



Higher Education Review of the University of the West of England, Bristol

October 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 the University of the West of England, Bristol. The review took place from 12 to 15 October 2015 and was conducted by a team of six reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Seth Crofts
- Professor Mohammad Dastbaz
- Dr Dawn Edwards
- Ms Louisa Green
- Professor Clare Milsom
- Ms Emily Connor (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by the University of the West of England, Bristol 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 6.

In reviewing the University of the West of England, Bristol 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 2015-16 are Student Employability and Digital Literacy,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/the-quality-code.

² Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859.

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 the University of the West of England, Bristol

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at the University of the West of England, Bristol.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at the University of the West of England, Bristol.

- The extensive commitment to the widening participation and outreach agenda regionally, and the benefits this affords to students from under-represented groups (Expectation B2).
- The expansion of the Peer-Assisted Learning initiative in supporting students' academic potential and development (Expectation B4 and Enhancement).
- The breadth and strength of partnerships and the embedding of employability skills across the University's activities (Expectations B1 and B4).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendation** to the University of the West of England, Bristol.

By September 2016:

- ensure that all postgraduate research students receive appropriate training before they undertake teaching duties (Expectations B3 and B11).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that the University of the West of England, Bristol is already taking to make academic standards secure and improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The implementation of the revised examination board guidelines to ensure that these are consistently applied across all faculties (Expectation A2.1).
- The steps being taken to ensure assessment feedback is timely and of a consistently high quality to support students' academic achievement (Expectation B6).
- The comprehensive introduction of plagiarism-detection software by the end of the current academic year (Expectation B6).

Theme: Student Employability

The University's *Strategy 2020*'s stated intention is 'to be known nationally and internationally as the best university for professionally recognised and practice-oriented programmes, which contribute to an outstanding learning experience and generate excellent graduate employment opportunities for all students'. In support of this aim the University has a long-standing history and established working relationships with employers in the local region.

The University recognises that there is a demand for graduates in local industry and that their students can help meet the need for a highly skilled workforce. *Strategy 2020* includes a priority to develop 'ready and able graduates' and articulates this approach through its employability and enterprise plan which shows how these relationships can be used to support students' employability after graduation.

The University's engagement with employers is highly effective and there are links with a wide range of industries and professions. Employers emphasise the positive outcomes of working relationships, their commitment to the University and the resulting impact on students and the workforce. Employer forums are held to engage in dialogue around graduate and placement recruitment and to increase networks across the City of Bristol and the region. Employers are involved in an ongoing basis with a variety of programme-related initiatives and they retain a high profile through mentoring, guest lectures, fairs, award events and the viewing of academic poster presentations. Many students confirm that the University's strong links with employers and industry were a reason for applying to study at the University.

The University has built on its long-standing relationships with local industry to prepare its students to meet the demands of the local workforce, by equipping them with the skills and opportunities they will need to succeed after graduation.

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

About the University of the West of England, Bristol

The University traces its history through Bristol Polytechnic to the Merchant Venturers' Navigation School, established in 1595, the Merchant Venturers' Technical College, Bristol Technical College, the West of England College of Art and the teacher training colleges of Redland and St Matthias. The University was designated as such and took its title under the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992*. In 1996, the Colleges of Health of Avon and Gloucestershire and of Bath and Swindon were incorporated into the University.

The University has three campuses in and around the City of Bristol and one in Gloucester. Most of its students are based at the Frenchay Campus (which lies north of Bristol city centre). The other campuses are at Bower Ashton (south-west of the city centre), Glenside (about one mile from Frenchay) and UWE Gloucester.

The University engages in a wide range of collaborative partnerships both in the UK and internationally. The University's *Strategy 2020* identifies its ambition to have strategic partnerships, networks and connections that differentiate its academic activity and enhance its global reputation, health sustainability and prosperity. In line with these aims the University has reviewed its global partnership activity and re-focused in some areas. As a result of these developments, collaboration with a smaller number of strategic key partners is

being prioritised. The University's longest-standing collaborative link is with Hartpury College which has been an affiliated institution and associate faculty of the University since 1997.

The University has approximately 31,000 students. Around 26,000 are studying at the four University campuses, with around 6,000 studying at partner institutions. Of the total student population, 25,000 are undergraduate, with 5,700 postgraduate taught and 470 postgraduate research students. The University delivers around 600 programmes of study at foundation degree, undergraduate and postgraduate levels and works with more than 60 professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.

The University has 3,615 academic, professional and support staff and is organised into four faculties which incorporate 15 academic departments. These arrangements are supported by a wide range of professional services.

The University's *Strategy 2020* was ratified by the Board of Governors in 2013 and focuses on the core purpose of advancing knowledge, and inspiring people and transforming futures. *Strategy 2020* sets out the University's ambition and identifies four institutional priorities: outstanding learning; ready and able graduates; research with impact; and strategic partnerships, connections and networks.

Since 2014 the University has undergone substantial change, including at senior management level. At the start of 2015 appointments were made to new posts of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Chief Operating Officer), and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience). The University's administration was reorganised in 2012 to achieve an integrated service more closely aligned to the academic structures and to provide greater consistency across the institution. A new Graduate School was launched in 2012 with the aim of developing a more coherent postgraduate research student experience.

The University has seen considerable recent campus development with the closure of the St Matthias site in 2014 and significant continuing developments at Frenchay, Glenside and Bower Ashton. The University recently acquired the Arnolfini contemporary arts centre in Bristol as part of its projected waterside campus development. A new Students' Union building opened at Frenchay in summer 2015 and a new flagship Business and Law building is due for completion in 2017.

The University was subject to an Institutional Audit by QAA in March 2009. The Institutional Audit report included four advisable recommendations and three desirable recommendations. The review team considered the progress made by the University in implementing the recommendations and concludes that they have all been satisfactorily addressed.

The Institutional Audit report also contained two areas of good practice. The review team concludes that progression of the areas of good practice has been consolidated, built upon and further embedded within the University's practice.

Explanation of the findings about the University of the West of England, Bristol

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The University's oversight of quality and standards is provided by its academic governance arrangements, with overall responsibility residing with Academic Board. Much of the operational responsibility is delegated to the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC) for taught provision, or the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee for postgraduate research provision. Governance and management structures have been designed with the specific intention of ensuring institutional oversight of academic standards and quality.

1.2 The University uses a credit-based academic framework to set, and ensure consistency in, the academic standards of awards. The Academic Regulations align with the FHEQ in terms of defining threshold standards. Alignment of programmes with the FHEQ is a key requirement for programme development, approval and periodic review. All qualifications are positioned at the appropriate Level (4, 5, 6, 7 and 8) of the FHEQ. These equate to levels 1, 2, 3, M and Doctorate within the University's academic framework.

1.3 The review team tested these processes by considering the University's Quality Management and Enhancement Framework (QMEF), the effectiveness of the deliberative committee structures, and records of minutes of committee meetings. The team also met staff from the University, including senior management, faculty managers, teaching staff and students.

1.4 The review team met a number of relevant staff and considered a range of documentation as part of the evidence presented by the University. The documentation included the processes for approval and review of programmes, examples of completed submissions and reports, external examiners' reports and documentation relevant to programmes delivered with collaborative partners.

1.5 The requirements of the FHEQ and Quality Code are clearly set out in the University's QMEF as well as the University's Regulations and Procedures. These reference points are used as part of programme approval, monitoring and review and ensure that awards of the University are set at the correct academic level and that programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptors.

1.6 Qualification and level descriptors are used to ensure that characteristics for foundation degrees, master's degrees and doctoral degrees inform the design and approval of awards at that level and are referenced within the programme specification and within the Academic Regulations.

1.7 The University has gone through substantial changes and the new strategies that have been introduced, including *Learning 2020*, are producing the desired outcome. Awards are positioned at an appropriate level and the FHEQ is referenced. Staff clearly understand the relevant external reference points. There is also effective mapping of requirements as part of programme development which supports the positioning of awards at an appropriate level. The QMEF underpins the development of standards across the faculties and the faculty facing Quality Account Manager roles contribute to the effective maintenance of academic standards.

1.8 Programme specification templates are used effectively and intended learning outcomes are clearly stated and aligned with relevant qualification descriptors. In addition, the University requires all programme specifications to reference the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, which inform the design and development of new programmes. Levels and titles of awards are aligned with the titling conventions specified in the FHEQ and the University's Academic Regulations.

1.9 Faculty and departmental oversight of academic standards and quality is maintained through the Faculty Academic Standards and Quality Committees (ASQC) which report to LTSEC. The national requirements as set out in the University's QMEF are used effectively as part of the programme approval, monitoring and review processes to ensure that awards are positioned at the correct academic levels.

1.10 Overall, the review team found evidence that Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ are used and understood by staff. The University ensures that its awards are mapped against relevant national benchmarks and it implements and monitors its procedures effectively. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A1 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

1.11 Academic standards are maintained through implementation of the University's Academic Regulations and the QMEF. Overall responsibility for academic governance arrangements rests with Academic Board. However, operational responsibility is delegated to the LTSEC for taught provision, or the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee for postgraduate research provision.

1.12 The review team considered the University's QMEF deliberative committee structures, and records of minutes of committee meetings and external examiners' reports. The team also met staff from the University, including senior management, faculty managers, teaching staff and students.

1.13 The QMEF enables academic departments to implement consistently and effectively processes for programme approval, annual monitoring, periodic curriculum review, engagement with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, and external peer review. The QMEF is kept under review by the Learning and Teaching Enhancement team, working closely with the Associate Deans (Learning & Teaching). Faculty executive groups endorse ideas for new programmes before proposals go forward to the Portfolio Development Group (PDG) for University sign off prior to proceeding to the design stage. The Quality Account Managers for each faculty are the primary source of advice on design and approval of programmes, and the programme lead and design team ensure that University policies are followed. New programme documentation is scrutinised at ASQC before proceeding to the Curriculum Approval Panels (CAP). These panels have overall responsibility for programme and module approval, with the LTSEC providing effective monitoring of quality and standards of University awards.

1.14 The University has a range of committees reporting to Academic Board including the LTSEC at institutional level, which provides oversight of academic standards. Faculty ASQCs undertake scrutiny at a lower level. These structures provide an effective governance structure. Following the University's review of the effectiveness of its academic governance in 2012, revised processes have been put in place to ensure University oversight, with a view to ensuring wider elected staff and student membership, and to promoting constructive critical dialogue. Academic Regulations are kept under review by the Regulatory Management Group following a set of principles which were revised in September 2014. Any changes recommended by this group are referred through the academic governance structure to Academic Board for ultimate approval.

