment of this process, a Programme Manager's Handbook has been devised by the College, which provides standard templates and guidance on the implementation of programmes in accordance with the guidance set by the awarding body.

1.33 Each course programme has a designated Programme Manager who, in conjunction with the course team, produces programme handbooks and specifications. The Academic Standards Facilitator has focused specifically on standardising procedures for awarding organisations and has devised a number of supporting policies to embed assessment, feedback and internal moderation.

1.34 Students are provided with assignment briefs that are clearly linked to assessment objectives and intended learning outcomes. Assignment briefs have been designed to a standardised format, with clear submission dates, and have been internally verified or

moderated before being made available to students. Students confirmed that the information provided on their course programme was relevant and helpful, and that assessments had been relevantly contextualised to support their learning.

1.35 The College also makes effective use of Centre Guide to Assessment and Managing Quality Guides for programmes developed by the awarding organisation. Where these programmes are concerned, the College Quality Assurance Manager acts as the College's Quality Nominee and first point of contact.

1.36 The College website and virtual learning environment (VLE) are used as the main repositories for this information, which both staff and students can access.

1.37 The review team found that staff ensured that academic standards were at the appropriate level through the process of new programme approval. Documentation considered also demonstrated that academic standards were considered in programme design and delivery. External examiners report on the academic standards for its awarding bodies and organisation.

1.38 The College was consistent with the implementation of the processes for approval of taught programmes on behalf of their awarding bodies and awarding organisation, their academic standards, academic frameworks and regulations. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met 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

1.39 Responsibilities for the assessment of learning outcomes vary slightly depending on the awarding body or awarding organisation. Awarding bodies provide the College with assessment guidelines to ensure College staff are fully conversant and aware of the awarding body guidelines on assessment. Similarly, the awarding organisation, through the Centre Guide to Assessment, provides valuable information on linking intended learning outcomes to assessment and advice on assessment design.

1.40 The Quality and Standards Group, in conjunction with the Higher Education Manager, has responsibility for ensuring that programme assessment of learning outcomes is implemented in accordance with the guidance set by the awarding body or awarding organisation, and has devised an assessment flowchart and assessment template for higher education programmes. Two other meeting forums add further rigour to the College's management of assessment processes. The Senior Curriculum Group and Quality and Resources Review Group agendas clearly highlight higher education as an area for discussion in their meetings. Minutes record any higher education issues discussed, including the appropriateness of assessment; these are then passed onto the Higher Education Office for further action.

1.41 At course level, programme managers, through the Faculty Management Group and the Heads of Faculty, promote a College-wide approach to developing staff understanding of assessment of learning outcomes and standardising College processes. The Programme Manager's Handbook reinforces this by providing standard templates and providing helpful guidance on the implementation of programme assessment. The Academic Standards Facilitator has also been highly effective in promoting compliance with the awarding organisation's processes regarding assessment of learning outcomes.

1.42 The College has appropriate oversight structures and processes in place to enable the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.43 The Expectation was tested through evaluation of the evidence and discussion with staff and students of the College. The review team scrutinised a number of documents, including handbooks, specifications and external examiner reports.

1.44 College staff refer to the external reference points and Subject Benchmark Statements when devising relevant programme specifications, module aims, intended learning outcomes and assessment tasks. Staff and students have a clear understanding of what an intended learning outcome is, and assessments have been accurately written against these: for example, staff used the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statement effectively when writing the module content of the BSc Health and Social Care programme. Students indicated that assignment briefs have been clearly designed and signposted to

learning outcomes by citing examples of how assessment objectives link to intended learning outcomes within their own programme. For example, students from the Business and Early Years programmes indicate that not only are they appropriate, but they also reflect accurately what is happening in industry, and in one area are run alongside the industry standard qualification.

1.45 The College has established an effective internal Exam Board process to monitor the progress of all students and awards. Exam Board meetings are clearly structured and recorded, with external examiner reports confirming standards are being met.

1.46 The College showed that the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment and relevant standards. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.47 The College has developed successful partnerships with five awarding bodies and one awarding organisation who have ultimate responsibility for the monitoring and review of all programmes. Although variation occurs in how each partner monitors and reviews their respective programmes, the College has devised internal processes to ensure they are fully compliant and meet the requirements of each partner.

1.48 Clear lines of responsibility exist within the College for the reporting of programme monitoring and review. The Assistant Principal for People and Performance, and the Higher Education Manager, have responsibility for the embedment of all awarding body and awarding organisation monitoring and review arrangements. On a day-to-day basis, the Higher Education Manager, through the Higher Education Office, has oversight of the monitoring and review arrangements.

1.49 The College follows the requirements of its respective awarding bodies and organisation, and has established internal processes to enable the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.50 The review team tested the Expectation by considering documentation, including the Higher Education Self-Assessment and Action Plan, and monitoring and external examiners reports. The review team also met senior and academic College staff.

1.51 Internal College monitoring processes have been effectively embedded, and make good use of a range of data and information. Each programme area devises an action plan that reflects that academic year's activity. The action plan is reviewed, involving feedback from key stakeholders such as external examiners and students. The Quality and Resources Review Group, which meets three times a year, reviews the actions plans in conjunction with the Higher Education Manager, who then produces a College Higher Education Self-Assessment and Action Plan based on programme monitoring reports. To add increased rigour to the process, the College has successfully embedded a Quality Cycle, which uses programme monitoring and self-assessment reports as the basis for quality improvement within the College. Additional evidence that may inform the monitoring process comes from the College process whereby external examiner reports are reviewed, and areas of good practice are identified and shared with staff. Students are also encouraged to complete module evaluations at the end of each semester, which can also inform the monitoring and review processes.

1.52 The awarding bodies and the awarding organisation have devised their own monitoring and review process to ensure compliance. Awarding bodies employ several processes, including the annual report produced by each Link Tutor or Academic Liaison, and institutional monitoring and external examiner reports. The Quality Assurance Manager acts as Quality Nominee with the awarding organisation to ensure that academic standards are maintained and promoted, and will be the first point of contact when Subject Verifiers engage with the College to monitor programmes. The College makes effective use of the Quality Manager's Handbook to promote compliance. The Regional Quality Manager and the

appointment of Subject Verifiers to each vocational area ensures that academic standards are maintained. Staff are aware of the importance of the monitoring and review function in promoting consistency in areas such as assessment design, timeliness of feedback and support for students.

