



Higher Education Review of Halesowen College

November 2015

Contents

About this review	1
Key findings.....	2
QAA's judgements about Halesowen College	2
Good practice	2
Recommendations	2
Affirmation of action being taken	2
Theme: Student Employability.....	2
About Halesowen College	3
Explanation of the findings about Halesowen College.....	4
1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations	5
2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities	18
3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities.....	39
4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities	42
5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability	46
Glossary	48

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Halesowen College. The review took place from 24 to 26 November 2015 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Liam Curran
- Mrs Maz Stewart
- Mr Lyes Bouakaz (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

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

The [themes](#) for the academic year 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=106.

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

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

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Halesowen College

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

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

Good practice

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

- The strategic approach to the implementation of higher education staff development (Expectation B3).
- The investment in technology and facilities in computing, engineering and creative industries, which contributes significantly to the quality of students' learning opportunities (Expectation B4).

Recommendations

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

By July 2016:

- continue to monitor the use of higher education resources to ensure higher education students are prioritised (Expectation B4)
- ensure that students have access to resources that prevent unacceptable academic practice (Expectation B6).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- the steps taken to ensure the quality of the student learning experience on the FdA Early Years programme (Expectations B3 and B6)
- the College's commitment to the development of its enhancement policy (Enhancement).

Theme: Student Employability

Halesowen College demonstrates a strong commitment to student employability. This is clear from its validation process, where all programmes indicate in their curriculum, learning and teaching, assessments and work placements how student employability should be developed. Its Higher Education Strategy, and the Enhancement Strategy, also make clear references to student employability.

Student employability is reinforced through the learning opportunities provided through the College's range of foundation degrees, and Higher National Certificates/Diplomas (HNC/Ds) with the Higher Level Apprenticeship framework. The College was successful in securing funding from the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership to enhance its resources in engineering, computing and graphics. The redevelopment of the Halesowen Engineer Training Facility will accommodate state-of-the-art facilities. There are strong links with employers in, for example, education training, engineering, and health and social care.

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

About Halesowen College

Halesowen College (the College) is a tertiary college located in the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley, eight miles west of Birmingham. It currently operates from three sites close to the centre of Halesowen. Higher education is primarily delivered at the main Whittingham Road campus, in the new purpose-built Higher Education Centre, but some delivery is still located at Coombs Wood. The College serves the local population from surrounding townships in the boroughs of Dudley and Sandwell, plus a significant number from West Birmingham. The area served is primarily urban in character and includes wards with a high index of deprivation. POLAR 3 data indicates that many of the census wards in the surrounding area are in the lowest or second-lowest quintile for higher education participation. The Ofsted inspection report published in July 2013 graded the College as 'good'. At the time of the review, the College had approximately 5,750 students enrolled, 450 of which are studying on higher education programmes. The College has a contract for employer responsive provision to deliver workplace training and apprenticeships. The College's mission is to be 'the leading choice for Post 16 Education and Training'.

The major change since the last review by QAA is the increase in student numbers in higher education from 45 to 450. This increase has been matched by appropriate levels of staffing and resources. The College has developed programmes based on its teaching strengths and on meeting the needs of employers in the area. Its Higher Education Centre opened in 2014.

The last review QAA review (April 2011) identified areas of good practice, including making use of partnership networks and university links to draw on good practice, develop internal monitoring and provide a range of relevant assessments. It also included the work of the Curriculum Leadership Programme for staff development and the involvement of employers. The College continues to build on these good practices. The desirable recommendation regarding the academic infrastructure has been addressed by thorough engagement with the Quality Code.

Explanation of the findings about Halesowen College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College offers a wide range of higher education programmes at Levels 4, 5 and 6, approved through the University of Worcester, Newman University and the awarding organisation Pearson. The partnerships with the universities are regulated by partnership agreements. These agreements outline the collaborative arrangements that the College must operate in with regard to quality assurance, maintaining academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. Ultimately, it is the universities and Pearson who are responsible for setting academic standards, together with clear and transparent learning outcomes. They also ensure each qualification is allocated to the appropriate level on *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and meets relevant Subject Benchmark Statements for all subject areas. They are also responsible for ensuring that the programme aims and intended learning outcomes for assessment and awards are clearly outlined for students and staff.

1.2 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.3 The review team tested this Expectation through meetings with staff and a review of partnership agreements, programme specifications and external examiner reports. The team confirmed that the responsibilities for ensuring that qualifications are set at the appropriated

level of the FHEQ rest with the universities and Pearson. External examiners reports confirm programmes are set at the correct level and take account of the qualification descriptors and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.4 All programme specifications and student handbooks provide detailed information of the external reference points taken into consideration when developing programmes, such as the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.5 All programmes are managed by the College through the partnership agreements and the management of internal quality assurance procedures. For Pearson programmes the College makes use of Pearson's Centre Guide to Assessment Levels 4 to 7.

1.6 The College has developed its own internal quality assurance systems. It operates a cycle of annual monitoring whereby annual reports are produced by the programme leaders. These reports consider comments made by external examiners regarding the maintenance of academic standards and reference points. In the case of the awarding universities this may also involve link tutors. This process enables the College to monitor the management of its higher education programmes and to ensure programmes are positioned at the appropriate level.

1.7 The awarding universities use programme annual review, external examiner and link tutor reports to assure themselves that the College is maintaining academic standards. Pearson monitors academic standards through its academic management review and external examiner reports. No major issues have been identified in either of these reports.

1.8 The review team found that the College has appropriate mechanisms and procedures in place that take account of reference points for the maintenance of academic standards on behalf of its awarding bodies and organisation. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.9 The College is responsible for following its awarding universities' processes and procedures set out in academic handbooks and regulations. The universities and Pearson are responsible for ensuring the relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements are incorporated into module learning outcomes and assessments, which are confirmed at validation and revised at periodic review events held every five years.

1.10 For Pearson programmes the College has developed Quality Manual policies and procedures for assessment that include quality assurance arrangements and the operation of examination boards that meet the requirements of the awarding organisation.

1.11 Programme handbooks make appropriate reference to College and awarding universities' academic regulations and procedures, relevant academic frameworks, programme structures and learning outcomes. Programme handbooks are located on the College virtual learning environment (VLE).

1.12 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.13 The review team considered the Expectation through the evaluation of partnership agreements, validation documents and procedures, programme monitoring arrangements and committee structures, and in discussions with staff.

1.14 The College has its own internal structures to manage the quality of all its higher education provision. There is a dedicated higher education team, led by the Higher Education Director and supported by a Higher Education Manager. The team is responsible for the strategic planning and implementation of higher education within the College, as well as having oversight of the academic cycle, academic standards and quality of learning opportunities.

1.15 It is the responsibility of Curriculum Team Managers to have oversight for the performance of staff and students as part of the academic remit. The Higher Education Director meets with curriculum managers and faculty directors at faculty boards and reports to the Director of Learning and Teaching.

1.16 Programme handbooks make appropriate reference to both the College and universities' relevant academic frameworks, regulations, policies and procedures. Programme structures assessment and learning outcomes are outlined in detail.

1.17 The College works effectively with the universities and Pearson to ensure that programme specifications reflect the academic frameworks and employs these regulations in accordance with the partnership agreements. The College faculty boards, academic boards and the Higher Education Board, which report to the Learning and Teaching Quality Team and the senior executive team, are effective in the governance and management of standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.18 All awards approved by the universities and Pearson follow their respective internal validation processes. The universities and Pearson ensure that programme aims, learning outcomes, assessment strategies and descriptors include explicit reference to the frameworks for higher education.

1.19 The information is set out in programme specifications, which provide the framework for the College to manage its delivery and assessment of the programmes it delivers on behalf of the universities and Pearson.

1.20 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.21 The review team met students and staff at the College and reviewed partnership agreements, programme specifications and policy documentation.