1.15 Academic Regulations for each academic year are published in September alongside a summary of changes from the previous version and are publicised to all staff and students. With the introduction of the Consumer Rights legislation, the regulations will now be produced in time for offers to be made on programmes.

1.16 Academic Services staff and external examiners are present at all examination boards, including those of collaborative partners, to ensure consistency. The University recognises that there are some variations in examination board processes and in interpretation of guidelines across different faculties and has responded to this by issuing

guidelines for Award Boards Discretion. These are being revised to ensure greater consistency across faculties. The review team **affirms** the University's implementation of the revised examination board guidelines to ensure that these are consistently applied across all faculties.

1.17 Overall, the review team found evidence that the University has comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern the award of credit and qualifications, and is working to ensure these are consistently applied. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A2.1 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

1.18 The University fulfils its responsibility in providing a definitive record for all programmes. These records include information about programmes' aims, intended learning outcomes, structure and assessments. The Quality Account Managers for each faculty maintain a definitive record of programme revisions once approved by relevant CAPs. If a change is considered by the Quality Account Manager as a 'low-impact' change, then this will be eligible for approval at the next available CAP meeting. If the change is considered a 'high-impact' change, procedures as outlined for new programme approval must be followed.

1.19 To test their effectiveness the review team analysed relevant documentation submitted by the University, including programme specifications, professional doctorate programme descriptions, module specifications and transcripts. The team also met staff and students during the review to discuss the approach to maintaining and using definitive programme records.

1.20 Taught doctorates and the taught parts of the PhD programme are approved in line with the QMEF requirements and a definitive record is held. The recently formed Graduate School coordinates the work between different faculties and provides a single point of contact for post graduate research students and their administrative requirements. Annual progression and monitoring is organised at faculty level but monitored by the Graduate School.

1.21 Definitive records of each programme are available through programme specifications, which are accessible on the University's website. A programme module change log records all amendments to programmes. Student handbooks support the information in programme specifications. The student portal, myUWE, is the single source of information that provides the latest changes made to the modules and programmes for students.

1.22 The review team found that the University has appropriate processes to ensure the maintenance of definitive records for all programmes of study and for individual student records. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A2.2 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.23 The University has a well-established regulatory framework and comprehensive policies that relate to the design and approval of programmes. The process for approval of all taught programmes is set out in the QMEF and covers all programmes and modules leading to an award of the University. This process includes those programmes delivered in collaboration with a partner institution. The business case for the programme is considered separately to the academic rationale through the Global Development Group (GDG) which is responsible for sound strategic, legal and financial arrangements. Collaborative programme approval follows the same process as for University-delivered programmes. For prospective partnerships a due diligence process is required. The Collaborative Provision Committee is responsible for ensuring alignment with partnership approval processes.

1.24 The Faculty Executive Committee ensures that proposals are in line with the University strategy and also approves the suspension and discontinuation of programmes. The Programme Development Group (PDG) maintains institutional oversight of the University's programme portfolio. Following Academic Standards and Quality Committees (ASQC) endorsement, detailed consideration of the academic issues is undertaken by the CAP which acts with the delegated authority of Academic Board to approve new programmes. The CAP comprises academic staff, subject-external academic advisers and/or practice-led advisers. Students input through the representative system. Student representatives are also members of the Faculty ASQCs. These committees scrutinise documentation, ensure that consultation has taken place and make recommendations to the CAP. For programme approvals involving a partner institution there is an additional step, the Programme Delivery Meeting, which ensures the partner is capable of delivering the programme and makes a recommendation to ASQC and CAP.

1.25 The Framework for Research Degrees is set out in the University's Academic Regulations and the Code of Practice for Research Degrees. Research degree programme approval and monitoring is reported through the Faculty Research Degree Committee which is responsible for the maintenance of the academic standards of postgraduate research programmes on behalf of Academic Board. Oversight for the research programme of work is provided through the Graduate School. The research supervisory team is responsible for ensuring that students receive timely academic support. QAA Guidance on qualification characteristics for master's and doctoral degrees are used to inform the design and approval of awards and are referenced in the Academic Regulations.

1.26 The review team scrutinised the University's processes and their effectiveness through consideration of evidence provided relating to programme approval. The effectiveness of the approach was tested by meeting staff responsible for quality assurance and enhancement. The review team viewed the Academic Regulations, QMEF, programme approval requirements, and programme and module specifications, and considered a range of committee minutes.

1.27 The University processes relating to the approval of taught programmes and research degrees make direct reference to the Quality Code and FHEQ, and Subject

Benchmark Statements. The QMEF ensures that learning outcomes are aligned with the relevant qualification descriptor in the FHEQ and that threshold academic standards are met. UWE levels (0, 1, 2, 3, M, D) are mapped to the FHEQ for all awards. Research degrees are aligned to the qualification descriptors for master's and doctoral-level awards.

The University's QMEF is well understood by staff who receive guidance on the qualifications framework and subject benchmarks through the Quality Account Managers. The programme design template requires a description of how external reference points and benchmarks have been used in the design of the programme. Reference to the external benchmarks is systematically checked through the process of programme approval. Guidance for CAPs makes specific reference to ensuring that the learning outcomes are appropriate and meet external reference points. These outcomes are stated in the programme specification.

1.28 Quality Account Managers maintain a definitive record of the programme. Annual and periodic monitoring ensures that any changes to the programme do not impact on academic standards. Amendments to a programme or module require the programme manager to complete a Rationale and Impact Assessment form. Changes are categorised as 'high' or 'low' impact with reference to clear, consistently applied criteria. The Curriculum Approval Committee approves programme amendments. All changes involving collaborative partner institutions are considered high impact. Three successive changes can be considered low impact with the fourth low-impact amendment considered as high-impact. High-impact amendments require consideration by an external reviewer and CAP scrutiny and approval.

1.29 Overall, the review team found that the current process for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees is appropriate and robust, and operates consistently across the University to ensure academic standards are in accordance with internal and external frameworks. The review team therefore 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

1.30 The University has a comprehensive framework of Academic Regulations that provides explicit guidance in relation to the award of academic credit and qualifications. These regulations are subject to ongoing review by the regulatory management group. Changes are ratified at Academic Board and systematically communicated to all staff and students.

1.31 The QMEF provides extensive guidance across a range of areas that govern the management of academic standards. The QMEF provides operational direction which supports the consistent implementation of the regulatory framework to ensure effective management of the award of academic credit and qualifications. Quality Account Managers are allocated to each faculty to ensure that academic staff are able to make effective use of the University's regulatory policy and external requirements. Comprehensive programme specification templates provide extensive information on academic level and programme learning outcomes.

1.32 The University has developed an Assessment Cycle Policy which provides direction in relation to the marking and moderating of academic work and useful guidance on assessment at different academic levels. The award of credit is appropriately scrutinised by an effective external examining system. External examiners support examination boards at field and award level. These boards are assisted by Academic Services officers to ensure consistency in the deliberations that occur across the University. In addition, written guidance is provided for chairs of boards to promote consistency in academic standards across the institution.

1.33 The review team tested the effectiveness of the University's processes by scrutinising a wide range of documentary evidence, including the Academic Regulations and QMEF. The team reviewed external examiners' reports and minutes of Assessment Boards. The team met a range of academic and professional services staff at faculty level and within central University departments. The team held meetings with staff, students and employers to gain feedback on the award of credit and the operation of assessment processes.

1.34 The University has established a rigorous process for programme approval through CAPs. These panels have a specific remit to ensure that programme learning outcomes align with qualification descriptors as set out in the FHEQ. The CAP process involves peer review across faculties and sets out requirements for the input of external advisers and external examiners to ensure that new programmes are developed in the context of external peer review.

1.35 Quality Account Managers monitor activity in relation to programme amendments to ensure that the integrity of programmes is not compromised as a result of the modification process. Where programme changes are classified as high impact, a new programme

approval process is initiated. These provisions ensure that programmes deliver learning outcomes that are consistent with the originally validated award.

1.36 Overall, the review team concludes that the University has established a robust set of processes that are monitored by an effective committee structure. The University ensures that learning outcomes at course and module level are appropriately tested through assessment practice. External examiners are fully engaged in this process and confirm that academic standards are being met. Therefore Expectation A3.2 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.37 The University reviews all its programme on an annual and periodic basis. External examiners are appointed to all University programmes and are required to complete a report template which references specifically whether academic standards are consistent with those set out in the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements. All taught and research degree programmes are reviewed each year.

1.38 For taught programmes, annual monitoring requires the programme leader to complete a comprehensive report that specifically refers to externality, external examiners' reports, changes in Subject Benchmark Statements and sector practice. Collaborative programmes follow similar processes depending on the nature of the provision, validated or franchised, with the additional requirement for the inclusion of a Partnership Lead Report. Research degree programme annual monitoring is reported through the Faculty Research Degree Committee which is responsible for the maintenance of the academic standards of postgraduate research programmes on behalf of Academic Board.

1.39 The University requires that its taught provision is reviewed and re-approved at least every six years. Institutional oversight for the process is maintained through the LTSEC which receives reports from the faculty ASQC. The latter receive notification of review outcomes, monitor action plans and identify good practice for dissemination. Critical reflection forms the foundation of periodic review. The critical evaluation document evidences that academic standards continue to be met and are aligned with appropriate external benchmarks, and professional body requirements.

1.40 In considering the Expectation, the review team scrutinised the annual monitoring and periodic curriculum review processes. Guidance documentation, monitoring and review reports and minutes of a range of University committees were examined, and the processes discussed in meetings with staff and students.

1.41 Annual monitoring and periodic curriculum review processes are applied consistently and systematically across the University. Staff are able effectively to articulate the processes and had a clear understanding of the purpose and outcomes of monitoring and review. The processes make explicit reference to the achievement of threshold academic standards. A range of internal and external data is used to inform monitoring and review. The curriculum evaluation document confirms that academic standards continue to be met and the continuing validity of programme-level educational aims and learning outcomes, which are matched against the level descriptors of the FHEQ. In addition to annual monitoring, the departmental score card records information on student attainment, including pass rates and final degree outcomes.

1.42 Externality is provided in both processes through the appointment of external panel members and reviewers who confirm that Subject Benchmark Statements are mapped appropriately and academic standards are met. Faculty ASQCs maintain an overview of the processes and institutional oversight is provided by the LTSEC. Good practice and areas for

enhancement are identified through both activities. Academic Services ensure the dissemination of good practice. The Partnership Lead Report ensures that good practice is identified for collaborative provision.