1.53 The intensive care process also provides an effective monitoring and challenge function to ensure that programme teams are performing efficiently in monitoring and reviewing programmes, while at the same time able to provide support to promote programme attrition and success rates.

1.54 The College ensures that established processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented, which complies with the awarding bodies and awarding organisation's requirements. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is 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

1.55 Ultimate responsibility for using externality in the setting of academic standards for degree level programmes lies with the awarding organisations, and with the awarding body for Higher National provision.

1.56 The academic procedures of the awarding bodies require the use of external expertise in the setting of academic standards. Programmes delivered by the College are subject to this process in the development, design and review of programmes.

1.57 These processes allowed the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.58 The review team considered the College's approach to the use of external and independent expertise in relation to academic standards by considering the College's self-evaluation document, and scrutinising evidence provided, including external examiner reports and the Programme Manager's Handbook, and meeting with senior staff, teaching staff and students.

1.59 The appointment of external examiners on degree level programmes is the ultimate responsibility of the awarding bodies, and requires their approval. The College does nominate external examiners for some, but not all, programmes. In the case of Higher National provision, the awarding organisation is responsible for appointing external verifiers.

1.60 The Higher Education Office is responsible for the maintenance of effective communication between programme managers and external examiners at the College, in collaboration with the awarding bodies.

1.61 The review team found that the College's processes in relation to this Expectation met the description in partnership documents, and that described by senior managers and teaching staff.

1.62 The review team found that staff at the College were aware of the importance of externality in the setting and maintaining of academic standards, through the arrangements with awarding partners.

1.63 The review team found that the College's approach to the use of external and independent expertise follows its awarding bodies' requirements. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that 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

1.64 In reaching its judgement about the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.65 All of the applicable Expectations in this area have been met and risk is judged low in each case. There were no features of good practice or recommendations in this area, but there was one affirmation.

1.66 The review team identified that there were some issues with the management and oversight of academic standards of the Higher National provision, which was inconsistent with the rest of the higher education provision delivered at the College. The review team found that the College was aware of these inconsistencies and had begun to address these through a standardisation exercise led by the Academic Standards Facilitator, which has resulted in an affirmation of this work.

1.67 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations at the College **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 Responsibility for the design, development and approval of programmes is the responsibility of the awarding bodies and the awarding organisation. Approval checklists exist for all programmes run by awarding bodies.

2.2 The Senior Curriculum Group, and the Quality and Standards Group, have formal oversight of the approval process within the College, with the Quality and Resources Review Group providing a monitoring and reporting function. College Faculties, through their programme managers, forward applications for approval to the Higher Education Office, which are then internally scrutinised by the Quality and Standards Group before being submitted to the relevant awarding partners.

2.3 The Assistant Principal for People and Performance, and the Higher Education Manager, liaise with awarding bodies through partnership meetings to ensure that the College's provision is compliant with awarding body procedures. Link tutors/Academic liaisons from the respective awarding bodies provide a valuable support function throughout the validation and revalidation process. The awarding organisation's Regional Quality Manager also provides practical support and guidance to ensure that programmes are developed in accordance with the awarding organisation's academic framework and regulations.

2.4 Internal College deliberative structures and processes enable the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.5 In testing the Expectation, the review team scrutinised a number of documents, including handbooks, specifications, approval processes, minutes of meetings and assignment briefs. The review team also met teaching teams, senior academic staff, professional staff and students.

2.6 College higher education programmes and programme specifications have been designed with reference to the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. The Programme Manager's Handbook provides standard templates and guidance on how module content and intended learning outcomes can be accurately linked within assessments. Course specifications and handbooks are relevantly contextualised to reflect the aims of the programme and module content, and have been appropriately linked to intended learning outcomes.

2.7 Programme managers, in conjunction with course teams, are responsible for the production of the programme handbooks and specifications. The Academic Standards Facilitator has focused specifically on standardising procedures for the awarding organisation, and has devised supporting policies to embed assessment, feedback and internal moderation. Any changes to awarding organisation specification is undertaken in conjunction with the Regional Quality Manager and the Subject Verifier for the vocational area.

2.8 Staff could articulate accurately and relevantly the process for the design, development and approval of all higher education programmes.

2.9 The College demonstrated established processes for programme design, approval and review, which are clear and effective. College staff are aware of and articulated the responsibilities and requirements of the College accurately and relevantly. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.10 The College receives student applications through UCAS and via direct applications made using the Higher Education Direct Application available from the College. All higher education applications are considered against entry criteria, which are set out in the College's University Level Prospectus. An initial screening of all applications is undertaken by the College's admissions team, before the relevant higher education Programme Manager makes decisions regarding the acceptance of an applicant for their programme. The process, including application data and the turnaround times for applications, is monitored by the Higher Education Development and Operations Group meetings and by the Senior Leadership Team.

2.11 The College has established processes in place to allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.12 In testing the Expectation, the review team considered a variety of documentary evidence provided by the College, including the Admissions Policy, prospectus, application procedure guidance, details of the Keep Warm campaign, Open Day advertising and event records, offer letters and introduction packs, and minutes of senior meetings that monitored recruitment, selection and admissions processes. The review team met College staff, who confirmed that they were conversant with the College's policies and processes for the recruitment, selection and admission of students. Students from a variety of full and part-time programmes were met, and they confirmed that their experiences from application to enrolment were good, and that information was accessible and accurate. The College has a comprehensive Admissions Policy to ensure that applicants receive effective communications that meet their needs at all stages of the process. Admission staff, supported by a dedicated Higher Education Adviser, work with programme managers to provide specialist advice and guidance to students applying for higher education courses at the College. Opportunities for level 3 students to progress to higher education are delivered in a number of ways, including open events and interview days spread throughout the year to provide prospective students with pre-enrolment information. Throughout the recruitment process, the College maintains close contact with students through a variety of media processes, including a Keep Warm campaign, programme flyers and newsletters. Responsibility for the provision of induction processes rests with individual teams, who prepare pre-enrolment packs and information letters. Pre-enrolment packs include general programme information, guidance on placements and reading lists. The team considers the comprehensive arrangements and communication mechanisms in place to support prospective and new students during the admissions process as **good practice**.