1.22 The College keeps a record of its programmes in a digital prospectus, available through its website. It is also available in printed format, ensuring that amendments are reflected immediately on the website and propagate to printed versions of documentation.

1.23 The College's Higher Education Assessment Policy provides internal guidance to College staff to ensure they are compliant with the assessment strategies of the universities and Pearson, approved during programme validation and set out in the programme specifications. External examiner reports confirm that the College is maintaining the standards of the higher education programmes it is delivering.

1.24 There is a definitive record of each higher education programme delivered by the College, and there are processes in place to ensure that the College is meeting the requirements of the universities and Pearson. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.25 The universities and Pearson have responsibility for the development, preparation and approval of the programmes delivered on their behalf by the College.

1.26 During the development of programmes, external consultations are held to ensure that the programmes meet sector skills and knowledge needs, and comply with subject and qualification benchmark statements. Programme module specifications record delivery content, credit rating, learning outcomes, assessment and grading criteria, and identified transferable skills. The approval of programmes is governed by the universities and Pearson's academic regulations. The College has greater autonomy in the delivery of its Pearson qualifications, which is directly funded.

1.27 College partnership arrangements with the universities ensure that programme teams comply with the quality assurance processes and procedures as outlined in their academic handbooks and academic regulations. The College is compliant with Pearson's quality assurance processes in line with BTEC centre guidance Levels 4 to 7.

1.28 The College's Higher Education Strategy clearly sets out its mission, aims and aspirations for its higher education provision. The need to meet specific local employment skills and associated underpinning knowledge has led to the development of programmes in particular discipline areas, for example the Early Years sector and Pearson Higher National qualifications in order to support the delivery of Higher Level Apprenticeships. The College's Higher Education Assessment Policy incorporates pertinent information from Pearson's BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment Levels 4 to 7.

1.29 The College's Quality Manual sets out robust procedures for higher education programme approval procedures. An integral part of the internal approval procedure process is rigorous consultation with employers to ensure that programme design and module selection meets employment sector skills and knowledge needs. Pearson Higher National programmes provide the College with the opportunity to construct the programme of study through the delivery of mandatory and selected optional programme specification modules.

1.30 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.31 The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with College senior managers, university representatives and teaching staff, and by reviewing the College's self-evaluation document submitted for this report and accompanying evidence, and additional evidence presented to the team during the review visit.

1.32 The programmes approved by the universities are time-constrained and subject to periodic review. The universities and the College, with other franchise collaborative partners, participate in the periodic review process. Programmes undergoing periodic review are the subject of a series of meetings involving the College, universities, external examiners, employers and other stakeholders in order to ensure the relevance and validity of the programme itself, and module content. The processes of validation and periodic review are

understood by College staff. The universities hold strategic partnership meetings, which enable the ongoing monitoring of their programmes with respect to quality assurance and currency.

1.33 It is the College's intention to carry out an internal periodic review of its Pearson Higher National qualifications at the point in time that Pearson initiates the review and (re)validation of its Higher National qualifications.

1.34 The College, universities and Pearson have robust procedures in place to implement processes for the approval of taught programmes, which ensure that academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification. The procedures are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations. The College's internal documentation and procedures ensure that it is compliant with the universities and Pearson's procedures.

1.35 The College works effectively with the universities and Pearson regarding the approval of its taught programmes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.36 The universities and Pearson are responsible for ensuring the academic standards of their programmes, individual modules, learning outcomes and assessment strategies comply with the FHEQ, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and professional benchmarks, and the Quality Code. The College is diligent in applying the academic standards and module guidance as defined by the universities and Pearson to the quality assurance, delivery and assessment of the programmes it delivers on their behalf.

1.37 Module assessment strategies and learning outcomes for all programmes are underpinned by the FHEQ level descriptors and approved as part of the universities and Pearson's validation processes. External examiner reports confirm that assignment briefs provide students with assessment activities that enable their achievement of module learning outcomes. Pearson Higher National qualification assignment briefs provide the College with more flexibility in contextualising assessment activities to the learning outcomes in order to reflect local employer and employment skills and knowledge-development needs. Pearson Higher National assignment briefs are internally verified prior to release to students. Teaching staff and students are provided with guidance regarding the weighting of learning outcomes and credit value, which is set out in programme specifications and handbooks.

1.38 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.39 The review team tested the College's arrangements to ensure students achieved module learning outcomes by reviewing assessment activity; the universities and Pearson's own academic standards; College and universities' policies and procedures; programme handbooks and module specifications; external examiner reports; and a range of assessment-related evidence provided by the College. The review team met senior, teaching and support staff, and had discussions with students, employers and alumni.

1.40 The College is diligent in implementing the process of internal second marking for the universities' programmes, in accordance with the College's Higher Education Assessment Policy, and the universities' academic regulations. The universities externally moderate assessment outcomes through partnership meetings comprising university and franchise partner college team members.

1.41 External examiner reports confirm that assessment strategies and assessment outcomes comply with Pearson's BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment Levels 4 to 7, the key elements of which are mirrored in the College's Higher Education Assessment Policy. There is internal monitoring of assessment activity through a cycle of assignment-brief and assignment-evidence internal verification. Assessment grading criteria is published by the universities and Pearson for use on their programmes. The College is compliant with the relevant grading criteria during the assessment process.

1.42 Student achievement is confirmed through assessment boards. The College provides explicitly clear and detailed information for the structure and procedure to be used for Pearson Higher National assessment boards. Examination boards for the universities are held at the College and are attended by a University programme leader and external examiners. A record of the examination board is forwarded to the respective university. External examiners' comments on assessment and second marking, or internal verification, are incorporated into the College's Annual Evaluation Review programme documents for all higher education programmes.

1.43 The College effectively manages its responsibilities in ensuring that assessment activities meet module learning outcomes and credit allocation for the programmes it delivers on behalf of the universities and Pearson. The assessed assignment evidence meets UK threshold standards and FHEQ level descriptors. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.44 The College manages its higher education provision through its curriculum areas. The College's Higher Education Strategy guides the expansion and oversight of its higher education provision through ensuring that higher education is matched to local employer skills and knowledge needs. This approach aids the College in identifying deficits in skills and providing programmes to meet employer needs at an appropriate level.

1.45 There is an effective College committee and reporting structure to monitor termly and annual programme delivery, and quality assurance and student achievement. Course management committees meet termly and are attended by programme team members and student representatives. Good practice is discussed at these meetings and shared across teaching teams through the use of the College's online facility. Minutes from course management meetings are circulated to relevant faculty directors and the Higher Education Manager. The Higher Education Board receives the minutes of course management meetings and monitors matters arising, as well as considering operational and quality assurance issues. The Higher Education Board reports to the Learning and Teaching Quality Team meeting. Senior Management Team meetings and the Corporation Board maintain a robust oversight of higher education programmes. Termly curriculum area meetings provide the opportunity for senior managers to monitor actions identified on Annual Evaluation Review reports, review programme performance and key performance indicators.

1.46 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.47 The review team considered the processes in place at the College for the monitoring and review of programmes by reviewing: the implementation of procedures set out in the College's Quality Manual; student surveys; module evaluation feedback; focus group reports; completed Annual Evaluation Review documentation; the Higher Education Self-Assessment Report; and university link tutor reports. The review of this documentation is supported by discussions with the Principal, Senior, Teaching and Support staff, university representatives and higher education students.

1.48 There is an annual monitoring of the higher education programmes delivered by the College through the Annual Evaluation Review process. The Quality Manual provides clear guidance on the implementation of the annual review of College programmes. Programme-level Annual Evaluation Reviews consider a wide range of information, including external examiner comments; retention and achievement data; progression data; student feedback; learning and teaching assessment strategies; programme resources; and, for franchised programmes, the management links between the College and the respective university. Annual monitoring reports also discuss good practice and areas for further development.