1.43 Overall, the review team concludes that Expectation A3.3 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the University implements rigorous and effective monitoring and review processes to ensure that academic standards are being achieved and maintained.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.44 The University has established a comprehensive set of measures that ensures effective engagement with a diverse range of external stakeholders. This engagement has resulted in the creation of highly relevant programmes that are specifically designed to address the skills needs within the local economy, and to support the transition into graduate employment. Strategic alliances have been established with local organisations, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Academic Health Science Network. These ensure full alignment between the University's portfolio and the needs of the local economy, public sector and third-sector organisations.

1.45 The review team considered a range of documentation relating to the programme approval monitoring and review processes. The team examined records of meetings with employers and other stakeholders to assess the level of external engagement in programme design, delivery and review and scrutinised documents related to the strategic development of the University's academic portfolio. The review team met staff involved in programme development who represented a cross-section of senior managers, professional services and frontline academic staff. Meetings took place with employers and students to assess the level of external expertise employed and how effectively that expertise was being used in programme delivery.

1.46 Representatives of partner organisations are regularly involved in the process of programme review and approval. The University engages effectively with a wide range of organisations to gather intelligence about emerging workforce needs. This involves a wide cross-section of University staff.

1.47 External examiners are effectively used to ensure consistent scrutiny of the operation of academic standards, with a requirement to ensure that assessment strategies and the management of assessment operate consistently. Modifications to programmes require engagement from external examiners to ensure that the changes do not impact upon academic standards.

1.48 The University's QMEF provides clear guidance in relation to the engagement of external advisers during programme development and approval processes. Specific protocols are set out for programme development teams to ensure that curriculum planning takes account of current industry practice and ensures that potential graduates are appropriately prepared for employment. The University has wide-ranging links with PSRBs from a diverse range of disciplines. The specific needs of professional practice have been embedded in the governance arrangements of the institution, and PSRB input is a critical part of the design phase of professional programmes. The QMEF has a specific section that sets out guidelines for addressing the requirements of PSRBs.

1.49 The review team confirmed that the University has embedded rigorous processes to ensure that external and independent expertise plays a significant role in the management of academic standards. Therefore Expectation A3.4 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards

1.50 In reaching its judgement about the setting and maintenance of academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.51 All of the Expectations for this judgement are met and the associated levels of risk are low. The review team affirms the implementation of the revised guidelines for examination boards to ensure consistency across faculties.

1.52 Overall, the review team concludes that the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards at the University **meet** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 Programme design is driven by University priorities and partnerships with employers and other local stakeholders. New programmes are developed following consultation with external stakeholders and detailed market analysis. Programmes are developed to take account of relevant resources and to promote learning opportunities. The programme approval process is robust and involves multi-layered scrutiny which takes account of external feedback.

2.2 The University takes a strategic approach to programme development. The University's *Strategy 2020* sets out its ambition to be known 'nationally and internationally as the best university for professionally recognised and practice-orientated programmes'. Faculty executive management endorse new programme proposals to go forward to the Programme Development Group (PDG) for sign off. The PDG is responsible for institutional oversight and management of the academic portfolio and is continuing to develop the curriculum across the University in relation to the needs of the local economy. Final programme approval for new programmes rests with CAPs, which have delegated authority from Academic Board.

2.3 The QMEF clearly states the processes for programme approval and the responsibilities of those involved in design and development. The QMEF also sets out guidance to ensure that new programmes align to the University's strategy and ensures that external reference points and industry standards are considered in the process. The process for programme approval is the same for on-campus provision and for programmes delivered by collaborative partners, with the addition of the Programme Delivery Meeting. The Academic Partnerships Project established processes to ensure a standardised approach to the University's engagement with partner institutions.

2.4 Following endorsement from the PDG for proposals to progress to design stage, the CAP is responsible on behalf of Academic Board for ensuring that programmes have been developed in line with the University's regulations and procedures. The Faculty ASQC scrutinise the documentation and ensure that appropriate consultation takes place. The CAP provides an annual report to Academic Board. The University makes clear the criteria by which programmes are assessed. The CAP considers in detail achievement of learning outcomes, assessment strategy and the learning environment, and provides approval or approval subject to recommendations/conditions or non-approval.

2.5 The review team scrutinised the University's processes through consideration of the quality assurance procedures and documentation relating to programme design, development and approval. The effectiveness of the approach was tested by meeting staff responsible for quality assurance and enhancement, employers and students. The review team viewed documents related to academic regulations, the QMEF, QMEF Programme Approval, QMEF Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies, and QMEF External Peer Review.

2.6 The Market Impact and Authorisation (MIA) form provides the academic and business case for a new programme. These proposals are considered by the PDG which reports to the LTSEC.

2.7 The University's guidance for CAP members provides a summary description of the curriculum design and approval process. The ASQC Guidelines for curriculum design ensure that the committee thoroughly reviews the documentary evidence. Faculty-based Quality Account Managers support the process. The Quality Account Manager coordinates external consultation, including with professional bodies, provides advice on regulations and procedures, and ensures that the documentation is completed by agreed deadlines. An external reviewer is also appointed.

2.8 Extensive consultation is completed prior to curriculum development of new programmes. Consultation involves students, external academics, industry specialists and practice-led advisers. The widespread use of industry experts in curriculum development and the practice-led approach to programme design were confirmed by employers and students. The good practice involving the breadth and strength of partnerships with industry and the embedding of employability skills across the University's activities are further addressed under Expectation B4.

2.9 The University makes rigorous and systematic use of the FHEQ in supporting programme design, and students are involved in the design phase. As members of the ASQC, student representatives have the opportunity to review the programme approval documentation, and support is provided by the Students' Union.

2.10 The QMEF is reviewed annually, and the University has recently evaluated the programme design processes and identified areas for enhancement, including the training and recruitment of student panel members.

2.11 Overall, the evidence reviewed and discussions with staff confirm that programme design and approval processes are systematically and consistently applied across the University and by its partner institutions. The review team concludes that Expectation B1 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.12 The University has a comprehensive and robust process for recruitment, selection and admissions with overall responsibility residing with the Director of Future Students. Oversight of recruitment is maintained through the faculty annual planning process and the annual review process, where recruitment and admissions are scrutinised by the University executive.

2.13 The University has a strong and long-established commitment to widening participation and outreach, by engaging at all levels with the local and regional community to make higher education accessible to students from under-represented groups. The University has a minimum entry requirement, and entry requirements for individual programmes are set by the Recruitment and Outreach Managers in the Future Students Team, with input from the faculties. Detailed information is available on the University website on the recruitment and admissions process. This includes information on how applicants can submit a complaint or appeal an admissions decision.

2.14 The effectiveness of the University's approach was tested by meetings with senior staff, staff with specific responsibilities for recruitment and admissions, and with students. The review team also considered a range of documentary evidence, including the Academic Regulations, Admissions Policy, International Recruitment Policy, admissions cycle action plans, the Heading Higher Passport Plus programme and the University website.

2.15 Responsibility for student number planning and recruitment at the University is the responsibility of the Future Students service. Deans of faculty are fully aware of their responsibilities for recruitment and how these link with the Future Students Team. The University maintains oversight of this through meetings with deans.

2.16 The Future Students' Team comprises recruitment and outreach, admissions, and international staff teams. These areas work alongside the faculties and professional services departments to deliver programme recruitment objectives. There are clear responsibilities within these teams and close liaison with each faculty, ensuring the process is effective and efficient. Potential students are guided through the application process by the applicant experience team who deal with queries.

2.17 The University has a notable and long-established outreach and widening participation programme, with faculties producing an annual widening participation plan. The impact of the University's widening participation initiatives was clear to the review team through its meetings with students and employers. A range of opportunities enable prospective students to gain an insight into the subjects offered and taster days of university life. The University's scheme, Heading Higher Passport Plus, is delivered in partnership with schools and colleges to support progression to university for applicants from under-represented groups and prepare them for higher education. This scheme comprises mandatory and optional modules, a self-assessment quiz and specific outreach activities, supported by a student guide and workbook. The effect of this initiative has been an increase in those applying to the University from under-represented groups. The University

is involved in a range of other initiatives including the South Bristol Youth Programme in conjunction with primary schools to raise aspirations. The Babassa Youth Empowerment Project is a national scheme aimed at encouraging black and minority ethnic groups to enter higher education, with an internship programme funded through the University's Access Agreement. A career development programme enables students from under-represented groups to gain Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) accreditation and partners students with a business mentor. The review team considers the extensive commitment to widening participation and outreach regionally, and the benefits this affords to students from under-represented groups, to be **good practice**.

2.18 The Future Students Team have clear processes for articulating their recruitment activities and priorities through the annual recruitment and outreach plans for each faculty. Faculties agree student number targets with the Future Students Team recruitment is reviewed against key performance indicators. At an institutional level this is reviewed as part of the annual business planning process.

2.19 The Admissions and International Development Service manage admissions to taught programmes. The University's process for admissions is clearly articulated in the Admissions Policy approved by Academic Board in 2014. This includes details of recruitment, entry requirements, information relating to international students, the admissions process and appeals and complaints against admission decisions, and fees; it also informs applicants of changes to programmes. The policy is reviewed annually with changes being recommended to Academic Board.

2.20 The University has a robust process for setting and agreeing the specific admission requirements for programmes and is working to increase its average UCAS entry tariff. The Admissions Policy identifies minimum entry requirements for all taught programmes. Programmes are required to adhere to the Admissions Policy unless there are specific requirements in relation to professional bodies. In such cases specific entry criteria are agreed. Should these be significantly different from the University requirement, approval by Academic Board is required. The admissions criteria for each programme are reviewed annually by a Recruitment and Outreach Manager to ensure alignment with similar institutions. Admissions requirements are articulated to the Admissions Team by the Recruitment and Outreach Manager. Staff involved in admissions receive a variety of training, initially as part of their induction into the role, and later through University-run workshops, guidance notes and external events. Good practice is gathered through membership of professional bodies, working parties and conferences. Staff involved in clearing receive training for this role.

2.21 The entry requirements for each programme are published on the University's website which provides clear and easily accessible information on the application process, open days, accommodation and fees. The policy and procedures related to the accreditation of prior learning are detailed in the University's Academic Regulations. The University uses an accredited learning mapping template which enables applications to be considered appropriately. Staff are required to have the necessary subject knowledge and knowledge of the University's accredited learning procedure. Information for students on accredited learning is provided through an information leaflet.

