



# Higher Education Review of Harrow College

January 2016

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Harrow College. The review took place from 12 to 14 January 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mrs Marian Stewart
- Mr Daniel Derricott (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are found on page 5 followed by numbered paragraphs starting on page 6.

In reviewing Harrow 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,<sup>2</sup> and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

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

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at:  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code).

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes:  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859).

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

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

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Harrow College

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-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 Harrow College.

- The culture of innovation and support in learning and teaching (Expectation B3).
- The College's engagement with external partners in supporting the professional development of students and staff (Expectations B4 and B3).

### Recommendations

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

By June 2016:

- ensure examination boards are consistently operated in line with College policy (Expectation A3.2)
- introduce, promote and consistently apply a policy on the recognition of prior learning (Expectation B6).

By September 2016:

- review policies and procedures in line with their scheduled review dates (Expectation A2.1)
- ensure processes are in place for the approval and reapproval of programmes that assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities (Expectation B1)
- ensure lesson observations support learning and teaching at the appropriate academic level (Expectation B3)
- facilitate greater individual and collective engagement of higher education students as partners (Expectation B5)
- improve the reliability, oversight and use of unit-level student evaluation (Expectation B8).

By November 2016:

- place greater emphasis on identifying and responding to trends across higher education programmes (Expectation B8)
- identify and implement minimum standards for VLE content across all programmes (Expectation C)
- articulate the distinctive needs of higher education programmes when enhancing the student learning experience (Enhancement).

## Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The support for staff to engage in scholarly activity (Expectation B3).
- The introduction of the higher education lead student representative and higher education student representation on College-level decision-making bodies (Expectation B5).
- The implementation of grounds for making an academic appeal and promotion of these to students and staff (Expectation B9).

## Theme: Student Employability

The College's Enterprise and Employment Strategy 2011 and Harrow College Implementation Plan 2014-17 provide the strategic and operational framework for developing student employability skills and opportunities. The College has become an active member of a range of employment and skills related networks and groups in order to ensure that it is aware of possible training and skills needs. The College is an active participant on the Harrow Council Large Employer Network and the Enterprising Harrow Steering Group, which provide the College with information on proposed developments within the borough. This enables the examination of possible future curriculum development initiatives to take place.

All four HNC/HND programmes deliver modules aimed at enhancing employability skills and some students have the opportunity to participate in live projects with local organisations. The Higher National (HN) Health and Social Care programme requires students to either be employed or undertaking 200 hours of voluntary work in the sector. The Computing and Applied Science students undertake work placements as an element of their programme's professional development modules. The HNC/HND Business students are encouraged to undertake part-time employment in the sector in order to enhance their ability to link theory to practice.

The College uses work experience providers (WEPs) in order to allocate students to a placement and ensure that relevant programme modules and programme information is available to the placement providers. The College's virtual learning environment (VLE) has a dedicated section for careers and employability, where students can access information on, for example, CV writing and interview techniques.

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

## About Harrow College

Harrow College is a medium-sized general further and higher education college, operating on two main sites in Harrow-on-the-Hill and Harrow Weald, two smaller sites specialising in construction and engineering, and around 12 outreach and community-based venues. In scope for this review are four subject areas: Business; Applied Chemistry; Health and Social Care; and Computing and Systems Development. These programmes have 88 learners registered on Pearson HNC/HND courses.

The College's strategic aims are:

- to become an outstanding provider
- to develop a responsive and innovative curriculum offer
- to be a viable and efficient College
- to further improve the College's accommodation, building stock and estate
- to create an effective organisational culture and relevant flexible workforce
- to pursue strategic partnerships and collaborative arrangements that will enable the College to respond to local, regional and national priorities.

The 2011 QAA Integrated Quality Enhancement Review report made five advisable and three desirable recommendations. An action plan was created and progress has been made in addressing the recommendations individually, although some are still incomplete. The College has made the decision not to change its traditional method of recording meetings and has yet to adjust its lesson observations process to allow evaluation against the level descriptors specifically appropriate for higher education.

The main changes regarding the higher education provision have been:

- the end of the partnership with Middlesex University following the College's decision to discontinue the Foundation Degree in Counselling and the University's decision to rationalise its partnership arrangements
- the introduction of Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals, with first enrolments in October 2012
- the discontinuation of the CertEd and PGCE provision and of the College's partnership with the University of Westminster
- in summer 2015 four new appointments were made: Interim Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum; Director of Student Experience; Director of Curriculum and Community Engagement; and a Professional Development and Training Manager
- the introduction of an HE Operational Group composed of curriculum managers and a senior manager to monitor operational issues of the HN programmes.

The key challenge for Harrow College is stated to be public funding issues. The further education sector continues to face significant reductions in adult funding and changes to funding for 16 to 18 year-olds. In the first year of its three-year strategic plan the College has met its financial targets including for higher education. Harrow College recognises that in the more immediate term it must work with other local providers to establish a coherent approach to higher level skills development linked to the borough's regeneration plans.