1.49 All Annual Evaluation Reviews, and their associated action plans, are shared within the College and with universities. External examiners' reports and the Pearson Centre Review Reports confirm that the College's internal process of annual self-assessment processes are robust. The programme-level Annual Evaluation Reviews include student feedback from, for example, College-wide surveys, module evaluations and student focus

groups. The College's annual Higher Education Self-Assessment Report is produced from the outcomes of Annual Evaluation Review reports and is referred to the College Executive. The Higher Education Self-Assessment Report is mapped against Quality Code themes; and identified actions are monitored by the Learning and Teaching Quality Team.

1.50 The universities' link tutors prepare an annual report, which is submitted to the universities and subject to internal university review. Strategic partnership meetings provide the opportunity for College senior managers (for example the Principal, Higher Education Director, Higher Education Manager, and heads of quality and curriculum heads) to contribute to discussions on programme quality, the student experience, staff feedback and developmental issues.

1.51 Each university partner has a prescribed cycle for the periodic review of the programmes it has validated. College staff participate in the periodic review of franchised programmes delivered at the College. Pearson retains authority for the periodic review of its Higher National qualifications.

1.52 The College has comprehensive and effective procedures in place to ensure that the programmes it delivers on behalf of its university partners and Pearson meet UK threshold academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.53 The College has well-established design and approval mechanisms for modules, programmes and qualifications. Programme teams work closely with the universities in order to ensure academic standards are set at a level that meets UK threshold standards. In programme design, modules and programmes are developed based upon identified skill needs through links with employers, subject specialists and professional bodies. The universities' link tutors work with the College on the development of the curriculum, assessment strategies and learning outcomes. Within these approval arrangements independent external academic and industry-facing advisers also provide input into this process.

1.54 All Pearson HNC/D provision is reviewed annually as part of the College's Curriculum Area Review process, to ensure programmes remain relevant and at the required standard.

1.55 Partnership programmes with the universities undergo a periodic review every five years. As part of this process the views of students and employers are considered, which influences the validity, content and relevance of new programmes.

1.56 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.57 The review team evaluated the College's use of external expertise that assures standards are being maintained by evaluating validation documentation and external examiners' reports. In addition, the team also discussed externality with College staff, university staff and employers.

1.58 Externality in relation to the setting and maintenance of academic standards is the responsibility of the College's awarding universities and Pearson. Each awarding partner appoints external examiners. External examiners play an important role in ensuring academic standards are being met and comparable with national standards.

1.59 Each curriculum area has significant links with employers. To provide externality curriculum teams invite employers to employer forums, where their views are sought when designing redesigning curriculum. This consultation process was used when designing and structuring the HNC in Engineering, and ensured the programme content would meet the needs of local employers and develop the appropriate skills for students and enhance their employability prospects.

1.60 Examination boards are held for all higher education programmes annually, which are attended by the Higher Education Director, Higher Education Manager and academic staff. Examination boards relating to the College's University partnership provision will have the external examiner and University link tutor in attendance. Each examination board confirms students' marks are subsequently forwarded to the awards board.

1.61 The College makes use of its Higher Education Assessment Policy to ensure the management of threshold academic standards. Through the internal moderation process the College internally verifies and samples students' assessed work, ensuring that assessment decisions are fair and consistent. External examiner reports comment favourably that the College higher education course team's assessment practice, marking and arrangements for internal moderation are appropriate and meet the requirements of awarding body regulations.

1.62 The review team found that the College makes effective use of a range of external and independent expertise. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.64 The College effectively follows the requirements of the universities and Pearson to maintain academic standards. These processes are supported by the College's own internal procedures and guidance.

1.65 All seven of the Expectations in this area are met and the level of associated risk is low. The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations at the College **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 The College's development of its higher education provision is guided by the College's Higher Education Strategy 2011-15 and the overriding College Strategic Plan 2015-20. The universities and Pearson retain responsibility for developing and validating the programmes. The College's internal approval procedures are robust. There is a thorough review of proposed programme management, staffing and resourcing. The approval process pays particular attention to employer needs and student progression opportunities.

2.2 Approval procedures ensure that proposed programmes meets the requirements of the FHEQ level descriptors, the Quality Code and relevant Subject Benchmarks Statements. Proposals articulate a business case and identify resources necessary to support module and programme delivery. The universities involve their collaborative partnership programme teams in the revalidation of programmes. Programme specifications approved during the approval process define programme and module learning outcomes, assessment and grading criteria, and approaches to teaching and learning.

2.3 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.4 The review team tested the Expectation through a review of evidence in the self-evaluation document, submitted to QAA as part of this review, including College and Higher Education Strategic Plans, the Quality Manual, university validation documentation for programmes delivered on their behalf at the College, programme specifications, partnership agreements, and minutes of meetings. The team also met the Principal, and senior, teaching and support staff.

2.5 This process enables the College to fulfil its strategic aims to provide higher education opportunities for its further education cohort and the local communities of Dudley, Sandwell and West Birmingham. The College's collaborative partnerships have been developed to provide progression routes to full degree programmes at the universities. The College also seeks to develop programmes that meet regional and local employer needs through the development of higher level employer-required skills and knowledge. An integral aspect of this strategic aim is the College's commitment to delivering Higher Level Apprenticeships and foundation degrees. Employer engagement in the programme approval and design process ensures that module selection enables students to gain specific employment related skills and knowledge, which is further developed when students undertake work experience activities.

2.6 Proposals for new higher education programmes, or for major amendments to an existing programme of study, follow prescribed procedures and completion of College documentation set out in the Quality Manual. Proposed new programmes must meet the curriculum development objectives with respect to employer engagement, serving the needs of the local community and student progression as set out in the College's Higher Education Strategic Plan. Academic peers review the programme team's new programme proposal at

the Course Approval Board. The faculty director and the Higher Education Director present the proposal to the Learning and Teaching Quality Team. Following consideration by the Learning and Teaching Quality Team, a written report is prepared. The funding of identified resources required to support the new programme form part of the approval process. The College Executive monitors and reviews the conduct and outcomes of the Course Approval Board. There is a written appeals procedure against a Course Approval Board decision.

2.7 The College's internal programme approvals process ensures that the aims and objectives of the College's Higher Education Strategic Plan forms an integral element in the development of the College's higher education provision. The review team found that the College has effective processes in place to ensure that its internal programme approval procedures consider all aspects of launching and revising programmes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.8 The College has a higher education specific admissions policy, which details its recruitment and selection procedures. It includes an emphasis on transparency, fairness and inclusivity. There are procedures on providing feedback to applicants. An annual review of the policy takes place and application data is monitored as part of this review.

2.9 The policy includes the Pearson Higher National programme entry requirements. Applicants for these programmes apply directly to the College, with the progress of part-time applicants tracked using the College's I-tracker. UCAS is used for full-time students. The College acknowledges that applicants for university programmes apply to the universities through UCAS and are admitted to their programmes in accordance with the relevant university regulations. A specialist member of College staff, the Student Adviser (Progression and Employment), is responsible for higher education applications. The College works closely with the universities.

2.10 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.11 The review team tested the College's approach to recruitment, selection and admission by carrying out an analysis of its documentation and through discussions with students and staff.

2.12 All applicants for part-time programmes and some full-time applicants are interviewed. Applicants may follow the College's general complaints procedure if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of their application, although there have been no complaints to date. Programme leaders are responsible for providing an induction to both their programmes and the College. College staff receive enrolment training as part of their continuing professional development.

2.13 The majority of students met by the review team stated that their inductions were effective, although some stated that they received an induction to their programmes only and not to the College services. Students found College open days to be particularly helpful. The process is fair, reliable, valid and inclusive.

2.14 A few students stated that the induction process could be improved, and noted in particular that those who cannot attend the induction event struggle to find the information. The College is currently reviewing its induction processes to ensure that they meet the needs of part-time students. An adult learner guide has recently been produced and a survey has been carried out on admissions. The responses are currently being analysed with a view to developing an action plan.