2.22 The International Recruitment Strategy contains clear objectives and priorities. The University has nearly 300 education representative agents worldwide to support recruitment. Agents are supported by a resource pack which contains links to key information for both the agent and international students. A handbook includes contractual information, training and performance monitoring and annual review of agents. The University hosted an Agents' Conference to share information and best practice in 2014 with a similar event being planned for 2016. Where the University has a regional presence,

a member of University staff visits agents to provide support. The University and its collaborative partners are jointly responsible for ensuring applicants accepted onto programmes meet the relevant entry requirements. These responsibilities are articulated in the formal Academic Agreement between the University and partner institution.

2.23 Applications are processed by the University admissions team and prospective students are given access to a personalised Welcome Website. This allows them to monitor the progress of their application and the admissions decision. Once students have received an offer the University maintains contact with them, with new students being supported by a comprehensive and interactive new students' webpage. Students commended this in their meeting with the review team. Students can register online prior to starting and are provided with clear and student-friendly guidance and information. Applications are monitored by the Director of Future Students who reports to the Vice-Chancellor and senior staff.

2.24 The University admissions cycle and recruitment initiatives are reviewed annually at departmental, faculty and University level.

2.25 Strategic oversight of admissions is maintained through an annual review which goes to the University executive.

2.26 Overall, the review team consider that the policies and procedures in place are reliable, valid and inclusive and are supported by appropriate University structures and processes. Expectation B2 is therefore 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

2.27 The University's *Strategy 2020* articulates its strategic direction for learning and teaching. This has four strategic programmes, including 'Outstanding Learning' and 'Ready and Able Graduates'. Strategic oversight rests with Academic Board, with operational responsibility for the implementation and review of learning opportunities and teaching practices delegated to the LTSEC. Local responsibility is through Faculty ASQCs which report to LTSEC. Students are provided with information on learning opportunities through the virtual learning environment (VLE), handbooks and advice from Academic Personal Tutors and Student Support Services.

2.28 All new staff are required to undertake the Postgraduate Certificate: Teaching and Learning in Higher Education during their probationary period. The University aspires to increase the proportion of Higher Education Academy (HEA)-accredited staff. The Learning and Development Centre runs a range of training courses open to all staff and a system of peer observation is in place for probationary staff. Additionally, a 360-degree feedback scheme for senior managers was introduced in 2014 which is now in the process of being extended to all staff. There is a separate policy articulating the training requirements for research students who teach.

2.29 Large amounts of data are collected through the annual and periodic monitoring processes, including from student feedback, market performance, retention and progression, achievement, and employability. This enables the University systematically and regularly to review the provision of learning opportunities.

2.30 The Learning for All Hub and the Education Innovation Centre deliver the infrastructure to enhance learning and teaching. A range of opportunities to reflect on teaching practices is provided to individual staff through the annual appraisal process and collectively through the annual Learning and Teaching Conference operational since 2012. The learning environment features in *Learning 2020*, focusing particularly on timetabling, learning spaces, programme identity and zoning, IT and infrastructure, and enhancing the learning environment.

2.31 The review team tested the effectiveness of the University's learning and teaching strategy by meeting with senior staff, faculty staff and undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students. Additionally, the team met a wide range of employers currently working in partnership with the University. The team scrutinised a range of materials, including committee minutes, appraisal procedures, information on learning opportunities provided for students, and annual reports on the Learning and Teaching Conference.

2.32 A shared understanding of *Strategy 2020* is promoted across the University through a number of mechanisms, such as the annual address, strategy cafes and monthly newsletters. These provide opportunities for information sharing and discussion. Staff at all levels are well engaged with, and share, the institution's strategic direction for learning and

teaching. Strong connections to professional practice are also evidenced providing a link between learning and teaching practices across a range of the University's provision.

2.33 An increasing number of staff are being accredited by the HEA. Continuing professional development is identified through the annual appraisal process, with a range of training provided centrally by the Learning and Development Centre. Workload allocation models are in operation across all faculties supporting staff to take up these opportunities and also to further their own research.

2.34 There is a separate policy articulating the training requirements for research students who also teach. This sets out a model that distinguishes between those research students who undertake 'learning support' and those who undertake 'teaching' activities. A sliding scale of training is applied depending on the type and volume of activity being undertaken. The team heard that the rationale for this approach was to articulate more clearly the different levels of support and teaching being provided, and for training to reflect this. However, during its visit, the review team heard some varying accounts of the application of the policy in practice. While this was not widespread, staff reported that the policy had been discussed following the 2015 postgraduate research experience survey (PRES) results and a decision taken to review it in the current academic year. From the evidence received the review team notes that the Graduate School Committee had discussed the policy but at the time of the review the detail of this discussion was not available. The review team **recommends** that, by September 2016, the University take steps to ensure that all postgraduate research students receive appropriate training before they undertake teaching duties. This matter is also addressed under Expectation B11.

2.35 Opportunities for staff reflection on teaching practice are embedded within the annual and periodic monitoring processes. These processes give consideration to staff reflection and programme and module data, and feedback from students, external examiners and external stakeholders in relation to teaching practice. The University's approach to learning and teaching is therefore kept under regular review with oversight by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

2.36 Enhancement is realised through a number of mechanisms that use reflection and dialogue between teaching staff and stakeholder input. In response to a recommendation from the 2009 Institutional Audit, the University has developed a Learning for All Hub to enable the sharing of good practice and established an annual Learning and Teaching Conference. The Education Innovation Centre and Learning Technology teams based within faculties have also been working to provide staff development opportunities in technology-enhanced learning. Away day events are held across faculty or within departments approximately once per semester.

2.37 The learning environment is also a focus of *Strategy 2020*. A review of study spaces was conducted in 2012-13 which informed developments of Hive and Hive 2 as well as café learning spaces. The University has invested significantly in refurbishing and creating new social and learning spaces, as well as a number of specialist facilities to further support 'ready and able' graduates. A high level of student satisfaction is reported with library services and students are appreciative of the learning environment offered to them at the University. Students have also been involved in various projects on redesigning learning spaces. The University has also invested in the enhancement of its VLE, which provides students with a comprehensive platform to access information directly relevant to their own learning. The University is currently developing lecture capture, although students reported limited take-up of this facility. Some early work is emerging within the University to strengthen the links between research and teaching.

2.38 Overall, the University has in place effective procedures to review the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices to enable and support students to develop as independent learners and study their chosen subject. Enhancements are realised and use the range of opportunities for reflection and dialogue between teaching staff. The University works with a range of its staff and students in implementing these procedures, often with active involvement from employers. The team confirms that Expectation B3 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.39 *Strategy 2020* sets out the University's aims to enable student development and achievement. The main vehicles include curriculum and assessment design, the provision of extra-curricular opportunities, and a focus on ensuring graduates are 'ready and able'. Strategic oversight of this area sits under the remit of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience). Further management is provided by the Associate Deans in each faculty and LTSEC which has delegated responsibility from Academic Board for enhancement of the student experience.

2.40 Students are provided with a range of information about their programme prior to arrival through early access to myUWE. The Student Charter sets out expectations of students, the University and the Students' Union. MyUWE and the VLE are used as the main channels of communication with students supported by the recently established student communications team. Outside the curriculum a range of opportunities are provided to students to enable their academic, personal and professional development and a UWE Bristol Futures Award was launched in September 2013 to promote and recognise students' professional development activities. Information is available to students via myUWE and further advice and signposting is provided by the Student Support Advisers and the website.

2.41 A Start of Year Project Group is responsible for activities to support student transitions into University. This includes a comprehensive induction programme. Postgraduate research student induction is provided by the Graduate School (see also Expectation B11). Additionally, the University has worked on a series of projects around student retention at university and faculty level and has established a Student Retention Task and Finish Group with a report considered by LTSEC.

2.42 The University has recently introduced an Academic Personal Tutor (APT) system to further support the development of its students. APT are provided with guidance on performing their roles and a working group is looking at the further development of the APT system in the long term as part of *Learning 2020*. The Peer-Assisted Learning Scheme also supports the formal learning process and is well established at the University and offered on a number of modules and programmes.

2.43 An Academic Literacy Forum brings together colleagues to share expertise and ideas about how best to improve the University's provision of students' academic skills. The library forms the hub for academic skills development supplemented by faculty study support.

2.44 The employability skills of graduates are a key focus of *Strategy 2020* and are also considered at programme design stage. The University has an ambitious programme of engagement with PSRBs and provides a high number of work placements to students during their programme of study. The University also actively encourages student volunteering.

2.45 The review team tested the effectiveness of the University's procedures by reading the evidence provided, including committee minutes and reports, information provided through myUWE and the University website. The review team met a range of students and teaching and support staff with responsibility for supporting student development and achievement.

2.46 The University has sound strategic planning to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. This is linked to operational annual planning at faculty level, and thus provides a robust mechanism for the University to monitor and evaluate arrangements.

2.47 All students who met the team had been allocated a personal tutor, had regular meetings with them, and found them accessible and approachable. Personal tutors are provided with guidance on performing their roles and a working group is looking at the further development of the programme. Although at an early stage of implementation, the role of the APT provides an important mechanism in enabling student development and achievement.

2.48 The Peer-Assisted Learning scheme is highly effective in supporting students' academic development. Originally provided in one department in 2002, it has been substantively expanded and is now offered across 71 programmes to 6,700 students. The scheme offers academic support using collaborative peer learning to support student transition, to aid retention and to enhance the academic experience. Students who met the review team commended the scheme, citing its accessibility and the perceivable benefits in supporting the learning experience. The scheme is also kept under regular review through annual reports to LTSEC ensuring its currency and appropriateness. The review team identifies as **good practice** the expansion of the Peer-Assisted Learning initiative in supporting students' academic potential and development. This matter is also addressed under Expectation Enhancement.

2.49 Graduate employability is a key focus of *Strategy 2020* and is overseen by the Employability and Enterprise Management Group. The University makes appropriate use of Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) data which identifies it having one of the lowest rates of unemployment for recent graduates nationally. Employability skills are considered at programme design stage and the University has an ambitious programme of engagement with PSRBs. Employers are also actively used in programme design.

2.50 A significant number of work placements are provided to students during their programme of study and the University actively encourages student volunteering. A UWE Bristol Futures Award was launched in September 2013 which recognises students' professional development activities with 2,000 students registered. The Careers Service provides effective advice to students. The University also recognised itself as the first provider in the UK to partner with its regional Chamber of Commerce to create a new job vacancy portal launched in summer 2015, for Chamber members to recruit students and graduates. In supporting students' development, the University has established and maintained meaningful links with a range of employers that are used in curriculum design and delivery, as well as the provision of placements and internships. Additionally, employers act as guest lecturers and participate in annual employers' fairs. The review team considers the breadth and strength of partnerships with industry and the embedding of employability skills across the University's activities to be **good practice**. This matter is also addressed under Expectations B1 and B10.