## Explanation of the findings about Harrow 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 (FHEQ)* 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's awarding organisation, Pearson, has ultimate responsibility for setting threshold academic standards, ensuring that each HN qualification is allocated to the correct level of the FHEQ and meets relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. The College retains responsibility for ensuring that threshold academic standards are maintained during programme delivery, and that teaching and learning differentiates between Pearson's Level 4 Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Level 5 Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes in order to meet the FHEQ level descriptors.

1.2 The HNC/D programmes delivered by the College are composed of modules prepared, written and validated by Pearson. It sets the credit values of its qualifications and the academic level. The College delivers mandatory and optional modules, which are selected to meet local and regional employment and employer skills needs. The College is responsible for ensuring that programme management and delivery meets and maintains academic standards as set out in the FHEQ through effective programme delivery and assessment guided by Pearson's Vocational Quality Assurance Handbook and the BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment (Levels 4 to 7), as well as its own internal policies and procedures.

1.3 The College is responsible for aligning assessment activity to module learning outcomes as set out in programme specifications, and ensuring assessment grading meets

the prescribed grading criteria specified by Pearson for its HN programmes. This is undertaken through a cycle of assessment setting, assignment evidence marking and internal verification procedures.

1.4 The review team tested the Expectation through an evaluation of external examiner reports, College-generated policies and procedures, Pearson programme specifications and programme assessment-related documentation. The review team met the Principal, senior and teaching staff.

1.5 The College is diligent in ensuring that it is compliant with Pearson's academic and quality assurance regulations in order that the programmes delivered on its behalf meet nationally acknowledged threshold academic standards, credit awards and level descriptors. External examiner reports confirm that threshold academic standards are met.

1.6 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**

1.7 Pearson is responsible for ensuring that its validated HN programmes meet relevant qualification, subject and professional benchmarks. Subject benchmark statements are incorporated into module credit allocation, learning outcomes and assessment activity requirements. The College manages its programme delivery and assessment through compliance with Pearson's quality documents for its HN programmes' Vocational Quality Assurance Handbook and the BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment (Levels 4 to 7), as well as its own internal policies and procedures. Pearson monitors the College's performance in delivering and maintaining the academic standards of the HN programmes it delivers through a review of the College's quality assurance processes and the external verification of individual programmes.

1.8 The College has effective internal structures to manage the quality of all its higher education provision. The College's higher education programmes are based within subject curriculum areas. The College has sought to give higher education a unique identity by ensuring that the management, quality assurance and oversight of higher education is through a discrete management and committee structure. Individual higher education course leaders report to their curriculum managers, who, in turn, report to the Vice-Principal Curriculum and Quality.

1.9 Operational issues relating to programme delivery and student progress are monitored and managed through fortnightly course team meetings, which are attended by the course leader, module lecturers and student representatives. The monthly curriculum managers' HE Operational Group reviews programme management and delivery, learner progress, quality assurance (for example, reviewing and responding to external examiner reports), and monitoring progress of programme-level action plans. The HE Academic Standards Group receives the minutes of subsidiary higher education committees, for example examination boards and the HE Operational Group. It monitors learner numbers and issues relating to the HEFCE contract. Annual higher education course reviews are considered by the HE Academic Standards Group in the autumn term. There is a Principal-led termly Standards Review of key performance indicators (KPIs) for higher education programmes. Each higher education course holds examination boards to confirm student achievement and progression; external examiners are invited to attend examination boards.

1.10 Students can access minutes of higher education meetings, external examiner reports and programme handbooks which contain College, course and academic guidance information. Handbooks are available on the College's VLE.

1.11 The College has an HE Strategy 2015-16 and a suite of internally prepared policies and procedures in place to support the management, delivery, quality assurance and recruitment to its higher education programmes. These include a Higher Education Admissions Policy, Learner Engagement Policy, Enterprise and Employability Strategy, Assessment Handbook, Complaints Policy and Procedures and a Marketing Policy.

1.12 The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing the College's higher education committee structure, committee terms of reference and committee minutes. The team

confirmed through questions to the Principal and senior staff that there is Governor oversight of the College's higher education provision. The team reviewed internally generated policies and procedures, both generic and higher education specific documents, and the efficacy of the higher education committee structure. The review team read the Pearson programme specifications and programme assessment-related documentation. The review team met the Principal, senior and teaching staff.

1.13 The College's approach to ensuring that it has established and transparent academic frameworks and regulations in place to support the delivery of the higher education programmes it delivers on behalf of Pearson is sound.