2.15 The review team found that the College's recruitment, selection and admission processes are transparent, reliable, valid and inclusive. The process is underpinned by an efficient organisational arrangements. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.16 The Higher Education Strategy states that one of the key strategic objectives is to provide students with an outstanding teaching, learning and support experience that is a model of excellence in the delivery of higher education within further education. The College reviews its teaching and learning strategy annually, with a focus on strategies that improve the quality of teaching and learning and highlights best practice.

2.17 The College places significant emphasis on the quality of teaching and learning by providing staff with a wide range of internal and external opportunities to undertake continuing professional development activities. There is a detailed staff training and development policy in place that demonstrates a strong commitment by the College's Senior Management Team to continually provide training and development opportunities for higher education staff in order to meet the College's higher education strategic aims and objectives. An annual staff training and development plan is produced, which is informed by feedback from the staff appraisal process, team meetings and targets set within the College's Quality Improvement Plan. Staff development activities have a range of strands that encompasses staff induction, mentoring, attainment of qualifications and scholarly activity, and professional and vocational updating. Strategic oversight of the College training and development plan rests with the Director of Learning and Teaching.

2.18 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.19 The review team examined this Expectation through meetings with staff and students and reviewed a wide range of documentation, including policies, programme monitoring and institutional reports, validation and periodic review reports, course handbooks and minutes of meetings.

2.20 There is a strong formal teaching observation process in place to monitor and enhance the quality of teaching and learning practices. The cycle of lesson observation informs the performance appraisal process. All higher education staff are observed at least once in the course of an academic year. Newly appointed staff during the probationary period will be observed three times in a year. The lesson observation criteria is currently mapped to the further education professional standards and the Ofsted inspection framework. The College intends to align its observation criteria to the Higher Education Academy's UK Professional Standards Framework.

2.21 Programme teams review learning and teaching through the annual review process. These reports include the analysis of student feedback, module evaluations, achievement data and external examiners reports. Oversight of these reports rests with the programme team leader, curriculum manager and the Higher Education Director. Within this process staff qualifications and experience are reviewed to ensure they can meet the appropriate teaching and learning standards set by the universities. There has been a considerable growth in student numbers and programmes since 2011. There has been a corresponding robust staff development programme to ensure that the quality of learning and teaching has been developed. This has led to significant numbers of staff undertaking relevant higher

level qualifications at undergraduate and postgraduate level in subject specific areas and teaching qualifications. The review team considers the strategic approach to the implementation of higher education staff development to be **good practice**.

2.22 The College places a great emphasis on the quality of teaching and learning on all higher education programmes. All members of teaching staff are expected to hold or be working towards a formal teaching qualification. To support staff in gaining appropriate qualifications they are provided with remission from their teaching timetable to enable them to achieve the necessary qualifications.

2.23 In addition, the Higher Education Director and Higher Education Manager operate a weekly session for staff that offers short and bespoke training. Academic staff confirmed that they found these sessions extremely beneficial to their teaching and management practice within higher education, and provided examples of topics covered, such as the Quality Code and enhancing the student.

2.24 College staff take-up continuing professional development opportunities made available by the universities. At a recent partnership review with the University of Worcester, the review panel commended College staff for the level of participation in continuous professional development and research opportunities in a process of ongoing staff development. A recent initiative that has been introduced in the College to support teaching staff and students is subject librarians liaising with University librarians, as is the case with the Early Years programme. This dialogue has enabled appropriate signposting of up-to-date and contemporary learning resources to staff and students. In addition, a number of College programmes, such as the FdA Early Years and the Diploma in Education and Training, are part of a University collaborative consortium, and annually have the opportunity to share good practice with colleagues from other institutions. The College's strategic approach to learning and teaching, and its arrangements for programme review and self-assessment reports, would allow the College to meet this Expectation.

2.25 Students from the FdA Early Years programme raised some concerns about staffing on their course. These included staff leaving in the first year and, in some cases, staff not being able to cover classes. There were also issues with lost, and the late return of, student work, which was very disruptive at the time. However, over the last two years, the College has taken action to resolve these concerns. It continues to monitor the programme and has strengthened its staff appointment processes. The review team **affirms** the steps taken to ensure the quality of the student learning experience on the FdA Early Years programme.

2.26 The College provides effective support for student learning and achievement. Individual support for students and their entitlements are clearly set out in the Higher Education Strategy, and in module and course handbooks. All students participate in a weekly timetabled tutorial that focuses on enabling students to develop independent learning skills through personal development planning, academic writing, and referencing and research skills. In addition, course teams make effective use of the VLE as a learning and development resource for students. Student confirmed to the review team that they found these resources to be of a good quality and beneficial in supporting them in their studies.

2.27 The review team found that the College has a comprehensive and strategic approach in managing the quality of learning and teaching, and supports students effectively. The staff development strategy plays a key role in ensuring the quality of learning and teaching. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.28 The College's Strategic Plan defines its commitment in ensuring students are well prepared for progression to higher education, or for successful careers that contribute to the economic, social and cultural well-being of the region. This strategy places students at the forefront, and gives recognition to the individual needs of learners and the support that they require to ensure high levels of performance, attainment and achievement.

2.29 Before a higher education programme is developed by the College consideration is given to the needs of students, and the local and regional economy in terms of progression and employment opportunities. Programme development discussions are held at a number of forums, such as within the Curriculum Area Review process, or by the Learning and Teaching Quality Team prior to any approach being made to the higher education institution partner. Through careful strategic planning with the universities the College has enabled progression Level 6 top-up opportunities, such as in Early Years, and Business and Media Production.

2.30 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.31 The review team tested the Expectation by meeting senior staff, teaching staff, employers and students. In addition, annual monitoring reports, policies, minutes of meetings and strategic documents were examined.

2.32 The College makes effective use of the representative system and committee meetings to enhance the provision and quality of learning opportunities. Programme committee meetings and surveys give students the opportunity to discuss and raise matters directly with course teams. These mechanisms and associated feedback have led to improvements in better computer facilities, improved admissions and enrolment processes, and modification of assessment.

2.33 All students are provided with a well-structured induction: the College has clear arrangements for inducting students and supporting their transition to higher education. Students are given a College programme handbook, which provides broad information about regulations, assessment and curriculum content. During induction, students are introduced to the VLE, learning resource centres and personal support services.

2.34 Each programme has a dedicated VLE area, which allows for greater support to be provided to students. Students can access handbooks, module records, assignment briefs, reading lists and assignments, and have remote access at any time. Students studying for university awards have access to the universities' learning resources and VLE. All students confirmed to the review team that they found the VLE resources to be very helpful in supporting their learning and development.

2.35 There is a wide range of support services available to students. The careers centre staff provide expert advice and guidance to students who wish to progress to higher education. Students confirmed to the review team that the careers service is extremely beneficial, providing ongoing support in interview techniques, UCAS applications, interviews and preparing Higher Apprenticeship applications. The Personal Skills Development and Support Team proactively engages with students to support their development and learning. This support is individual and flexible. Students commented favourably on the learning

support that is available on request, such as study skills and additional maths. They also confirmed that they are screened at interview and induction in order to establish any disability or learning needs.

2.36 All students receive a weekly tutorial with a dedicated tutor who maintains records of students' performance and progress. Students receive appropriate and detailed information through induction, module and course handbooks, schemes of work and tutorials. Tutorials enable student development, as they focus on study skills, academic writing and referencing, researching skills and personal development planning. Personal tutors also support students on pastoral issues, as well as progression opportunities and career advice.