2.51 A range of data is used by the University to evaluate its provision, including progression data, DHLE, the National Student Survey (NSS), and the University's Student Evaluation Survey (SES). An Academic Literacy Forum led by library services brings together colleagues to share expertise and ideas about how best to improve students' academic skills development. The group has developed a vision for 'academic success' taking account of the various academic skills support work offered across the University. The library forms the hub for academic skills development, which is supplemented by faculty study support.

2.52 Overall, the University's student support arrangements are effectively designed to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential from transition into the University, progression through their programme of study, and moving into employment. There is good practice in the use of peer-assisted learning and in the embedding of employability skills. Expectation B4 is therefore 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

2.53 There is a strong working relationship between the University and the Students' Union. This relationship is managed by the Partnership Board which has representatives from University senior managers, governors, and SU executive. The Partnership Board is co-chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and the Students' Union President, with a remit to set out both short-term priorities for the year and long-term actions against the Strategic Plan. The agenda is set by the Students' Union officers working in response to student feedback and is an opportunity to provide support for campaigning work and further student engagement.

2.54 The Student Charter promotes the significance of the student voice within the context of student and University expectations. The Student Charter has been reviewed after its first year, and shows clear commitment from all stakeholders. Students are aware of the Student Charter which is shared with them during induction, and at admission stage, although it is recognised that more could be done to improve the level of engagement and understanding.

2.55 Oversight for the student representative system lies with the Student Voice Working Group (SVWG), a formal mechanism for the strategic development of student representation. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) has responsibility for student representation at a strategic level. There is a route through academic governance for the student voice to be heard from module level through to Academic Board. There is shared recognition that more needs to be done to facilitate wider engagement with the formal processes. Students are represented at each level of the institution, including the Board of Governors where there is Students' Union representation. Postgraduate research students have opportunities to feed back through the Graduate School Committee, with representatives also sitting on the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee.

2.56 To assess the steps taken by the University to engage students individually and collectively, the review team met the University's senior staff, faculty staff and with undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students. The review team analysed a wide range of evidence which included committee minutes, report papers, policy documents and strategies and action plans.

2.57 Student representation is coordinated by the Students' Union, with support from Academic Services and academic staff in Student Representative Staff Forums (SRSFs). These forums are opportunities for students to feed back on good practice and any issues that arise on their programmes. The Students' Union is also seeking national recognition for its student voice activities, which is fully supported by the University. A recent SU survey indicates high levels of student satisfaction with the contribution of student representatives and engagement with staff in conducting their role.

2.58 Training for student representatives is designed by both the Students' Union and the University, and is delivered by the former. Online training has been developed and piloted for the first time this year. Extra training is also delivered by the Students' Union for those with additional responsibilities. It is recognised that more training could be available to support students' consideration of external examiners' reports, by mentoring for more senior committees and support for staff who chair meetings. Student representatives receive a handbook during their training. There is also a handbook designed for University staff about

the student representation system. An annual conference is held for student representatives to come together and reflect on their experiences. There is a culture of encouraging students to feed back, and of using this to inform developments within the University.

2.59 The SVWG oversees benchmarking and monitoring for the representative system, seeking opportunities for further development through training, engagement and completing the feedback loop. An annual survey is sent out to student representatives, with the results impacting on improvements to the system. Student representatives are paid for their contribution to committees, and are also eligible for the Bristol Futures Award. Student representatives also receive an achievement certificate at the end of the year

2.60 Students have various opportunities to feed back to the University throughout the year. Feedback is collected through SRSFs and inputs to academic governance, informing annual monitoring and curriculum review. Students also complete module evaluation forms and other surveys such as the NSS and Student Experience Survey (SES), though completion rates are variable. Results from these surveys are disseminated and discussed widely from departmental level through to the Board of Governors. Action plans are developed in response to feedback at departmental level, and are included in department reports. Results from the postgraduate research students are discussed at the Graduate School Committee.

2.61 Part of the SVWG role is to raise the awareness of surveys, and increase participation. Students are involved in the new programme design phase through student focus groups, informal talks with student representatives and student discussion groups. Student involvement in each programme is recorded on the Rationale and Impact Assessment form.

2.62 Active steps are taken to respond to students following their feedback. A section is included in the template for module handbooks as an opportunity for staff to respond on a local level about changes made as a result of student feedback. However, the use of this by academic staff is inconsistent and in the recent NSS only 54 per cent of students agreed that they are clear how comments on their course are acted upon. The 'You Said, UWE Did' institutional-wide campaign seeks to articulate clear examples of changes as a result of student feedback. This campaign is reviewed by the SVWG with an aim to make annual improvements. At meetings with the review team, students confirmed there was an understanding that their feedback was taken into account and acted upon. An institutional culture of responding to students' feedback is being developed.

2.63 There is a sense of a shared responsibility by academic and professional services staff to value and use the student voice. Examples were given by the University, including student input into the design of a new building and the Academic Literacy Forum.

2.64 Overall, deliberate steps are being taken to engage with students individually and collectively as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. A range of formal and informal mechanisms are used to collect, collate and disseminate the student voice at all levels of the University. The student representative system is well supported by both the Students' Union and the University, and its effectiveness is underpinned by a culture of feedback and student consultation. The student voice is used to enhance the educational experience. Expectation B5 is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.65 The University provides extensive guidance on the management of assessment through the Assessment Cycle Policy. This is supported by a comprehensive framework of Academic Regulations. These policies provide detailed information on all aspects of the assessment process including the design, marking and moderation and ratification of assessment decisions. Specific guidance is focused on all areas of the academic portfolio, including undergraduate, taught postgraduate, postgraduate research degrees, and collaborative provision. The Academic Regulations set out expectations in relation to levels of credit and the requirements for progression. Assessment strategies provide a clear framework for student progression.

2.66 The University has established detailed guidance for curriculum teams who are developing assessment strategies for new programmes. This has been embedded within the QMEF and provides a structure which enables programme teams to construct well-designed approaches to assessment.

2.67 The University provides detailed guidance for the management of examination boards and specific guidelines are provided for board chairs, to ensure they operate consistently across the institution. Academic Regulations are published online and in hard copy, and further guidance in relation to assessment policies and practice is widely disseminated on student advice pages and signposted to students through programme handbooks. There is significant involvement from employers, external examiners and PSRBs in the programme approval process which ensures that the outcomes of students' learning are consistently, reliably and appropriately assessed.

2.68 The review team considered a range of documentation relating to assessment policies and operational guidance, including the Assessment Cycle Policy, the QMEF, Academic Regulations and programme handbooks. The team reviewed the online learning resources and examined minutes of examination boards and external examiners' reports. The team met a wide range of academic and professional services staff based at faculty level and within central University departments. The team met students and employers to explore the effectiveness of the assessment process.

2.69 There are comprehensive policies set out within the Academic Regulations that govern the recognition of prior learning (RPL). These guidelines are consistently implemented and well understood by academic and professional support services staff, who ensure that this process is managed robustly. The operation of RPL is carefully monitored to ensure that consistent processes are operated across the institution.

2.70 The team identified a number strategies that aim to develop the skills of academic staff, to be more effective in their role in relation to assessment. An annual learning and teaching conference has focused on issues relating to assessment and providing effective feedback. University-designated Learning and Teaching Fellows have played a significant role in developing practice in relation to assessment. All new staff are required to complete a

Post Graduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, in which effective practice developing appropriate assessment skills features as a major theme.

2.71 The University and students have identified concerns about the timeliness and consistency of feedback on assessment. There has been a commitment to ensure that feedback in the form of explicit assessment of learning becomes a major theme of the Learning 2020 strategy. However, there is some inconsistency in the timeliness and quality of assessment feedback to students, although the team recognise that significant progress has been made, and this work is ongoing. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken by the University to ensure assessment feedback is timely and of a consistently high quality to support students' academic achievement.

2.72 The University has established measures to promote good academic practice. There is a study skills website and guidance is disseminated through the library online work book. A Guide to Assessment has been provided on the academic advice website. Subject librarians provide input to induction sessions and set out the support available to promote good academic practice.

2.73 The Academic Regulations set out the University's position on assessment offences, which is supported by the Assessment Offences Policy. Work is currently being completed to develop the University's VLE to provide a facility for online submission of assessments using plagiarism-detection software. This development is intended to be fully implemented by the end of the 2016 academic year. The review team **affirms** the comprehensive introduction of plagiarism-detection software by the end of the current academic year.

2.74 Overall, the University has established a robust regulatory framework and a well defined set of deliberative and administrative processes to ensure that there are equitable, valid and reliable processes for assessment. The review team affirms the work being undertaken in two areas that require further action in relation to assessment feedback, and the introduction of plagiarism-detection software, that are being addressed by the University. Therefore, Expectation B6 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.75 The University has a well established and effective approach to the management of all aspects of external examining. Policies and processes for appointment, induction, reporting and responding to feedback provided by external examiners are in place. Comprehensive guidance is provided in relation to all aspects of engagement with external examiners. An operational guide for examiners sets out detailed information for staff managing assessment. Protocols for supporting examining are clearly addressed in the Assessment Cycle Policy and in the University's Academic Regulations.

2.76 The appointment of external examiners is ultimately the responsibility of Academic Board. This process is coordinated centrally through academic services, which follows a formal nomination and application process. The qualifications and experience of external examiners are considered within faculties by the chairs of ASQC and appointments are reported to Academic Board.

2.77 The appointment process is administered by a senior administrator who provides detailed information in relation to the role and responsibilities of appointees. The University has established processes that record external appointments for academic staff and highlights any links with potential external examiners, to prevent reciprocal arrangements or conflicts of interest. External examiners are appointed at field and award levels. There is a chief external examiner who provides oversight across the whole award.

2.78 A well-established process is in place relating to the appointment and management of examiners for research degrees. This is set out within the academic regulations and graduate school handbook. This involves the appointment of two examiners, one internal and one external, whose input is coordinated by an independent chair who is given specific training by the graduate school.

2.79 An induction programme for external examiners is provided and online resources have been developed to support them in their role. An annual external examiners' conference has been established to discuss changes in the institutional framework and regulations, and reflect upon sector developments. An annual communication plan is sent out following the conference to ensure consistent communication across all fields and awards. A system of mentorship has been introduced to allow less experienced external examiners to be supported by those with established history in this role. The University has established measures to ensure that external examiners complete effective scrutiny of academic standards at collaborative partner institutions. This responsibility is linked to the appointment process for examiners at field and award level.