2.13 The College has an easily accessible Complaints Procedure on the website, should a complaint or appeal against a decision be necessary. Details are also available in the Higher Education Student Charter, which also outlines the procedures for complaints.

2.14 The College supports students by ensuring an effective and positive experience at initial application and admissions stages, and by offering appropriate support to those who need it. Information for prospective students is accurate, and selection processes are

transparent. Complaints Procedures against decisions relating to offers are available on the College website and in the Higher Education Student Charter. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.15 The College's approach to learning and teaching is described in the Learning Strategy. This is further articulated by the Higher Education Strategy. The Assistant Principle Head of People and Performance has responsibility for managing the delivery of teaching in this area, and is supported through the Head of Higher Education and the Higher Education Office. The Quality and Standards Committee has responsibility for the oversight of learning and teaching, with the Senior Curriculum Group taking operational responsibility, and the Quality and Resources Review Group scrutinising reports. At a Faculty level, the Faculty Management Group has responsibility to consider and develop practice in learning and teaching. There is a higher education representative in each Faculty to ensure that higher education learning and teaching is considered.

2.16 All staff receive at least one formal teaching observation a year delivered by their Head of Faculty or Programme Manager. Staff observing higher education have higher education practitioner experience and make use of a standard pro forma.

2.17 Staff identified as weak and/or requiring improvement are supported to develop by an Improvement Practitioner, of which there is one for each Faculty. Peer review and informal teaching observations also take place, with additional support being provided to new teaching staff at the College. This is supported through a mentoring scheme and the improvement practitioners.

2.18 New teaching staff on university programmes requires the agreement of the awarding bodies. All staff are expected to hold or undertake a teaching qualification in order to teach at a higher education level at the College. Those without the qualification are expected to gain one within two years of joining the College. In addition, the College supports staff to achieve Higher Education Academy fellowship to further enhance their teaching.

2.19 Innovation and enhancement in learning and teaching is encouraged through the Peer Review and Scholarly Activity Group. This work is further supported through the Enhancement and Scholarly Activity Facilitator role, who leads the Peer Review and Scholarly Activity group. Their role is to bring staff together to discuss and share ideas related to teaching, learning and assessment in higher education, and to support the continual drive to improve standards through engaging with research.

2.20 Student's views are considered in the development of learning and teaching, through representative processes and use of surveys. Representatives are invited to a number of key College meetings, as well as regular Higher Education Learner Voice meetings.

2.21 The College has invested in learning resource centres in order to support independent learning. In addition, the College is 18 months into a two-year strategy to implement a new VLE.

2.22 The College's approach to learning and teaching meets the Expectation in theory.

2.23 The review team tested the College's approach to the Expectation by considering the College's self-evaluation document and scrutinising evidence provided, including the Learning Strategy, the Higher Education Strategy, teaching observation pro forma and minutes of meeting. The review team also met senior staff, teaching staff and students.

2.24 The review team found that the College has in place appropriate and qualified staff to deliver its higher education provision, and that they displayed a good understanding of the context of learning and teaching at this level.

2.25 Support for scholarly activity for higher education teaching staff is in place, through a dedicated fund. The College encourages staff to ensure that this has an impact on the learning and teaching that they are responsible for in order to improve the learning opportunities available to students. The College allocates six days of staff development each year to support development. This provision is increased to ten days for programme managers to support scholarly activity. Best practice in learning and teaching is shared and disseminated across the College through meetings of Higher Education Development and Operations Group.

2.26 Students were positive with the teaching that they receive and with the development of learning centres, which has supported them to undertake independent learning and supplement their teaching. Students have the opportunity, through Higher Education Learner Voice meetings, to recognise effective teaching as well as raising any concerns. Furthermore, students confirmed that the learning and teaching they receive develops as they progress through their course and becomes increasingly demanding, building on the knowledge acquired at previous levels.

2.27 Teaching observations take place in accordance with the formal policy and have the positive engagement of teaching staff. In addition, staff can engage in further observations through the Peer Review and Scholarly Activity Group. However, the documents relating to teaching observations are not contextualised for higher education, with an additional guidance document being provided.

2.28 While the review team found that there were a number of staff development opportunities in place in order to support the development of learning and teaching practice within the College's higher education provision, this did not appear to be strategically led. It was unclear where the priorities for staff development are derived, and how its effectiveness is monitored and evaluated at an institutional level. The need for a coordinated approach to this element of the College's provision is described under the Enhancement Expectation.

2.29 The College has effective mechanisms and oversight in place to ensure that the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices are appropriate for the level of students on its higher education programmes. Teachers are appropriately qualified, are observed, and have opportunities for staff development and the sharing of good practice. Students provide feedback on their learning experience on a regular basis. The review team concludes that the Expectation 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

2.30 The College articulates a commitment to student development and the provision of learning resources, through the strategic plan, the Higher Education Strategy and the Learning Strategy. Student support and development are strategic goals in both the overall College strategy and the Higher Education Strategic Plan.

2.31 The College has recently made significant investments in buildings to support student development and ensure adequate learning resources. This has included specific space for higher education students in a number of areas, which includes the provision of specialist resources.

2.32 All higher education students are provided with a tutor and tutorial time; the commitment to this is outlined in the Tutorial Policy. The library has developed bespoke sessions to support students to develop academic skills to study at a higher education level. This includes referencing and plagiarism, and one-to-one support is also available to supplement the regular sessions.

2.33 Dedicated resource budgets to support higher education student learning and development are held by the Higher Education Office. This money is distributed in response to student feedback and in consultation with teaching staff.

2.34 The College has a commitment to equality and supporting all students to achieve their potential. This is delivered through the learning support team and contextualised to higher education levels, through the Higher Education Student Adviser and the Higher Education Learning Support Policy.