2.37 The College has invested significantly in its estates and resources to support its higher education provision. In collaboration with the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership the College has invested significantly in higher technological resources at the Coombs Wood Campus as part of a science and technology project. These new laboratory resources contribute significantly to the learning and development of students in the areas of computing and the creative industries. The College has recently invested in a state-of-the-art engineering training facility that supports teaching and learning for students in areas of component design and production, materials testing, fabrication, power products, fluid dynamics and manufacturing. The review team consider the investment in technology and facilities in computing, engineering and creative industries, which contributes significantly to the quality of students' learning opportunities, to be **good practice**.

2.38 There is a university Higher Education Centre, which has been purpose built for students. This is a dedicated open plan area for independent study, resourced with computers, tablet computers, and full 'bring your own device' connectivity. Students confirmed to the review team that this was an extremely valuable learning resource that supported their learning and development. They did, however, express some frustration of not being able to gain access to the Centre due to other students occupying the space and resources. The review team **recommends** that the College continue to monitor the use of higher education resources to ensure higher education students are prioritised.

2.39 The review team assessed the arrangements in place for enabling students' development and achievement, and found them to be comprehensive and effective. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.40 The College places an emphasis on continuous improvement of student engagement in its Higher Education Strategy. It has a number of student engagement processes across its provision.

2.41 Student Academic Representatives are elected for university programmes and receive training from the university. The College has recently introduced training for student representatives on its Pearson courses.

2.42 The College has a Quality Cycle, in which opportunities for student engagement have been identified. These include the attendance of student representatives at committee meetings, input from student surveys and student voice focus groups.

2.43 Module evaluation surveys are organised by programme leaders. Survey results are used to produce action plans, following discussion among senior staff, and at Learning and Teaching Quality Team meetings. Progress on the action plan is checked at focus groups with students.

2.44 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.45 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's student engagement processes and procedures by reviewing its documentation on policy, as well as examples of student feedback, including associated action plans. The team also met staff and students.

2.46 Programme committee meetings have a standing agenda item for student feedback. The College recognises that due to the nature of its part-time provision, student representatives may not always be able to attend the meetings. When this is the case, the programme leader meets with the student representative at a suitable time ahead of the committee meeting in order to allow student feedback to be discussed at the meeting. Students may also provide written comments to the committee in the event that they cannot attend.

2.47 Students met by the review team stated that they receive programme evaluation surveys and a College end-of-year evaluation survey. Students have the opportunity to raise issues at weekly meetings as well as student voice focus groups.

2.48 The College makes students aware of changes made as a result of their feedback using a 'You Said, We Did' approach, as well as through the student representatives. Some of the students were aware that action plans were produced by the College based on their feedback. In general, students feel that the College takes their views seriously and acts upon them effectively.

2.49 The College consults students during programme development. Although students met by the review team stated that they had not been directly involved in a programme design consultation, they were aware that the feedback they provide through surveys and student representatives would be taken into account during the design of new programmes.

2.50 The review team found that the College's approach to student engagement is robust and inclusive. Students consider themselves as partners with the ability to contribute to their experience, with the understanding that the College considers their feedback. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that 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

2.51 The universities provide clear and transparent guidance in their respective academic regulations for the management of assessment and assessment moderation. Pearson's BTEC Guide to Assessment Levels 4 to 7 provides the framework for the assessment and internal verification of the College's HNC/D programmes. External examiner reports confirm that the College complies with the universities and Pearson's requirements for assessment and feedback. Assessment criteria permit, if required, the contextualisation of assessment activity to work-based or work-related scenarios. Programme specifications and handbooks set out the intended learning outcomes for each programme and module, with clear assessment requirements.

2.52 The College's Higher Education Assessment Policy, guidance and process is comprehensive in its coverage of assessment processes. The policy is aligned to the FHEQ and Quality Code and makes clear reference for the need of programmes to comply with the universities and Pearson assessment regulations. Assessment regulations for all higher education programmes are set out in programme handbooks. The handbooks also contain information on, for example, grading criteria, submission procedures, good academic practice, migrating circumstances and late submission. The policy also provides clear guidance on appeal processes, adjustments for disabled students and recognition of prior learning.

2.53 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.54 The review team tested the Expectation through a review of external examiner reports, minutes of meetings, policies and procedures, samples of assessment briefs, student scripts and feedback to students, Pearson internal verification schedules and schemes of work, programme handbooks, and a wide-ranging sample of assignment feedback evidence made available during the review. The team also met university representatives, senior managers, teaching staff, support staff and students from across the range of higher education programmes. The team also attended a demonstration of the College's VLE to monitor the content of programme and module content as it related to assessment activity.

2.55 Assessment of partnership university programmes are managed in accordance with the individual university academic regulations. The validity and reliability of assessment strategies are reviewed and approved during the approval process, and monitored on an annual basis by external examiners. There are robust procedures in place for the second marking or internal verification of student assignments. Both universities use their strategic partnership meetings to carry out external moderation of assessment with their collaborative partner colleges. The College has an embedded and robust internal verification procedure in place to monitor academic standards and tutor feedback on Higher National programmes, in accordance with the BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment Levels 4 to 7 and the College's Higher Education Assessment Policy, guidance and process. Overall, external examiners comment favourably on the standard and accuracy of assessment and the quality of feedback to students.

2.56 The College's Assessment Policy guidance and process document contains information on the procedures to be followed should a prospective or existing student wish to implement recognition of prior learning procedures. Teaching staff report that no student has initiated the procedures to demonstrate prior achievement through this process.

2.57 The universities share the setting of assignments with the College programme teams. Assessment activities set against learning outcomes are approved as part of university (re)validation processes. College teaching staff are responsible for drafting and internally verifying assignment briefs, and internally verifying assessed assignments for their Pearson Higher National programmes. Oversight of the Higher National assignment briefs is managed by appointed Pearson external examiners. The external examiner for the Higher Nationals in Music noted that assignment briefs were 'stimulating and challenging'. Students expressed satisfaction with the range of assignment activities. Students in a work-based environment, or on an approved placement, are required to demonstrate the achievement of a range of competencies, certified by a placement supervisor. These competencies, in and of themselves, do not form part of the programme assessment process, but may be incorporated into, and form part of, the evidence for a module set assessment activity, such as a reflective practice record.

2.58 Assessment grading criteria are designed and approved by the respective university partners and Pearson. The grading criteria for each programme are set out in the programme handbooks, and are also available to students on the College's VLE. With only a few exceptions students reported that they found the grading criteria clear and transparent. However, a minority of students have experienced some confusion in understanding how to achieve higher assignment grades and have sought additional guidance on interpreting grading criteria from their module lecturers.

2.59 Overall, students expressed satisfaction with the timeliness and constructive nature of the formative and summative assignment feedback they receive. Assessment marking and feedback to students meets university and Pearson requirements. External examiner reports confirm that, with only a few exceptions where feedback was brief, feedback to students across all programmes was constructive and supportive. The review team noted some excellent examples of detailed assessment feedback to students from the Computing and Sports programme teams, which clearly identified student achievement and provided constructive guidance for the further development of both skills and knowledge. Good practice in assessment is shared at programme level and at Higher Education Board meetings.

2.60 Third-year students on the FdA Early Years had some negative experiences with respect to the timeliness of return of assessed work in years 1 and 2, and a loss of assignments during electronic uploading to the University of Worcester for external moderation. Working in partnership, the University of Worcester and the College confirmed the grades of the lost assignments at the 2013-14 assessment board. A change of programme leadership and staff resulted in the return of all outstanding assessed student scripts from Year 1, and some from Year 2 of the students' part-time programme. The College and the University of Worcester are continuing to work closely together in order to enhance the learning experience of Early Years students. Despite some early-in-programme negative experiences, the Year 3 FdA Early Years students stated that they wished to progress from the top-up to full-degree programme.

2.61 The College has installed plagiarism-detection software, which students can access via the College's VLE. However, the plagiarism-detection software is not embedded in student practice as an aid to managing and developing good academic writing skills. There is a lack of awareness among higher education students of the availability of the plagiarism-detection software, its function or how to use it. Teaching staff across all higher education

programmes do not routinely encourage its use. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College ensure that students have access to resources that prevent unacceptable academic practice.