2.80 The review team examined a range of regulatory guidance and documentation relating to the operation of external examining. The team scrutinised sample external examiners' reports and minutes of assessment boards. The team met a wide range of academic and professional services staff and undergraduate and postgraduate students.

2.81 The team found that external examiners' reports are generally detailed and provide an evaluative commentary on academic standards and quality of provision. All aspects of assessment and feedback are reflected upon during the reporting process. Issues raised in reports are carefully tracked by faculties and monitored through formal action plans. These reports provide clear and informative feedback and comment upon the achievement of

threshold academic standards. External examiners' reports reflect upon the level of student performance in the context of other UK degree-awarding bodies.

2.82 External examiners' reports are reviewed by senior programme staff and heads of departments, and considered by Faculty AQSCs. Good practice identified by the examiners is collated and reported in an annual report which is considered by ASQCs.

2.83 External examiners' reports are made available to student representatives through student consultative forums. Student representatives receive training in relation to interpreting external examiner feedback as part of the preparation for their role. The review team found that students had limited knowledge of the content of feedback provided by external examiners. The University acknowledges that there is further work to do in respect of disseminating external examiner feedback to students and a pilot project to provide programme feedback from external examiners is currently being implemented.

2.84 Overall, the review team found that the University has robust and effective processes which oversee the engagement with external examiners in the management of academic standards. This system is operating very effectively. Therefore, Expectation B7 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

2.85 The University's QMEF sets out the processes for annual monitoring and programme review. Processes are well established, and detailed protocols and standard templates ensure that they are operated consistently. All taught programmes and research degrees are reviewed annually as part of the formal monitoring process. LTSEC maintains institutional oversight of the process and reports annually to Academic Board. Programme managers complete a programme report each year on a standard template. This is informed by module reports which are discussed with external examiners. Managers are required to produce an action plan based on analysis of student survey outcomes, staff-student forums, external examiners' feedback and retention and achievement data. Previous actions are also reviewed with an update provided on actions taken and outcomes achieved provided. For collaborative provision the template includes comments from the link tutor although the process varies for validated and franchised provision.

2.86 Heads of department produce a report informed by the programme reports. A standard template is provided which requires the head of department to identify features of good practice and explain how it can be disseminated within and beyond the area. These reports are considered at the Faculty ASQC. Monitoring of collaborative provision feeds into departmental reports but a separate partnership report provides additional scrutiny for activity at partner organisations. This feedback is considered by the Collaborative Provision Committee.

2.87 Periodic programme review is carried out on a six-yearly cycle. The University operates a peer-based process which focuses on a critical appraisal of the programme informed by course data and student feedback. Institutional oversight is provided through academic services. The Curriculum Review and Accreditation Manager oversees the review cycle working with Associate Deans and Heads of Department. Programme withdrawals are managed through a clearly defined process, and discontinuation arrangements are made to protect the students' interests.

2.88 The review team scrutinised the University's processes and their effectiveness through detailed consideration of quality assurance processes including module reports, annual monitoring reports, departmental reports, documentation relating to periodic curriculum review and minutes of committees. The review team also discussed the processes with staff and employers.

2.89 The evidence considered by the review team confirms that monitoring and review processes for taught programmes are rigorously and consistently applied to maintain standards and enhance learning opportunities and ensure the effective identification of good practice. Processes are directly linked to the University's *Strategy 2020*. In meetings staff were able to identify how outcomes of annual monitoring had been used directly for enhancement. Module, programme and departmental reports are detailed and analytical and focus upon external feedback as well as considering student achievement. Expertise is also drawn on from employers to inform programme developments and to ensure that programmes are practice-led in line with the 2020 strategy. Annual monitoring of collaborative provision follows the same processes and outcomes inform departmental

reports. Additionally, for collaborative provision the Partnership Lead Report focuses on working relationships and is considered at the Collaborative Provision Committee.

2.90 Student feedback is captured through module and programme surveys. Student representatives are involved at the programme and departmental level through SRSFs and departmental committees. Student representatives are also members of the Faculty ASQC. Training for student panel members is being put in place, and a new role descriptor has been developed. Student panel members will have the same level of responsibilities as staff. The University acknowledges that there have been issues in recruiting students to panels and is working with the Students' Union to deliver more support and training for representatives. Students feel that the University listens to and acts on their feedback and were able to cite examples of actions in response to their feedback.

2.91 The QMEF is reviewed annually, and a new risk-based approach to periodic curriculum review is currently being piloted. This revised approach includes an institutional-level enhancement theme which ensures that deliberate steps are being taken to enhance student learning opportunities.

2.92 The review team concludes that Expectation B8 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the University has in place effective, regular and systematic processes for the monitoring and review of courses.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.93 The University has both a complaints and academic appeals procedure overseen by the University's Complaints and Appeals Team located in Academic Services. Both procedures comprise three discrete stages which are clearly described and on the University website. The Complaints Procedure is for students, staff, visitors to the University, and placement providers. Students at partner institutions are expected to follow the complaints procedures of their institution but can access stage three when they have exhausted local procedures. The Academic Appeals Procedure is for all students, including those studying at partner institutions. Complaints and academic appeals are monitored annually with an annual report that identifies enhancement initiatives. Appeals and complaints are considered widely through the University's deliberative structures.

2.94 The effectiveness of the University's complaints and academic appeals procedures was tested by meetings with teaching and support staff and those from within the University complaints and appeals team. The review team also met undergraduate, taught postgraduate and postgraduate research students, and scrutinised the Academic Regulations, Complaints Policy, Academic Appeals Policy, the annual complaints and appeals report, minutes of committees and the University website.

2.95 The University's complaints and academic appeals procedures meet Expectation B9. Both are signposted for students in the Academic Survival Guide and are available, including links to relevant forms, on the myUWE website, which presents them in a student-friendly format. In their meetings with students the review team heard that while most students know of these policies, some were unaware of the academic appeals procedure.

2.96 Ultimate responsibility for complaints and appeals resides with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). The Complaints and Appeals team are supported in their role through bespoke training including training in mediation and conciliation and the legal aspects of their work. They, in turn, provide support for academic and professional services staff who deal with stage one complaints.

2.97 Information on the complaints procedure includes a clear description of what constitutes a complaint, the difference between an appeal and complaint, the stages of the process and how complaints are recorded and monitored. The procedure comprises three stages: an informal resolution phase whereby the issue is raised close to the origin, consideration by a Complaints Manager, and consideration by the Head of Complaints and Appeals. Advice on complaints can be sought from a wide range of staff including Student Support Advisers, the Students' Union Advice Centre, the University reception and information points, programme staff and central services. The procedures for stages two and three of the procedure provide information on the timescale in which the University will respond to the complainant. This is not currently the case for stage one of the Complaints Procedure, although it is implicit within the procedure, and the University may wish to consider agreeing and publishing an explicit, indicative timescale for responding to the complainant at stage one.

2.98 The Academic Appeals procedure is described in the Academic Regulations and includes details of the process for students at affiliated institutions. Comprehensive, clearly

presented information for students is available on myUWE with details including how to submit an appeal, links to the required forms and case studies of successful and unsuccessful appeals. Academic appeals are divided into two categories, including a significant administrative error, and where performance was adversely affected by illness or other factors. Appeals are handled by the complaints and appeals team and decisions made by the University Appeals Panel, chaired by the Assistant Vice-Chancellor with members from each faculty. The academic appeals process comprises two stages: an investigation by the Head of Complaints and Appeals and consideration of an appeal by the Academic Appeals Panel. A timescale for each stage is clearly articulated in the Academic Regulations.

2.99 Students are informed of the outcome of a complaint or appeal at the end of each formal stage. Reasons for decisions are relayed to students and details of any action to be taken. The complaints and appeals team are responsible for issuing a completion letter when formal University procedures have been exhausted.

2.100 The website is the definitive location for information on academic appeals and complaints, with programme handbooks directing students to links. The availability of information on academic appeals and complaints in the programme handbooks is not consistent, with one example of neither process being signposted. Students can seek advice from Student Support Advisers and the University Students' Union Advice Service and a student-friendly guide to appeals is available with links to relevant documents, further sources of advice and forms. The results and notification of credit and assessment marks that students receive through myUWE provide details of how students can find information on requesting a review of their results with a link to the academic appeals procedure. Not all of the students who met the review team were aware of where they could find details of the academic appeals procedure and in which cases they could appeal an assessment decision.

2.101 Complaints and appeals are clearly monitored so that they can be used to enhance the student experience. They are recorded on a central database by complaints managers and the Head of Complaints and Appeals and inform an annual Complaints and Appeals Report. This is considered by a range of faculty and University committees including LTSEC, the Strategic Planning and Performance Committee, Academic Board and the Board of Governors. This is a comprehensive reflective and analytical report which through case studies highlights learning points and makes recommendations to enhance practice. The report also serves to identify areas where policy and/or procedural changes are recommended, these being considered by LTSEC.

2.102 Overall, the University has effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities which are fair, accessible and timely. The team concludes that Expectation B9 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.103 The University has a wide range of academic agreements with partners both in the UK and internationally. The term 'academic partnership' encompasses activities such as collaborative provision, credit recognition, student exchange and any other learning and teaching-related activities delivered in conjunction with external providers. Partnership development and operational activity is resourced and managed through University faculties by the Associate Deans (Partnerships) and link tutors, working with staff in the professional services.

2.104 The University has a clear separation of responsibilities within its governance structure for collaborative provision. The business, financial, strategic and reputational aspects of academic partnership developments are overseen through the Global Development Group. The academic, quality and standards oversight of this activity is through the Collaborative Provision Committee.

2.105 The majority of the University's collaborative arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with others fall within the framework of either a franchise or validation model. These models are clearly defined in the University's Academic Partnership Models document. The University also offers arrangements that can be part of a credit recognition agreement which are governed by the University's Academic Regulations and Procedures. The University also considers proposals to collaborate with other organisations to deliver elements of a programme, either as continuing professional development or in the context of a programme leading to an award.

2.106 The review team was able to assess the operation and effectiveness of the University's policies and procedures governing the management of its provision with others through meetings with staff, partners involved in supporting the delivery of learning opportunities, and students. The review team considered a range of evidence provided by the University relating to approval, review and management, committee minutes, as well as legal and other documentation.