2.35 The Employability Team and tutors are primarily responsible for informing students of professional opportunities, and providing careers advice for higher education students. Teaching staff are encouraged to ensure the relevance of programmes, through the use of guest lectures, work placements and field trips.

2.36 The College monitors student development and learning opportunities through the Senior Curriculum Group, meetings of the Higher Education Development and Operations Group, and programme level meetings. This is in addition to the opportunities for students to feedback through representative meetings.

2.37 The College's approach meets the Expectation in theory.

2.38 The review team tested the College's approach to the Expectation by considering the College's self-evaluation document and scrutinising evidence provided, including the Learning Strategy, Higher Education Strategy and minutes of meetings, and meeting with senior staff, teaching staff and students.

2.39 The review team found that students were generally positive about the support provided by the College to enable them to study at a higher education level and achieve their potential. Personal tutoring arrangements were in place, and there were adequate learning resources available. Where students had identified issues around learning resources, the College has acted quickly to address them. Academic skills development is supported through staff within the learning centres and online tutorials, in addition to support from

teaching staff. Students showed a good understanding of academic regulations and described the support that they had received from the College to study at a higher education level as being comprehensive and effective. The review team considers the comprehensive and consistent academic support for students that enables students to fulfil their potential to be **good practice**.

2.40 Subject librarians are in place and work with teaching staff to ensure resources are available. Librarians attend key meetings throughout the year in order to ensure the resource needs are communicated; this also includes meetings with student representatives.

2.41 Students spoke positively regarding the support provided by tutors across the College's higher education provision, however, some were less clear about the term 'personal tutor' and what this constituted.

2.42 The College's commitment to employability is shown through the provision of work placements, guest speakers and field trips. Students expressed satisfaction with the support that they received regarding employability, and the commitment to the provision of employability skills was apparent across all programmes, even those without a clear vocational pathway.

2.43 The review team found that, while students were satisfied with the support and learning opportunities available, there were no formal measures or evaluation in place in relation to the Learning Strategy. However, student feedback and good practice is discussed in key College meetings, displaying a commitment to student development.

2.44 The College has appropriate arrangements and resources in place to support students develop and achieve their academic potential. Students were positive with the resources available to them, and the review team recognised the comprehensive academic support available to them. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met 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

2.45 The College does not have a specific student engagement strategy for higher education but expects that every course will have student representatives, elected from each year group. Student representatives meet with senior staff at the Higher Education Learner Voice meetings as a means of feeding back directly to the College's decision makers. Student representation is also expected at Annual Programme Monitoring and Review meetings, focus groups, and Joint Board of Study/Partnership Board meetings, where appropriate. The College's Board of Governors has recently appointed a 19+ Student Governor, elected from the higher education cohort.

2.46 All students have the opportunity to engage in feedback to their programme through module evaluations, two student-based Faculty meetings per year, and at the College level, through student surveys and newsletter articles.

2.47 Based on the existing mechanisms in place, the review team considers the College's approach to the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.48 The review team tested the effectiveness of the procedures in place to engage students by examining documented policy and procedural requirements, and minutes of relevant meetings and committees, and also held meetings with students, teaching staff and senior staff.

2.49 Senior College staff express a commitment to engaging all higher education students in the quality assurance processes to ensure the enhancement of their educational experience. The Higher Education Office maintains a register of student representatives and informs a course if a representative has not been elected. The attendance of student representatives at meetings is also recorded by the Higher Education Office. To support representatives in their role, the College has negotiated training from the Students' Unions of their partner awarding bodies, and make these sessions available to their off-campus students, however, attendance at these meetings is low. In a significant minority of instances the student representatives are nominated by staff and not elected by their peers, mainly due to a lack of involvement from the students themselves. Staff recognise that this is more prevalent with part-time programmes, and make suitable arrangements for students to email comments to the meetings when the representative is unable to attend. In meetings with the students, not all knew who their student representative was.

2.50 The Learner Voice meetings enable all student representatives to meet together with senior staff, and student representatives are expected to collect information from their course groups before attending the meeting. These meetings are generally well attended by the student representatives. A major concern of the students was a lack of identity for the higher education students, which the College addressed by issuing orange lanyards to all higher education students, creating the Higher Education Study Centre and identifying dedicated study spaces for the higher education students. All students confirmed that they have opportunities to engage with staff and to voice any concerns that they have through course meetings. In most instances, students receive feedback on their concerns, but they were not aware of the exact nature of the meeting or how it fitted within the College or course reporting structure. Similarly, a number of student representatives who confirmed that

they had attended more formal meetings were unsure of the name or specific purpose of the meetings they had attended.

2.51 The College requires all programmes to undertake formal evaluations at the end of each module. In the majority of instances, students confirmed that they were given the opportunity to comment on the modules, either by completing a form or through an end of module discussion with a tutor. The module evaluations are summarised by the module leader and sent to the Programme Leader. Generally, students feel that the College listens to their comments and they were able to provide examples of where changes had been made as a result of their feedback, although they believe that the feedback system could be more robust and the module evaluation process applied more consistently.

2.52 The review team found that the processes for engaging students to work effectively as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience was variable across the College. All students receive a copy of the Higher Education Student Charter on enrolment, but this makes no mention of the student representation system of the College. Academic staff identified a number of initiatives they had put into place to encourage their students to become more engaged with the quality processes and to undertake the role of student representatives. The review team **recommends** that the College develop a consistent and coordinated approach for students to contribute fully and effectively as partners. Senior staff, however, while recognising the engagement of students as an issue for concern, were not able to identify any senior policy documents or action plans that addressed this specifically.