2.62 Student progression, achievement and issues that have affected student performance and achievement are discussed at assessment boards. The universities retain responsibility for managing the assessment boards, which are attended by College programme representatives. The College provides clear guidance for the management of its Pearson Higher National assessment boards through its Assessment Board Process document, which provides clear and transparent guidance to programme teams. The terms of reference for the College's assessment board ensure that the progress and achievement of all students are given due consideration.

2.63 The review team found that the College ensures that students are assessed by an equitable, valid and reliable process, including the recognition of prior learning. The review team concludes that the Expectation 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

2.64 The College regards external examiners as playing a crucial role in the management of academic standards and quality of opportunities. The College responds to external examiner reports in a timely and effective way. External examiners are appointed by the universities and Pearson in line with partnership agreements and Pearson's BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment Levels 4 to 7.

2.65 The programme teams liaise with all external examiners to arrange visits to review assessment materials, and for general advice and guidance relating to assessment strategies. The induction and briefing of external examiners is undertaken by the universities. The Higher Education Director is expected to consider the reports, which are subsequently required to be considered at programme team meetings with students representatives in attendance.

2.66 Programme teams respond formally in writing to all external examiners. This response identifies how the teams intend to address any actions that have been raised in the form of an action plan. This action plan is forwarded to the universities through the link tutors. The action plans inform the annual review process.

2.67 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met

2.68 The review team tested this Expectation through meetings with staff and students and by examining external examiners' reports, partnership agreements, responsibility checklists, minutes of meetings, and course annual course review reports

2.69 External examiner reports considered by the review team confirm that the academic standards achieved by students are at the appropriate and expected level, and that assessment processes used to measure student achievement are rigorous. External examiner reports also confirm that the College has appropriate and effective moderation, and administrative tracking procedures in place.

2.70 The College encourages external examiners to be involved throughout the year and to meet staff and students when they visit the College. For university programmes the external examiner attends the examination boards and comments on issues relating to academic standards and assessment practice.

2.71 Staff confirmed to the review team that external examiners have access to all student assessments and visit all programme teams annually. External examiner reports are submitted to the Higher Education Director and subsequently distributed to programme teams for discussion. The College responds to external examiner reports, and actions are set out and monitored through annual reports. The Higher Education Self-Assessment Report includes external examiners' comments, which are reported and monitored by the College Executive.

2.72 In addition, all programmes are monitored at three points during the year using the Curriculum Area Review process. This involves the faculty director, Curriculum Team Managers and programme leaders, who meet with the Principal, Director of Learning and Teaching, and the Director for Performance and Skills. Part of this review process is to monitor the actions that are required to be addressed as a result of external examiner feedback.

2.73 Students confirmed that, during induction and within programme handbooks, they are aware and informed of the role of external examiners. In addition, students confirm that external examiner reports are available on the VLE.

2.74 The review team found that the College makes scrupulous use of external examiner reports, and that arrangements are in place for the oversight and monitoring of the reports. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.75 The College uses a variety of mechanisms to monitor and evaluate programmes, from module evaluations to a Higher Education Annual Monitoring Report, which is considered at the Corporation Board.

2.76 There is a robust cycle of programme monitoring and review at the College, which incorporates internal and external evaluation processes for franchised university programmes and a rigorous internal cycle of evaluation for Pearson Higher Nationals. The Quality Manual, section 2, provides comprehensive guidance and report templates on the College's annual cycle of programme and self-assessment. Programme leaders operate a rigorous end-of-year evaluation of their programmes, through the Annual Evaluation Review (AER), using a template from the Quality Manual. The evaluation is in the form of a written report, using the Quality Manual template with each AER report. This generates an action plan, which feeds into the Higher Education Self-Assessment Report

2.77 The College has an established Quality Cycle, which sets out the timeline for key quality assurance activities, such as the College's cycle of corporation, Curriculum Area Reviews, quality assurance/programme delivery committee meetings, and the annual self-evaluation process. The Quality Cycle also identifies the points at which cross-College student surveys take place.

2.78 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met

2.79 The review team tested the College's procedures for discharging their responsibilities for programme monitoring and review through an examination of quality documentation, including the Quality Manual, Quality Cycle, self-evaluation templates, Quality Improvement Plans, completed programme level and higher education AERs, and discussions with senior managers, teaching and support staff, university representatives and students.

2.80 Programme delivery and quality assurance issues are initially monitored through discussions at programme level team meetings. Team meetings are attended by the Curriculum Team Manager and student representatives to ensure that student views regularly inform programme development. Each programme team meets at least once a term; set agenda items include programme development, assessment activity, internal verification, external examiner reports and action plans. The College has prepared terms of reference to support the management of team meetings. The minutes of team meetings are sent to the Curriculum Team Manager and the faculty manager.

2.81 Students complete module evaluations, which provide information on, for example, the quality of teaching and the level of challenges in learning, assessment activity and the availability of learning resources. The College is diligent in carrying out a range of internal student surveys to elicit student satisfaction feedback on programme induction, teaching and learning, and course review feedback. In addition, the College runs termly student voice focus groups to further explore survey outcomes and discuss issues of student interest or concern. Final-year students participate in the National Student Survey.

2.82 There is a robust process of annual programme monitoring, through the AERs prepared by programme teams. The reports are evaluative and draw on a wide range of information, such as programme data, student achievement, external examiner reports, cross-College and programme-level surveys, end-of-module questionnaires, information from student-staff consultative meetings, and progress made on addressing issues set out in the previous year's action plan. Franchised university programmes include the link tutor's annual report. The College is diligent in ensuring that the AER process is appropriately informed by the student voice.

2.83 The AERs take due note of the outcomes of the varied sources of student feedback. The College feeds back to students on its responses to student raised concerns through 'You Said, We Did' materials. On completion, the AERs and their associated action plans are peer reviewed by other curriculum areas, and with University partners where appropriate. Copies of the programme-level AERs are sent to the Curriculum Team Manager, faculty director and the Higher Education Director. The AERs feed into the Higher Education Self-Assessment Report, which is mapped to the Quality Code. The Director of Learning and Teaching prepares the College Higher Education Self-Assessment Report and an accompanying Quality Improvement Plan, which addresses areas for improvement and builds on identified strengths. The Corporation Board approves the Report prior to publication.

2.84 Curriculum managers report on progress made in addressing items in their Quality Improvement Plans at the termly Curriculum Area Reviews. With respect to higher education programmes, Curriculum Area Reviews are designed to ensure that middle and senior managers have a detailed knowledge of the quality and standards of programmes, programme data, any issues arising, programme strengths and areas for development. Termly higher education performance reviews provide the College Executive with an overview of in-year performance.

2.85 The review team found that the College's Corporation Board and senior managers have ensured that the College is effectively managing its responsibilities for ensuring that programme monitoring and review is well-organised and effective. There is a clear cycle of reporting processes, which includes student evaluations. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.86 The College has a complaints procedure, although it is not specific to higher education. Students on university programmes raise their complaints with the College in the first instance and may proceed to the relevant university's procedures if they are not satisfied with the outcome. The universities' partnership agreements outline the responsibilities of the College and those of the universities for handling student complaints and appeals.

2.87 Students appealing against an assessment mark use the College's appeals policy. The appeals policy makes clear the valid grounds for appeal. Appeals made by students on university programmes are handled in conjunction with the relevant university. As well as the complaints and appeals policies, information on how to make a complaint or appeal is published in the student handbook.

2.88 Data from complaints is used in the College's Annual Evaluation Reviews, which are used in periodic review processes. The reports also feed into the College's annual Higher Education Self-Assessment Report, from which an action plan is produced.

2.89 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.90 The review team scrutinised evidence provided by the College and met students and staff to assess its implementation of the complaints and appeals procedures.