2.107 The University's partner approval process is designed to ensure that potential risks are identified and managed. It aims to ensure that the University has the knowledge and experience to underwrite the provision it is proposed will be delivered by the partner. The due diligence process is designed to include sufficient opportunities for the University to determine whether a proposal should continue through to the next stage. In 2014-15 the University introduced a risk register for each collaborative provision partnership with the intention of reviewing this annually.

2.108 In 2014-15 the University introduced Partnership Boards as the formal point of contact between the University and partners to provide a forum for monitoring the operation of the partnership, the risk register, adherence to the Operations Manual, any issues or concerns, and the development of a common understanding of any local regulatory requirements. The Partnership Boards are held regularly (twice-yearly minimum and more often with new partners). The boards have helped streamline the management of relationships with partners. The level of delegated responsibility is determined by the nature

of the partnership. Link tutors and the Operations Manager, working with the teaching team at both institutions, share information on assessment regulations using the Operational Manual as the guide to implementation. This dialogue includes regular face-to-face briefings. The University's standard external examining procedures, as set out in the QMEF, apply to arrangements with other delivery organisations.

2.109 The University has a dual award relationship with Taylor's University in Malaysia, which is governed by a set of variant regulations. The partnership with Taylor's University is currently under review, as part of the normal cycle of partnership activity.

2.110 A potential partner's approach to marketing and recruitment is discussed as part of the negotiation and development of the collaboration model, and is assessed as part of the due diligence process. Information about University programmes offered by collaborative partners is initially discussed as part of the agreement process, and the University's marketing and academic services teams work closely to ensure that partners are aware of, and adhere to, the guidelines as set out in the academic agreement schedules.

2.111 The Academic Partnership model exercised by the University sets out clearly the overarching responsibilities of the University and its partner for admissions and registration of students. The detail of how these activities work in practice is formalised and recorded in the academic agreement and schedules and the Operations Manual and appendices.

2.112 The University does not delegate responsibility for approving the criteria for admission to a programme that leads to an award granted in its name. Lists of students admitted to University programmes are on the student record system where they are held and can be verified.

2.113 The University's *Strategy 2020* states its commitment to 'outstanding learning and a practice-oriented provision', providing a strong ethos in encouraging opportunities for students' work placements and internships. Within *Learning 2020* the work-stream on practice-orientated and professional accreditation is the vehicle for providing these opportunities.

2.114 Appropriate student work placement arrangements are in effect for professionally accredited programmes, such as healthcare and nursing. Placement preparation includes the development of a learning contract and regular meetings with students and placement providers. All healthcare placements for programmes in the Departments of Nursing and Midwifery and Allied Health Professions are governed by the Learning & Development Agreement between Health Education South West and the placement provider, which sets out the standards required.

2.115 A list of all professional placement providers for health and education is kept on a central database. A group has been set up for 2015-16 to enhance the processes and procedures for professional placements and make any necessary changes.

2.116 Other student placement activities are undertaken in a more variable manner. Employers who met the review team identified a wide variety of placement activities and spoke of the valuable and often long-standing partnerships they had with the University. Students are encouraged to find their own placement and receive visits by staff from the University, although there are various models for this approach. Learning contracts and tripartite agreements are in place, although the agreements mainly focus on health and safety assessments rather than on learning outcomes.

2.117 Placement activity outside the professional arenas is managed by the Employer Partnership Services Team. Oversight is through the Head of Employer Partnership services who signs all placement agreements and the Placement Support Team (PST) maintain

oversight institutionally. The University has strong and impressive links with a wide range of businesses, the NHS and other employers across the region, which provide excellent opportunities for students to benefit from relevant work experience, placements and internships. The good practice in the breadth and strength of partnerships and the embedding of employability skills are further addressed under Expectation B4.

2.118 Overall, the review team consider that the University's arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with collaborative partners are supported by effective policies and operational management which ensures that processes are implemented securely and managed effectively. The review team consider that Expectation B10 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.119 The Graduate School Committee, Research, Knowledge Exchange Committee and Research Degrees Award Board have delegated responsibility for the oversight of postgraduate research provision. This includes delivery of the University's Research Strategy, oversight of research and knowledge exchange (including consideration of viva outcomes) and securing the standards of final research degree awards. Oversight of postgraduate research provision is administratively located in the Graduate School which has been introduced since the Institutional Audit in 2009.

2.120 The Graduate School administers the selection, admission and induction of research students using a single admissions policy applied across the University. There are three enrolment dates, shortly after which students meet their supervisory teams to complete an induction checklist. An induction day and faculty-wide induction events are also hosted. A process is in place for the allocation of supervisors, and training is provided and coordinated by the Graduate School.

2.121 Students and staff have access to the Academic Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degrees. These set out the requirements for research degrees, including progress reviews and final examination requirements. The University appeals and complaints procedures apply to research students and students are directed to it through the Code of Practice.

2.122 Faculty Research Degrees Committees review the progress of individual students and the Research Degrees Award Board oversees the approval of students' progression and final examination outcomes. All research students complete a minimum of 60 credits of taught provision to enhance the development of their research and other skills as set out in the regulations. This is complemented by a suite of training opportunities offered through the Graduate School. The University participates in PRES to obtain feedback from research students whose representatives are on the relevant committees.

2.123 The review team tested the appropriateness of the arrangements for the delivery of research degrees by meeting staff from the University's senior management team, staff of the Graduate School and research degree students. The review team also considered the range of documents provided by the University, including the Research Strategy, relevant committee minutes and papers, PRES data, programme handbooks, the University website and Academic Regulations.

2.124 There is effective institutional oversight of research degree provision through the Graduate School Committee, the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and the Research Degrees Award Board. Responsibilities are delegated from the Academic Board ensuring appropriate oversight of the University's Research Strategy. Administrative oversight is effectively located in the Graduate School. The Graduate School provides a consistent approach to the postgraduate research student experience across the University in acting as a centralised hub for research degree matters.

2.125 The University's research strategy ensures that research students are admitted to an environment that offers students quality of opportunities. This is further supported by a

range of activities offered within the faculties and a suite of University-wide events coordinated by the Graduate School.

2.126 The Graduate School administers the selection, admission and induction of research students and operates a single admissions policy. It also provides appropriate training for admissions staff. Applicants are interviewed by a panel which includes potential supervisors. Shortly after enrolment students meet with their supervisory teams to ensure completion of key induction tasks identified through a University-wide induction checklist.

2.127 Students and staff have access to the Academic Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degrees that clearly set out the academic requirements, including for progress review and final examination. Students who met the review team confirmed they knew where to access regulatory information and where to obtain further advice on them where necessary.

2.128 The process for allocating supervisors ensures the lead supervisor, as director of studies, has appropriate expertise and experience in supervising research degree students. A workload allocation model ensures that supervisors have sufficient time to devote to the task. Training is provided for directors of study and supervisors and currently around 57 per cent of supervisors have completed training. The Graduate School has also recently developed a pack for external supervisors.

2.129 Faculty research degree committees effectively review the progress of individual students. The Research Degrees Award Board oversees the approval of students' progression and the final examination, ensuring appropriate institutional oversight. The Graduate School Handbook, Code of Practice and website outline the progress and review processes in full, ensuring that students are clear on what is required. The University regularly considers data from review events through the Research Degrees Award Board. Faculty research degrees committees, with support from the Graduate School, monitor students' progression, which ensures that appropriate support is provided to individuals. Students reported they were clear on progress review requirements.

2.130 All research students complete a minimum of 60 credits of taught provision to enhance the development of their research and other skills. This is complemented by a suite of training opportunities offered through the Graduate School. Some students who met the review team indicated that access to training was dependent on which point in the year a student started. One student also stated that not all training was particularly relevant to their area of research. However, all students reported a clear understanding of what training was offered or required, and indicated they had used their supervisor when seeking advice.

2.131 Examination arrangements are clearly articulated and understood by students. A chief external examiner for research degrees is appointed to the Research Degrees Award Board, ensuring externality in the oversight of research degrees awarded by the University.

2.132 The University has appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure research student engagement which takes the form of student representation on the relevant committees and participation in PRES.

2.133 Overall, the review team considers that the University's research degrees are awarded in an environment that ensures secure academic standards. Students are offered the opportunities and support needed to achieve appropriate academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees. The review team concludes that Expectation B11 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the policies and procedures are well designed and operate effectively in practice.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.134 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.

2.135 All applicable Expectations are met and the risk is judged low in each case. There is one recommendation, two affirmations are made covering one Expectation and there are three features of good practice.

2.136 The one recommendation arising from Expectations B3 indicates that the University should ensure that postgraduate research students receive appropriate training prior to teaching.

2.137 The affirmations confirm the steps being taken to ensure assessment feedback is timely and of a consistently high quality, and the intention to introduce a comprehensive approach to using plagiarism-detection software.

2.138 The features of good practice confirm the University's commitment to the widening participation and outreach agenda, the expansion of the Peer-Assisted Learning initiative, and the strength of partnerships and embedding of employability skills.

2.139 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the University **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 Three University teams are responsible for published information: Marketing and Communications, Internal Communications and Student Communications. The Director of Marketing has overall responsibility for signing off the prospectus and externally facing publicity material. This resulted in a detailed action plan to enhance their approach to published information, with many actions being completed by the time of the review. The University website is a comprehensive and easily navigable source of information for all of the University's stakeholders. The internally facing area myUWE provides the primary source of information for both students and staff. Regulatory and quality assurance information for staff is contained within the Academic Regulations and QMEF.

3.2 The appropriateness of the University's public information was tested by meeting with staff from marketing, communications and student services teams, undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research degree students, and employers. The review team also scrutinised the Published Information Task and Finish Group report, published information responsibility chart, programme and module handbooks, the Academic Survival Guide, the University website, and the websites of a number of partner institutions, including overseas collaborative partners.

3.3 In 2014-15 the University undertook a review of its published information in light of its forthcoming review, and the publication of the Competition and Markets Authority policy paper. The report of the Published Information Task and Finish Group made a number of recommendations for the University to consider. Key recommendations related to a lack of senior management level oversight and leadership in relation to public information, the lack of a consistent process for the review and audit of published information, inconsistent practice in faculties on the information placed on the VLE for students, and the need for a revised template for programme and module handbooks. Good progress has been made by the University in completing the actions in the Published Information Task and Finish Group Action Plan, with many actions completed and those outstanding largely due for completion by July 2016.

3.4 The Student Communications team is responsible for ensuring that the University's communication with students is effective and uses the most appropriate media. In response to the recommendation from the published information task group, the University is in the process of appointing a Director of Strategic Marketing and Communications to strengthen the strategic oversight of published information. The Director of Marketing is responsible for signing off the prospectus and all other externally facing publicity material. Detailed information on responsibilities for public information across the University are published, with the document providing information on the owner of the information, who is responsible for checking and approval, its location and arrangements for review.