2.53 The College has established some mechanisms in order for students to have an opportunity to engage with how their programmes are delivered. The review team found that the majority of students were satisfied with their engagement with staff and had opportunities to address any issues that they identified. However, there was a lack of consistency in applying the College requirements for student engagement; a variable nature of securing student representation at course level; and a lack of a defined structure for student engagement at all levels within the College. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associate level of risk is moderate, due to there being some shortcomings in the rigor of mechanisms being applied for student engagement.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.54 The process of assessment is a shared responsibility between the College and its respective awarding bodies, and the awarding organisation. The College has established a Higher Education Assessment Procedure, which promotes a consistent approach to the process of assessment design on higher education programmes within the College. The College has also produced an Assessment, Verification and Moderation Handbook, which is relevant to the awarding organisation's assessment processes, and also covers accreditation of prior learning. The Academic Standards Facilitator has developed an Assessment Policy, which ensures staff devise assessment instruments that match the specification and intended learning outcomes. The Programme Manager's Handbook provides a valuable reference point for guidance on assessment, and guarantees that the appropriate standards and regulations are applied. In addition, each awarding body monitors the assessment process, through the Annual Programme Monitoring and Review arrangements, external examiner reports, and through the sampling of student work.

2.55 The College has systems in place for the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.56 The review team tested the Expectation by considering documentation, including the Higher Education Assessment Procedure, handbooks, and external examiner and monitoring reports. The review team also met senior and academic staff, and students.

2.57 Managerial responsibility for the development of the Higher Education Assessment Procedure within the College rests with the Higher Education Office, which also provides a support function to programme teams in developing their assessments. This has had the desired effect of promoting a common approach to assessment design.

2.58 Each Faculty appoints a Programme Manager, who has responsibility for the administration and management of the programme. Programme managers collectively meet in the Faculty Management Group, and in conjunction with the Heads of Faculty ensure that all college assignments accurately reflect the intended learning outcomes or assessment criteria for that programme.

2.59 Staff development opportunities have been provided for all new and existing staff, with new staff undertaking a robust induction process with the College Improvement Practitioner. There is evidence that the College has provided staff development and scholarly activities that focus on assessment. Staff spoke positively about the annual Curriculum Conference as a key example of how good practice and experience can be shared among all staff.

2.60 Students are made aware of assessment criteria through handbooks, the virtual learning environment and in seminars. Students confirmed that they are made aware of the regulations around assessment and feedback during admission and induction, through the College VLE, and in course handbooks.

2.61 Staff demonstrated commitment to devising assessments that link theory to practice, are industry relevant and promote active learning. This was endorsed by students, who indicated that they found the assignments relevant, and that they provided a stretch and challenge as their programme developed.

2.62 There is clear guidance for staff on the provision of feedback to students, and templates are used to promote a consistent approach. Students undertaking awarding body awards confirmed that feedback was timely and supported their academic development in providing stretch and challenge. Students from the HND Business Studies programme indicated that there was considerable variation in the timescale of feedback on their assessments. Students stated that they had to continually ask for their marks; while they were eventually informed of their marks, students were not given any formal feedback. The review team **recommends** that the College ensure that the College policy relating to the return of assignments and feedback is applied consistently and within stated deadlines, so that student development is promoted at all times and parity of experience is being maintained.

2.63 The College engages positively with external examiners to provide further oversight of the assessment process. Both students and employers confirmed that professional and vocational requirements are considered in the development of assessments, through the College's commitment to employability. The College has established clear guidelines for the scheduling and management of Exam Boards and assessment panels. External examiners reports indicate that programmes adhere to the standards expected.

2.64 The review team found that the College has appropriate processes and procedures in place to enable students to achieve their awards. The College has mechanisms in place to carry out the process of recognition of prior learning. Staff were clear in their responsibilities throughout the assessment process. Students were satisfied where to find information relating to the assessment of their programmes, and understood what was expected of them in order to meet the learning outcomes. The review team identified that there was an issue regarding the timeliness of feedback given to some students on the HND Business Studies programme. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate, as the problems identified are confined to a small part of the overall higher education provision.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.65 The responsibility for the appointment, training and management of the external examiners associated with the higher education programmes offered at the College is that of the awarding bodies and the awarding organisation. The College is invited to nominate external examiners for some university programmes.

2.66 The Higher Education Office is responsible for maintaining effective communication between external examiners and teaching staff at the College. They are also responsible for receiving and considering their reports. The Higher Education Office supports programme managers to positively engage with external examiners in order to support the maintenance of standards and the development of programmes. In addition, there is an extensive Programme Manager's Handbook at the College, which clearly describes the responsibilities of programme managers in relation to external examiners.

2.67 External examiner reports are considered by programme teams and any recommendations result in action plans being developed. External examiner reports also describe how previous recommendations have been actioned by course teams. At an institutional level, the Higher Education Office is responsible for the consideration and compiling of feedback from external examiners.

2.68 External examiner and Subject Verifier reports are made available to students through the VLE.

2.69 The arrangements in place at the College allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.70 The review team tested the College's approach to the Expectation by considering the College's self-evaluation document and scrutinising evidence provided, including external examiner reports, Subject Verifier reports and minutes of meetings, and by meeting senior staff, academic staff and students.

2.71 The review team found that the College has adequate processes in place in relation to external examiners, in order to support the development of learning opportunities and the maintenance of academic standards. Teaching staff showed a good awareness of their responsibilities in relation to external examiners. The reports that the review team examined showed that the comments of external examiners and Subject Verifiers were considered by course teams and resulted in actions that led to improvements.

2.72 There was limited knowledge of the availability of external examiner reports from students, with very few students ever having read a report. Some students recalled meeting external examiners or Subject Verifiers, and in these instances they described a positive process that provided a good opportunity for them to make meaningful comments about their programme.

2.73 Teaching staff were unaware of any institutional priorities that had been identified by the College for the attention of all programmes through the analysis of external examiners reports. The need for the College to consider its approach to communication at an institutional level in order to support the development of learning opportunities is considered under Expectation B8.

2.74 The College has mechanisms in place to enable the scrupulous use of external examiners. The College engages with external examiners and critically uses external examiner reports in the monitoring and reviewing of higher education programmes. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.75 The College has adopted a consistent approach for annual monitoring and periodic review across all higher education programmes. The model establishes parallels between the College and its awarding bodies, and awarding organisation, and accurately reflects the process undertaken by the awarding bodies and the awarding organisation. The Higher Education Office has embedded a programme of annual monitoring through the College Quality Cycle.