2.91 Students met by the review team were aware of how to make complaints and appeals. They stated that complaints they raised were often dealt with satisfactorily at an informal stage, without the need to make a formal complaint.

2.92 The students identified their first point of contact for a complaint or appeal as the programme leader. They were aware that their handbooks contained information on the complaints and appeals processes. Students on university programmes stated that they would make their complaint to the College at first before proceeding to their university.

2.93 The review team found that the College has published procedures in place for student complaints and academic appeals, which promote the fair handling of issues raised by students. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.94 The College has responsibility to ensure that effective management arrangements are in place with employers. This also applies to other placement providers where a significant part of students' learning is required to take place in the workplace, in order to meet the learning outcomes of modules, and statutory or professional body requirements.

2.95 Workplace learning and placements are a key part of a wide range of programmes. Foundation degrees have a work-based learning element that require students to be in employment or volunteer in a relevant industry or sector. For these programmes, such as the FdA Early Years and the Diploma in Education and Teaching, work-based learning falls within the remit of the universities' policy on the management of work-based and placement learning. Under the work-based learning policy it is the responsibility of the College to make sure providers of work-based and placement learning are fully informed of their responsibilities, and are given appropriate information support and guidance during and after students work-based learning placement.

2.96 The College has clear procedures for supporting and managing provision with others, including on work placements. Students are responsible for securing their own work placements in the first instance, especially where the identification of placement forms part of the module assessment criteria. Tutors provide a range of advice and guidance based on programme requirements and individual circumstances, and ensure that placements offer suitable learning opportunities. When students experienced difficulties in finding a suitable placement, support is available from the College placement officers, who work with course teams and employers to ensure placements meet academic requirements. The College makes records available to students of local employers that have previously accepted students from the College. The College maintains oversight of placement opportunities through visits and monitoring students during their placement.

2.97 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.98 The review team tested the College's arrangements for supporting and managing provision with others through the scrutiny of programme guides, handbooks and procedures, and in meetings with staff, students and employers.

2.99 The College provides information for employers on work placements, and visits work placements in advance of placements. There is considerable dialogue between the College placement officers and employers in terms of their preparation in receiving students. It is the responsibility of the College work placement officers, supported by the higher education-based learning academic tutors, to ensure all employers receive a full induction. As part of this induction a work placement risk assessment is undertaken, in addition to a detailed assessment of whether the placement provides adequate opportunities to meet the learning outcomes of placement and work-based learning. It is the responsibility of placement officers to ensure student learning agreements and individual learner plans are agreed with employers. In addition, employers receive an employer engagement handbook that provides detailed information of their roles and responsibilities in supporting higher education students during their programme of study.

2.100 Students confirmed that the College provides considerable opportunities through work placement and work-based learning that enables them to develop their employability skills. For example, HND Sports students undertake a work-based experience unit that requires them, as part of the learning outcomes, to negotiate industry experience with their tutors and employers. The HND Health and Social Care students must undertake 200 hours of placement learning, which is a compulsory element of their programme. It is a requirement that students undertake reflective milestone reviews within their placement at interview stage, midpoint and endpoint. This reflection is supported by employer-witnessed statements and reports. All students in work placements are visited twice by the College work placement officers and academic tutors.

2.101 For students undertaking the FdA Early Years, practice-based learning forms a significant proportion of the qualification for students, and takes place within registered Ofsted approved settings. Students are supported during their work-based learning by a designated professional partner who is an employee within the workplace. The professional partner is the student's daily point of contact, who provides advice and support. In addition, the student also receives support from the College's work-based learning tutor and programme leader.

2.102 The College's curriculum teams have strong links with employers. For example, the FdA Music and Business make effective use of industrial links, which creates enhanced learning opportunities for students. An example of this is industry briefs being provided to students. Employers have also contributed to the design of the curriculum, and commissioned video production briefs for students. Students indicate that their work-based learning experience is very beneficial to them, as it develops their employability skills and improves their employment opportunities.

2.103 It was clear from discussions with staff, students and employers that work placement learning is well managed by the College and that all stakeholders are well prepared and supported. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

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

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.105 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.

2.106 The College has effective systems in place for programme approval, admissions, learning and teaching, student support, student engagement, assessment, programme review, complaints and appeals and working with others.

2.107 All 10 expectations are met with low levels of risk. There are two examples of good practice relating to staff development and investment to develop resources in engineering, computing and creative industries. There are two recommendations, one concerning the use of higher education resources, and another concerning the use of resources to prevent academic malpractice. There is one affirmation regarding the actions taken on the FdA Early Years programme.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College has processes in place to ensure that the information for which it is responsible is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The College's programme information is stored in a digital prospectus, which is available on the College website. Amendments are immediately updated on the website. Printed information is produced using the data from the website, ensuring that it is always based on the latest version.

3.2 For Pearson programmes the College is responsible for marketing its programmes to students. The universities are responsible for the creation of programme information and handbooks, and have final approval on any marketing materials being released by the College. The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.3 The review team met members of staff and representatives of the student body, and scrutinised documentation, in order to assess the effectiveness of the College's application of its policies on the quality of its information about learning opportunities.

3.4 The College reviews and updates its public-facing programme information annually. This information is checked by programme leaders, signed off by a senior member of staff, and then reviewed by the marketing team prior to publication. Senior staff work with the universities when publishing information about their programmes.

3.5 The College provides clear admissions and induction information for students. Upon enrolling at the College, students are provided with access to policies and procedures relevant to their programme. Students are made aware of their responsibilities during induction.

3.6 Students found their programme handbooks to be a valuable source of information. A survey carried out among students found that the majority consider the College's website to be user friendly and the information on the website to be up to date.

3.7 External examiner reports are made available to students, however, there was little awareness within the student body of the role of the external examiner. A minority of students met by the review team were aware of the external examiner reports at all.

3.8 An area of the College's VLE is dedicated to higher education, which provides students with access to policies and procedures. Students are consulted when information is prepared and updated. The College is able to produce copies of its information in alternative formats to ease accessibility. The College's Higher Education Strategy, which is available on its website, is a clear statement about its strategic priorities and associated aims and objectives. The College is working to produce guidance to promote and reinforce its policies on the minimum standard of information posted by academic staff on its VLE.

3.9 The review team found that the College's approach to producing information about the quality of learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, and that established procedures are in place to ensure that the information remains accurate and up

to date. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

3.10 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.

3.11 The College has effective systems in place to ensure that information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. It works well with its awarding universities to provide this information.

3.12 The review team concludes that the quality of information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College has a strategic approach to the development and delivery of its higher education provision. There is a Higher Education Strategy 2011-15, with a revised strategy in preparation. The Higher Education Strategy has guided the expansion of the College's provision, with set clear objectives for the expansion of programmes. It is the College's intention to further elaborate its strategic aims and objects for developing, managing and improving the quality of student learning opportunities through the development and implementation of its Enhancement Strategy.

4.2 The College has a systematic approach to embedding the enhancement of student opportunities in its interactions with employers, its quality assurance procedures, and programme design and delivery. Enhancement is an overriding priority for the College's higher education provision. The Enhancement Strategy is currently available in a draft form and is awaiting final evaluation and approval. The Enhancement Strategy uses the QAA definition of enhancement to underpin its objectives in improving and enhancing student learning opportunities. The Strategy emphasises the enhancement of student learning opportunities through: an elaboration of the College's Principles of Enhancement; a commitment to provide students with the highest level of experience with respect to teaching and learning, in order to maximise knowledge and skills to enable personal and professional development; and a commitment to provide excellent support services to enhance individual student learning, and to build the College's external reputation for academic standards and leading learning.

4.3 The Enhancement Strategy is clearly aligned to College's Strategic Plan priorities. The review team **affirms** the College's commitment to the development of its enhancement policy.