3.5 The University website is a comprehensive source of information for prospective and current students and other stakeholders and is overseen by the marketing team. The website is easily navigable and makes a wide range of information available to the

public in an accessible format, including its mission and vision, strategic plan, structure, and academic, corporate and other policies. The marketing department has a web owner directory which details the specific responsibilities for areas of the website. The web is maintained by a network of editors with guidance provided in a handbook and guidance documents. A Web Forum enables the sharing of practice and the exchange of ideas.

3.6 For prospective students the website is the main source of information and guidance. This is easily accessible, clearly presented and provides all the key information on the application and admission process. Details of the University's programmes are provided in a summary of the programme specification under six easily navigable tags and a link to the full document. Each programme has key information set information included with a link to the Unistats website. The University is continuing to enhance the information provided to prospective students in light of the Competition and Markets Authority report and is making greater use of social media to communicate with applicants. Students found the website an extremely useful resource pre-application and prior to enrolment. They are given access to myUWE once they have accepted their offer.

3.7 MyUWE is the definitive source of information for current students on their programme as well as for the University's regulations and student policies. It is maintained by a team in marketing who are regularly informed of changes to programmes. The Student Communications Team, based in Student Services, works with faculties, professional services and the Students' Union to ensure the publication of relevant and timely information. Recent initiatives include a video explaining key aspects of the Academic Regulations, a student email newsletter and an Academic Survival Guide. The University has a Student Charter, which students are aware of. This has been recently updated in partnership with the Students' Union. The Charter sets out what the University may expect of students and what students can expect of the University. MyUWE enables students to access the University's VLE, their individual academic record, timetable, personal details, administrative information relating to the programme including programme and module handbooks, and teaching materials. Students in their meetings with the review team commended myUWE as an excellent resource on all areas of their programme and a valuable tool for communication.

3.8 The University has templates for the format of both module and programme handbooks which are in the process of being updated to ensure they have a clear academic focus. Some material has been moved from handbooks to the VLE. Students highlighted delays in receiving timetables as an area of concern. In their meeting with students the review team was informed that the situation has improved for 2015, but further improvements could be made to ensure that students receive the timetable prior to the academic year. The University acknowledges this change and is taking further steps to resolve the issue.

3.9 On completion of their studies students receive a certificate and transcript as detailed in the Certificate and Transcript Policy and are issued with a Higher Education Achievement Record.

3.10 Responsibility for the published information of the University's collaborative partners resides with the partnership team in the Academic Services department. Respective responsibilities for published information are agreed as part of the due diligence approach encompassing the Academic Agreement Schedule. The partner institution has responsibility for preparing promotional and publicity materials in liaison with the link tutor and partnership lead, with the marketing department at the University assuming responsibility for the approval of materials. The academic services department checks the publicity materials of partner institutions annually.

3.11 Information for those with responsibility for quality and standards is provided through the Academic Regulations and QMEF, both of which are reviewed regularly. Changes to the Academic Regulations and QMEF are communicated to staff and students through a range of channels including internal newsletters and myUWE.

3.12 Overall, the University has clear and robust procedures to ensure that the information provided for their intended audiences is fit for purpose, accessible and accurate, meeting the Expectation of Part C of the Quality Code. The team concludes that Expectation C 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

3.13 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.

3.14 Information published by the University is fit for purpose and trustworthy. Processes for the development and verification of information are understood by staff. Students confirm that information is comprehensive, accessible and helpful to them, and provides them with sound information to support their learning.

3.15 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the University **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 *Strategy 2020* identifies the University's strategic approach to enhancement and provides four work-streams to achieve this ambition. Oversight lies with LTSEC which is responsible for taking deliberate steps in developing enhancement initiatives, and identifying and disseminating good practice. The strategy is then implemented through the QMEF which includes programme approval changes and design, and annual monitoring for all provision, including curriculum review and internal periodic review. The implementation of enhancement activities is supported by the existing governance arrangements, which allow the sharing of good practice and recognise and respond to issues or challenges. These three strands show the University's commitment to the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

4.2 To assess the steps taken by the University to ensure the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team met the University's senior managers, faculty and professional support staff, and with undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students. The review team analysed a wide range of evidence, which included committee minutes, report papers, policy documents and strategies and action plans.

4.3 The approach to enhancement is taken strategically through governance arrangements and by the development and sharing of extra initiatives that emerge at a local level. This approach fosters an ethos of enhancement. Issues, challenges and good practice are progressed through departmental committees and student representative and staff forums through to faculty academic standards and quality committees, and ultimately to LTSEC. As noted in Expectation B5, students are invited to attend committees at all of these levels to provide feedback and enhance programmes and processes. LTSEC also holds an annual enhancement meeting with an extended membership, specifically looking at an enhancement theme, to identify opportunities for improvement.

4.4 The University's Graduate School supports strategic enhancement at postgraduate research level. Students from the Graduate School sit on Faculty Research Committees and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee to identify good practice, opportunities for enhancement and any challenges that may arise, and thus feed into the future implementation of the programmes.

4.5 A variety of survey methods are used, including the NSS, SES, PRES, module evaluations and the International Student Barometer. It is recognised that for some of these surveys completion rates continue to be low and a review is currently being conducted to evaluate how student feedback may be more comprehensively collected at an institutional level. Progress is measured by the outcomes of survey results where key performance indicators are set. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) meets with individual Programme Leaders to discuss completion rates for the NSS, and again with the NSS/SES institutional taskforce to set long and short-term actions for improvement, and to identify areas of good practice. Results are monitored through academic governance, and senior managers have responsibility for oversight of performance. Monitoring of performance indicators is reported through academic governance up to the Board of Governors.

4.6 There are a number of examples of effective enhancement activity. The Peer-Assisted Learning scheme, which originated from a single department,

has developed into a University-wide initiative which supports thousands of students each academic year in areas ranging from study skills to employability and induction. This matter is also addressed as good practice in Expectation B4. The UWE Bristol Futures Award accredits students for their engagement with extra-curricular activities such as volunteering and paid work. Students and staff are positive about the impact of this initiative. The Academic Literacy Forum brings together colleagues from across the University and the Students' Union to improve the provision of students' academic skills.

4.7 The University has begun to conduct a series of business process reviews through the 'Lean' method as part of the enhancement agenda. This work identifies opportunities for enhancement, standardisation and practice. The first review looked at the extenuating circumstances policy to ensure fair and consistent application of the policy in decision-making boards.

4.8 Quality Account Managers use CAPs to identify and disseminate good practice during curriculum design and development. The Quality Account Managers are faculty facing but sit in the central Learning and Teaching Enhancement Team, supporting the strategic work-stream, *Learning 2020*.

4.9 The QMEF outlines the process for annual monitoring, which is used by the University as an additional opportunity for enhancement. Action plans are produced from module and programme reports as a result of annual monitoring, which systematically include feedback from students. Action plans are used to measure year-on-year progress, and to inform discussions at departmental committees and further up through the academic governance. For external partnerships link tutors have responsibility for ensuring partners comply with and complete annual reporting mechanisms.

4.10 Overall, there is a clear commitment to enhancement by the University which demonstrates a range of initiatives which are used to enhance current processes, and support and develop the quality of the student learning experience. There is a culture of enhancement embedded into current practice with an ethos of continuous improvement embedded into the strategy and framework at the University. The review team concludes that Expectation Enhancement is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.11 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.

4.12 The Expectation in this area is met and the level of risk is low.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The University's *Strategy 2020*'s stated intention is 'to be known nationally and internationally as the best university for professionally recognised and practice-oriented programmes, which contribute to an outstanding learning experience and generate excellent graduate employment opportunities for all students'. In support of this aim the University has a long-standing history and established working relationship with employers in the local region.

5.2 The University recognises that there is a demand for graduates in local industry and that their students can help meet the needs for a highly skilled workforce. *Strategy 2020* includes a priority to develop 'ready and able graduates' and articulates this approach through its employability and enterprise plan which shows how these relationships can be used to support students' employability after graduation. This strategic approach is articulated through the Employability and Enterprise Plan.

5.3 A large proportion of the University's work around employability is driven, underpinned and supported by excellent working relationships with a range of employers. The Vice Chancellor takes an active role on various external boards and bodies in the city and region, which emphasises to local business the priority of the institution and its offer. Employers who met the review team emphasised the positive outcomes of the highly effective working relationship, and felt that this was reciprocated.

5.4 Initiatives work on a local and institutional level to develop students' employability. The Employability and Enterprise Service works closely with the faculties through career consultants to provide support to academics in the review, design and delivery of employability and enterprise-related elements within and alongside degree programmes. Employers are engaged in programme design or through delivery of programmes to ensure that the skills and experience students develop are relevant to the needs and demands of industry, or by obtaining PSRB accreditation. Employer-led skills sessions are a feature of many taught programmes. Employers have the opportunity to attend advisory boards during the review process to contribute their perspective through a sense of 'co-designing and co-creating' through this process.

5.5 A Career Development Programme has been developed for 150 students to develop their employability skills in a wider context. While open to all second-year students, the programme is targeted at students from under-represented backgrounds to help secure quality work experience. Students are aided by an employability mentor during their final year. There has been an increase in the numbers of students from under-represented backgrounds, expanding on the University's widening participation agenda.

5.6 The University's engagement with employers is highly effective and there are links with a wide range of industries and professions. Employers emphasise the positive outcomes of working relationships, their commitment to the University and the resulting impact on students and the workforce. Employer forums are held to engage in dialogue around graduate and placement recruitment, and to increase networks across the City of Bristol and the region. Employers are involved in an ongoing basis with a variety of programme-related initiatives and they retain a high profile through mentoring, guest lectures, fairs, award events and the viewing of academic poster presentations. Many students confirm that the strong links with employers and industry were a reason for applying to study at the University.

5.7 As a result of these highly effective employer relationships, 1,500 internships have been created since 2010 alongside other placements, and recruitment onto graduate programmes. There has been an increase in the number of small and medium enterprises advertising job vacancies through the University and recruiting graduates. As a result, the University's aim to contribute to the demands of the local workforce is supported by the quantity and quality of placements advertised, and programmes developed in collaboration with industry.

5.8 The University has built on its long-standing relationships with local industry to prepare its students to meet the demands of the local workforce, by equipping them with the skills and opportunities they will need to succeed after graduation.

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 30 to 33 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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