2.76 At programme level, course teams, through their Programme Manager, undertake a process of annual monitoring and review, which involves the use of external examiner reports, student module evaluations, and feedback from students through student staff consultative meetings. Final monitoring reports are forwarded to their Head of Faculty for approval, and these also inform the Faculty's overall self-assessment processes.

2.77 All monitoring reports are forwarded to the Higher Education Office, which sends them to the Quality and Standards Committee for consideration. This Committee has overall responsibility for the monitoring of all programmes within the College, and reports its findings to the Governing Body. Programme monitoring reports are discussed and additional reference points, such as external examiner reports and feedback from students, are used to inform discussion. Reports are forwarded to the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Body, which has oversight of quality assurance for the College.

2.78 The College has appropriate systems in place to regularly monitor and review its higher education programmes, which enables the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.79 The review team tested the Expectation through evidence provided for periodic review, action plans, external examiner reports, team meeting minutes and committee minutes. It was clear from the evidence that a process of periodic review occurs with the College's awarding body partners but it is unclear if this process has been implemented to cover the awarding organisation.

2.80 The review team met senior staff and academic staff who are involved in annual monitoring and review. Staff were able to articulate the monitoring process accurately at programme level, and students confirmed their involvement in the monitoring and review process through their representation on programme committees and through the module evaluation process.

2.81 Although the processes for monitoring and review are effective, systematic and parallel to that of the awarding bodies and organisation, the review team found that the content of Senior Management Committee minutes did not always accurately reflect the content of the meetings, and this was further evidenced by staff being unclear of what objectives the Quality and Standards Committee had set for the College from its monitoring and review process. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College ensure that all formal committee minutes are recorded in sufficient detail to reflect accurately actions and outcomes.

2.82 From meetings with staff and students, the review team found that programme monitoring and review was well understood and managed, however, the dissemination from senior management meetings regarding the outcomes and priorities arising from the monitoring and review process was not articulated clearly to academic staff. The review team **recommends** that the College establish an effective communication process between senior management and the teaching and support staff.

2.83 The process relating to annual monitoring was known by students, who could articulate clearly how their feedback would inform the process. From minutes of programme meetings it was clear that annual monitoring is an agenda item and that external examiners reports are also reflected upon regularly. Programme meetings also discuss the outcomes from module evaluations to improve and develop programmes. Students reported feeling confident to express their views at programme level and could identify improvements made as a result of their feedback.

2.84 The College has a systematic and effective process for monitoring and reviewing its higher education programmes involving the Governing Body, which has oversight for quality assurance for the College. The College's internal processes parallel and accurately reflect that of the awarding bodies' processes and also the awarding organisation. Effective use is made of external examiner reports, student feedback and action plans. As identified by the review team, although monitoring and review processes at programme level are comprehensive and well embedded, the process at senior management level regarding clarity in minutes of meetings needs to be more accurately articulated and disseminated to staff, and communications of priorities regarding higher education provision could be more effective. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate, as the current procedures are broadly adequate but have some shortcomings in the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.85 The College publishes references to its Complaints and Appeals Procedures on the website, in the Student Charter, and the Student College and University Level Handbook, which is issued to all students on enrolment. The College Complaints Procedure identifies a number of stages applicable to either verbal or written complaints, including an informal stage where there is an opportunity to address the issue without progressing to the formal stages. All stages in the process are identified with time constraints, to ensure that issues are addressed in a timely manner. An appeals process is available to ensure that the complainant knows the procedure to be followed should they be dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, and where the ultimate decision-making authority for the College lies within this process.

2.86 Information relating to the Appeals Procedure of the College is less detailed and relates primarily to the awarding organisation's requirements. No time frames are published to accord with the progression of an appeal through the stages identified.

2.87 The effectiveness of the College's policies and procedures was tested by examining documentation, including the Complaints Procedure, the Appeals Procedure, the Student Charter, and the Student College and University Level Handbook. The review team also met students, senior staff, teaching staff and support staff.

2.88 The College has a Programme Manager's Handbook that provides guidance to all course leaders of their responsibilities when dealing with a complaint. This is supplemented further by a useful flow diagram of the steps to be followed at each stage of the process should a complaint be raised. The Higher Education Office maintains a record of all complaints, and staff confirmed that no formal complaints had been received in the previous academic year and that informal complaints would not necessarily be recorded as they had been addressed at the informal stage of the process. The College maintains that it is rare for complaints to be escalated to a partner university, but if that were to happen, then the Head of Performance and Higher Education would also be involved in ensuring that the correct procedures were followed.

2.89 Information provided to students on the Appeals Procedure, and the grounds on which an appeal may be made, are less accurate than for the Complaints Procedure, describing the awarding organisation's interpretation of an appeal and not that associated with the awarding bodies. While all documentation refers the student to the corresponding awarding body guidance, the College's Appeals Procedure states that its own process applies to students from partner university courses. Each awarding body, in the responsibilities checklists provided, make clear which institution is responsible for addressing complaints and appeals. For one awarding body, the appeals process is defined as a shared responsibility; for another, it is the provider's responsibility; and for two, it is the awarding body's responsibility.

2.90 The review team examined a number of course handbooks and established that: many made no reference to the Appeals Procedure applicable to the awarding body; two contained information on appeals; and one contained detailed information on both complaints and appeals. Students were not able to identify where they would find the

information on the Appeals or Complaints Procedures, but would approach their tutors if they needed to access them, which supports the concern raised by the students in their written submission that they would wish to see information on appeals better signposted to the awarding bodies. The review team **recommends** that the College ensure that the appeals processes are easily accessible and provide guidance on the grounds by which an appeal may be made.

2.91 The College has a detailed Complaints Procedure, and provides students with links to their awarding body's Appeals Procedures. However, the information given on appeals is not always easily accessible, often not contained within course handbooks and is not specific to the individual awarding body and their Appeals Procedure. The review team concludes, therefore, that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate, as the current procedures are broadly adequate but have some shortcomings in the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.92 A number of programmes at the College contain professional placements, including foundation degrees with a clear vocational focus. The College is aware of its responsibilities in relation to the Expectation and no assessment that contributes to the ultimate award is assessed by any individual other than a College tutor.