4.4 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.5 The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing the College's Strategic Plan; the draft Enhancement Strategy; the committee structure and a range of committee minutes; programme specifications and associated assessment activity; quality assurance procedures; placement and external speaker records/documentation; and staff development records. In addition, the review team held meetings with senior managers, teaching staff, support staff, students, employers and College alumni.

4.6 The College has a discreet higher education management structure, which provides the focus to drive forward the enhancement of programme-level quality assurance, programme delivery and review in order to provide students with a quality learning experience. The higher education committee structure enables senior and Corporation Board oversight of all higher education issues relating to estate, resources, teaching and learning, staff development and student progression, engagement and experience. Terms of reference clearly state the membership and functions of each College committee. A University of Worcester staff member has been appointed to the Corporation Board in order to add expertise and direction in higher education to deliberations.

4.7 The College has in place a variety of procedures to elicit feedback from higher education students in order to enhance the student learning experience.

Class representatives are selected by the student cohort to represent their views at programme committee meetings and through representation with other students at student forum meetings. Students participate in a range of College surveys, and programme modules are subject to student feedback questionnaires. The outcomes of surveys, forum meetings and module evaluations are discussed at programme team level. These feed into programme-level Annual Evaluation Reviews and provide a continuous in-year appraisal of the student learning experience.

4.8 There are examples of enhancement at the College, including a wide range of staff development opportunities to enhance higher education team members' understanding of the Quality Code. There are new teaching strategies relevant to higher education teaching, through internal and external staff development opportunities to enhance students' learning experiences. Staff have access to higher education teaching qualifications, and there is a robust internal programme of continuous professional development throughout the academic year. Student learning and employability are further enhanced and supported by a range of effective individual and workshop activities designed to develop academic, professional and employment-related skills, provided by specialist library, careers and learning support staff. The College's commitment to enhancing student learning opportunities is demonstrated by the development of the Higher Education Centre, a study resource where the learning needs of higher education students are prioritised by teaching and librarian staff. Students are also able to access higher education programme related specialist computer software.

4.9 The College enhances the student learning experience through established and mutually rewarding relationships with local, regional and national employers, as well as the employment focus of the higher education programmes offered by the College. All higher education programmes offered by the College are either work-based - for example the FdA Early Years, and Education and Training programmes - or work-related with employer placement opportunities, for example the HNC/D Computing and Applied Science courses. Although there is no employer engagement in the College's internal programme approvals process, employers are engaged in module selection with programme teams in order to ensure that Higher National programmes meet higher apprenticeship employer needs. The Chair of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership also chairs the College's employer forum. University partners engage with employers during the design and validation of their individual programmes. The general manager of a local company involved in the College's higher apprenticeship scheme has been appointed to the Corporation Board.

4.10 The College has a programme of visiting speakers and opportunities for students to gain industrial experiences, for example HND Sports students work in partnership with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council on a 'Let's Get Fit' health promotion initiative. The University of Worcester's Lifelong Learning Teaching Qualifications Partnership Teaching Conference, coordinated by the College, is attended by students. HNC/D Animal Management students have also visited a fishery and deer park. External speakers include an online video link conference with the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria Executive Director. Health and Social Care students have access to staff members from a local hospice in order to discuss care strategies and palliative care.

4.11 The College has a strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities, which is implemented by senior managers, teaching staff and support staff in regard to programme management and delivery, and quality assurance. The College has strong employer engagement in providing opportunities for students to link theoretical knowledge to actual workplace practice. Careers and learning support staff provide multiple opportunities for students to develop and/or enhance their employability skills. Employers are engaged in supporting programme teams in module selection and programme design to ensure students have the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the workplace.

4.12 The review team found that the deliberate steps being taken by the College to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities are comprehensive and effective. The review team concludes that the Expectation 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

4.13 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.

4.14 The College has a clear draft of its Enhancement Strategy, which has yet to be fully implemented.

4.15 The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low. There is an affirmation in relation to the steps the College is taking to develop and apply its Enhancement Strategy.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The College Higher Education Strategy shows a clear commitment to work in partnership with its university partners and Pearson to develop a comprehensive higher education curriculum that will enhance the employment opportunities for the local community. There is also a key reference within this Strategy to increase employer engagement and develop higher education courses that complement the Higher Level Apprenticeship framework

5.2 Through a review of definitive documents, course handbooks, programme specifications and work-based handbooks, in addition to meetings with staff and students, the review team found clear evidence of the development of employability skills.

5.3 The College has a strong vocational ethos, with strong links with employers and the business community in a local and regional context. These links have assisted the College in developing its Higher Level Apprenticeship framework. A considerable number of HNC students in Applied Biology and Chemistry, Computing and Business are currently employed as higher level apprentices. Students complete units specifically requested by their employers, which enhances their employability prospects. Employability is built into programmes during the development and approval stages, and students are well prepared for placements.

5.4 The College provides students with careers advice through its well established careers centre. The careers team has a school liaison team, which works with over 20 local schools, providing careers advice and promoting progression opportunities within the College. In addition, the careers team, in partnership with the University of Worcester, participates in the University Access project, which offers taster programmes for potential applicants. Students confirmed to the review team that the College careers advice service is informative and provides them with supportive and detailed information of the opportunities for transition from further to higher education, and also progression to employment or University.

5.5 The development and curriculum planning of foundation degrees take account of the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark*. These qualifications integrate academic and work-based learning through close collaboration between the College and employers. Students who gain the foundation degree award demonstrate intellectual abilities, transferable attributes, and practical skills for employment. For example, students on the foundation degree in Early Years successfully implement skills learnt on their course within the workplace. These skills include the ability to develop and implement an inclusive curriculum that promotes education and well-being of children in order to help them achieve.

5.6 Work-based learning forms a significant proportion of the foundation degree qualifications, and this is incorporated into taught modules and dedicated learning modules. The FdA in Early Years opens up opportunities for career progression for students who are already in employment, working voluntary voluntarily in the sector, or progressing from Level 3 courses. Employers are involved in the design, delivery and review of the FdA in Early Years.

5.7 The FdAs in Business and Media Production bring together the media expertise of the College, and the business and management expertise of Newman University. All media related modules are delivered by College staff, with business, work placement, and academic skills being delivered at the University. The programme is designed around running a production company, in which students receive live briefs from a variety of

businesses, making effective use of industry link. Students undertake a variety of roles within the production company. These roles are rotated as students' progress through their modules.

5.8 To support innovation in employability the College has invested significantly in its estates and resources to support its higher education provision. In collaboration with the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership the College has invested significantly in higher technological resources at the Coombs Wood Campus as part of a science and technology project. These new laboratory resources contribute significantly to the learning and development of students in the areas of computing and the creative industries. In addition, the College has recently invested in a state-of-the-art engineering training facility that supports teaching and learning for students in areas of component design and production, materials testing, fabrication, power products, fluid dynamics and manufacturing.

5.9 Each curriculum area has significant links with employers relevant to the subject area. Course teams make effective use of these relationships by inviting employers and industrialists to the College as guest lectures. For example, the HND Sports students, in partnership with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, ran an internal health promotion College event, Let's Get Active. The Diploma in Education and Teaching programme team invites colleagues in other educational settings to peer-observe College students. Programme teams make effective use of external real life work-related settings to promote employability for students. The HND Animal Management students visited a wide range of animal related venues, such as fisheries, deer parks and safari parks.

5.10 In addition, course teams collaborate with employers to provide learning opportunities through live project briefs that contribute to their assessment and develop their employability skills. HNC students undertake a one-day-a-week placement that is directly linked to a personal and professional development module that requires 200 hours of work placement.

5.11 The review team concludes that the College is taking deliberate and strategic steps to create employability opportunities and experiences for students that maximise their career prospects and progression.

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 30-33 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.

QAA1476 - R4571 - Feb 16

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2016
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01452 557 050
Web: www.qaa.ac.uk