2.93 The College produces information for both students and the organisation with which they are placed as part of their programme. These documents outline the responsibilities of the College and the employer. Academic credit is awarded by the College for these placements, with employers having responsibility to provide professional feedback.

2.94 There are processes for ensuring that placements are adequate and assigned to appropriate students; staff undertake checks prior to placement in relation to health and safety, and risk assessment. In addition, students expect to be contacted or visited during their placement by a member of teaching staff.

2.95 The review team considers that the College's approach enables the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.96 The review team tested the College's approach to the Expectation by considering the College's self-evaluation document and scrutinising evidence provided, including placement handbooks and health and safety checklist, and meeting with senior staff, teaching staff, support staff, employers and students.

2.97 Employers reported positive engagement with programme teams around placements, with a number of employers having held long standing relationships with specific programmes at the College. Employers reported on the value and contribution of the placement students to their organisations.

2.98 The responsibilities in relation to placements are clearly articulated, with the College, placement providers and students being aware of them. Staff described the system for checking a placement provider, ensuring its relevance and conducting checks around health and safety. Placement providers also described this system from their perspective, confirming its effective implementation.

2.99 While processes in general appeared effective, some students reported that they were not visited or contacted while on placement, however, those that had undertaken a placement reported a positive experience. The College also did not undertake systematic reviews or evaluations in relation to placements to ensure their relevance and value to placement providers.

2.100 The College has a number of work placement arrangements for a number of its higher education programmes, which it manages effectively. Relationship and effective communication links have been developed and maintained with local employers. Clear information about placements is provided to both students and employers, and the relevant and appropriate checks of placements are carried out by College staff.

Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

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

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.103 Of the 10 applicable Expectations in this area, all are met. Six Expectations have a low level of associated risk, while the remaining four have a moderate level of associated risk. There are two features of good practice in this area, five recommendations and no affirmations.

2.104 The features of good practice relate to Expectation B2 and Expectation B4. The team found that there were extensive systems in place which allowed students a positive and well supported experience during the admissions process. Expectation B4 highlights the considerable and comprehensive academic support that is available to students. Staff reported the various opportunities where students can receive support and guidance in developing their academic skills and practice, about which students were very positive.

2.105 The review team found that, although there were various mechanisms in place for student engagement, further work could be achieved, which results in a recommendation in Expectation B4 where the College should develop a coordinated approach for engaging students more fully. The current systems of student engagement are sufficient in order for the Expectation to be met.

2.106 The review team found inconsistencies in the timeliness of assignment feedback to students. Therefore, the review team recommends that the College apply a more consistent approach across all programmes in Expectation B6. As the inconsistency related to only a small part of the overall provision, the Expectation is found to be met.

2.107 There are two recommendations confirmed for Expectation B8. The review team found that minutes for meetings considering higher education provision were not comprehensive and did not accurately reflect discussion or decision making. It was also considered that outcomes from meetings or monitoring processes were not communicated effectively to staff in order for a consistent awareness of strategic priorities to be ensured. The resulting risk for the Expectation is moderate but as the current shortcomings are rectifiable, with no major structure changes or implementations, the Expectation B8 is confirmed as met.

2.108 The review team identified a lack of clarity and consistency in the publication and awareness of Appeals Procedures under Expectation B9. Information relating to the awarding bodies' appeals procedures was difficult to locate or inconsistent between publications and website. Both staff and students were unclear as to where the information could be found and how it was to be applied. Therefore, the review team recommends easier accessibility and guidance. Although the associated level of risk applied to the Expectation is moderate, the Expectation is met as the College has a robust and well informed complaints process.

2.109 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College makes a wide range of information available for the public and staff, as well as for current and prospective students. It publishes comprehensive information about the full range of its higher education provision in its annual prospectus, which is available in electronic and hard copy, and online via the website. The College's mission, values and policies are all available externally via the College's website and internally through the staff and student portal. There is a clear and well defined procedure for the verification of materials prior to publication, which involves the Heads of Faculty, Programme Leaders, the Higher Education Office and the Higher Education Manager. The Marketing Team prepares proofs of all materials, which are distributed externally. The proofs are then verified by the appropriate departments, and have to be agreed by the Senior Leadership Team, before being sent to the awarding bodies for final approval prior to publication.

3.2 The review team tested the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by reviewing the website, VLE and handbooks, and by meeting with students, teaching staff, employers and support staff.

3.3 The College's Admissions Policy is available on the College website to ensure that potential students are able to access the information, advice and guidance required when making an application. Information relating to programmes is reviewed and updated regularly. The Head of Performance and Higher Education, together with the Marketing Department, liaise with programme managers and students when reviewing the programme information, to ensure that it is current and fit for purpose. All marketing material is produced in accordance with the awarding organisation's guidelines. Through the College website, potential students can download leaflets containing essential course information on a particular programme. These detail the UCAS and institution codes, and outline the entry requirements and specific features of the course in terms of previous experience desired, progression and employability opportunities.

3.4 The College devotes considerable attention to the information provided to potential and current students. The College has developed a 'Right Student... Right Course' process throughout its provision, and endeavours to ensure that students are accurately informed of what to expect of each course and the student experience offered. Students are invited to bespoke interview sessions to learn more about the course, as well as to ensure that the course is right for them. As part of the pre-enrolment process, the College Advice Team and programme managers maintain regular communication with applicants to ensure they are fully prepared for the start of their course.

3.5 The College publishes a Higher Education Student Charter, which summarises what students can expect from the College. This is available through the website and the VLE, as well as being issued in hard copy to all new students during enrolment. The Student Charter is also supported by the Higher Education Student Code of Conduct, which all students complete at the start of their programme as part of the induction process.

3.6 Programme specifications for each course are made available to current students, via the VLE and in hard copy in the learning centres, for the duration of their studies. The College also produces a Student Handbook, and an information site on the VLE, to share and provide relevant information to students on the services and procedures associated with their studies. These sources provide links to the appropriate awarding body resources, handbooks and academic regulations that are applicable to the current students.

3.7 All programmes have bespoke VLE sites containing essential information regarding their programmes. These are managed by the Programme Manager, as well as the course teaching team. As part of the College internal inspections, class sites are sampled to ensure that they are up to date, and contain the necessary course information. Individual programme managers produce a course handbook with essential information about their programme, including progression guidance and assessment procedures. These are collected by the Higher Education Office to be checked and stored centrally, as well as published on the VLE.

3.8 Students confirm that the information they received during admissions and since commencing their course has been accurate and accessible. With the exception of a few inaccuracies relating to the Appeals Procedures of some awarding bodies, the review team concludes that the information provided by the College is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The review team concludes, therefore, that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.9 In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice. The review team concludes that the quality of information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College has produced a Higher Education Strategy and a Learning Strategy to promote the development of higher education within the College. The Higher Education Strategy provides the vision for the development of higher education within the College from levels 4-6, and outlines how partnerships with awarding bodies and awarding organisations are to be developed and maintained. The Learning Strategy focuses on promoting excellence and, in conjunction with the Internal Inspection Handbook, provides clear direction for staff when planning lessons, and identifying appropriate teaching and learning strategies. The establishment of the Higher Education Office and Higher Education Manager, working in conjunction with the Quality Assurance Manager, has promoted the embedment of academic standards and quality of learning opportunities for students, through the processes which have been introduced to monitor higher education provision. In addition, the College has effectively embedded a Quality Cycle, which has ensured that programme teams, faculty managers and Heads of Faculty are focused on quality improvement.

4.2 The Higher Education Office has been effective in promoting the development of enhancement opportunities within the College. Staff and students have confirmed this by commenting favourably on the supportive advice and guidance that has been provided, and the effective processes that have been developed since its establishment. These include: approval processes, information on assessment design, and College monitoring arrangements for all programmes. Academic staff articulated College enhancement activities at programme level, and understood the impact of creating a more positive and supportive learning environment for students. Although there exists a sound knowledge and understanding of enhancement within the College, the review team found that at a senior management level there was an inconsistent strategic approach to enhancement. Although the College uses its Quality Cycle and student feedback in informing enhancement activities, there are a lack of measures in place to assess and review the impact of enhancement and how these outcomes are disseminated to staff. The review team **recommends** that the College coordinate and disseminate its approach to enhancement, and devise methods to monitor impacts and outcomes of defined initiatives.

4.3 The Academic Standards Facilitator, whose role is to standardise higher education processes across the College, has been highly effective, particularly in embedding processes relevant to awarding partners' systems and processes. Staff and students have confirmed the benefits of this role in meeting the review team, and indicated how the introduction of guidelines around assessment, internal moderation and verification has enhanced the quality of provision.

4.4 The College has provided a range of relevant and appropriate staff development activities for higher education staff. This includes: the PGCE programme for newly appointed staff, access to the Higher Education Academy, and the support that is provided by the Improvement Practitioner, which ensures staff develop the skills, competence and confidence to delivery at higher education level. Staff highlighted the Curriculum Conference as being an effective forum for sharing good practice. Furthermore, the Scholarly Review Group provides valuable opportunities for staff to reflect and share good practice with each other, and in doing so improve standards through engaging in research.

4.5 The College has developed strong links with employers and other professionals over a range of vocational areas, such as Health and Social Care, Engineering and Sport. These links have impacted positively on course development and design by allowing students valuable placement opportunities, as well as relevant industry linked qualifications. For example, the College's link with Flybe Training Academy has afforded students the opportunity to study and develop the necessary skills to industry standard that will make them employable on completion of their award.

4.6 The College is aware of its responsibilities related to this Expectation and has some mechanisms in place to ensure that adequate oversight of enhancement is in place, opportunities for the dissemination of good practice are offered to staff, and students can engage systematically in the identification of enhancement initiatives. While academic staff have a good understanding of enhancement and engage in activities resulting in enhancement, the review team has identified a need to develop an increased institutional and coordinated approach to ensure that the quality of learning opportunities is promoted and the parity of student experience is fully embedded. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the risk is moderate, as the procedures currently in place are broadly adequate but have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.8 There is one Expectation in this area with a moderate level of associated risk.

4.9 There are no examples of good practice and no affirmations in this area. There is one recommendation. The review team identified some strategic approach and provider level direction in enhancement, which has resulted in initiatives and activities that improved the quality of learning opportunities for students. However, the review team recommends that a more coordinated and managed approach is required that improves communicating enhancement priorities to staff and monitors the impact of initiatives.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 Employability is a focus of the College's provision from a strategic level across all of its provision; it is also a priority within both the Higher Education Strategic Plan and Strategy.

5.2 Engagement with employers around the development, implementation and review of programmes at the College is not strategic, but there is a consideration of local needs, with elements of the College's current offer being the result of positive engagement with local employers: the Foundation Degree in Aircraft Engineering offered with Kingston University being the most recent example.

5.3 Foundation degree validation panels require an external professional adviser to be a part of the process to ensure the relevancy of the programme. Staff are encouraged to maintain contact with experts in relevant industries as the programme is delivered and reviewed.

5.4 The College has invested in an Employability Coordinator to support its work in this area and ensure that all students have access to vocational and careers information.

5.5 In addition, a number of programmes offer work placement and vocational opportunities to students. Where vocational placements are not a part of a programme, a Personal and Professional Development Module is delivered.

5.6 The currency and relevance of the programmes offered by the College is reflected in an impressive employment rate for graduates: the past three cohorts on the Foundation Degree in Aircraft Engineering have 100 per cent employment rates in the relevant sector after graduation.

5.7 The College has invested support for students with careers guidance and information around opportunities to gain further skills and information. This includes support to students in non-vocational programmes. In addition, there are a number of field trips, some of which are international, providing students with further opportunities to gain new skills and enhance their employability.

5.8 Employers reported having positive relationships with the College, with a number of placement providers having worked with the College regularly and hosting a significant amount of students. In addition, staff engage with these employers to ensure the relevancy of their skills.

5.9 Overall, the review team considers that the College has a clear commitment to the employability of its students, driven by the needs of the local area and responding to local demand where appropriate. There are further opportunities for the College to consider its approach to employability at a strategic level to further enhance this work.

Glossary

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

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

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