1.14 While there is a suite of policies and procedures in place, the College acknowledges that it has not been consistent in its approach to reviewing, amending, and updating these in accordance with their own specified review dates. This omission could result in policies and procedures relating to higher education management, delivery and quality assurance being out of date or containing inaccurate information. The review team **recommends** that the College review policies and procedures in line with their scheduled review dates.

1.15 The review team therefore concludes that this Expectation is met, but that the associated level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

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

**Findings**

1.16 The College delivers HNCs and HNDs validated by Pearson. The latter is responsible for maintaining the definitive records for the HN programmes they validate, and ensuring that their programmes meet the FHEQ level descriptors; subject, qualification and professional benchmarks, and determining the credit award. HN programme specifications provide the framework for the College to manage its delivery and assessment of the HNC/D courses it delivers.

1.17 Pearson provides definitive programme specifications containing module content, credit award, learning outcomes and assessment strategies. The College tailors its programme delivery by selecting optional modules to complement Pearson's mandatory modules in order to ensure that programmes meet local and regional employment sector requirements. Programme specifications are posted on the course site of the College's VLE. These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.18 The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing programme specifications and programme handbooks to ensure that module delivery, mandatory and optional credit awards meet external examiner approval. With programme teams they discussed the differing strategies used to collect module evaluations. The review team met senior and teaching staff, and higher education students.

1.19 The College has effective procedures in place to ensure that staff, students and external examiners have definitive records of each higher education programme delivered at the College. Programme specifications provide information on module content, learning outcomes and assessment strategies. There is a robust cycle of annual review of higher education programmes in order to maintain and enhance academic standards.

1.20 Pearson provides definitive programme specifications containing module content, credit award, learning outcomes and assessment strategies. The College tailors its programme delivery by selecting optional modules to complement Pearson's mandatory modules in order to ensure that programmes meet local and regional employment sector requirements. Programme specifications are posted on the course site of the College's VLE. The College does not offer individually customised modules for any of its HN programmes.

1.21 The College's internal policies and procedures relating to assessment, teaching and learning and the quality assurance of Pearson programmes have taken due note of Pearson's Vocational Quality Assurance Handbook and the BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment (Levels 4 to 7).

1.22 External examiner reports confirm that the College is using programme specifications as the reference point for the delivery of the programme. While programme handbooks do not contain Pearson programme specifications, they provide comprehensive College, programme and academic guidance and are available on the VLE.

1.23 Internal quality assurance and programme review processes, for example, the higher education curriculum managers' meetings, the annual programme review procedures and the Principal led termly KPI Standards Reviews provide effective ongoing internal monitoring of higher education programme delivery. The College has a process of module review which varies between programmes. Module reviews feed into robust annual monitoring procedures. Pearson's Centre Quality Review and programme external examining provide external evidence of effective programme delivery and quality assurance, and evidence that HN programme delivery at the College is comparable with other centres delivering the same programmes.

1.24 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 College's programmes operate within Pearson's standard framework whereby a number of optional units are chosen by the College to complement a set of core units. Responsibility for approving the framework of each programme rests with Pearson and the College is not involved in this, therefore the College does not have responsibility for setting the standards of its programmes. The College's responsibilities for programme approval relate predominantly to assuring the quality of learning opportunities. The College does have a programme proposal process, whereby the Senior Leadership Team considers new proposals, which allows the College to assure itself it has the resources to maintain the academic standards of the programmes.

1.26 The College's engagement with the Pearson framework for programme approval and module selection, together with its own diligence in considering new programme proposals through Senior Leadership Team meetings, would enable this Expectation to be met.

1.27 The review team met senior and academic staff to discuss the requirement for programmes to undergo reapproval within the College, so that their ongoing relevance and compliance with Pearson frameworks could be confirmed.

1.28 The College undergoes regular review by Pearson, which confirms compliance with their quality assurance framework and with the programme's specification. The College, by means of their annual curriculum planning discussions between curriculum teams and the Senior Leadership Team, confirms the ongoing market need and relevance for students, employers and local/central government.

1.29 The 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**

1.30 The College operates its assessment procedures within the framework of the Pearson BTEC Centre Guidance to Assessment (Levels 4 to 7). This is translated into College operating policy through the Assessment Handbook, which collates various policy statements on topics such as extensions, academic misconduct, internal and external verification. The Assessment Handbook is reviewed annually by the Curriculum Management Group, which is made up of senior managers and curriculum managers from each of the College's curriculum areas. In addition, curriculum managers audit compliance with requirements on assessment each spring and assign a red, amber or green rating to each area under consideration. Any areas rated as red require an action plan to be created and implemented within six weeks.

1.31 The College's systematic approach to collating assessment policies in a single place, keeping them under review and auditing compliance with them suggests a robust approach to managing the standards of assessment. This would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.32 The review team discussed the College's approach to managing assessment with curriculum managers, senior and teaching staff, and students. Further evidence on the role of the Curriculum Management Group and on any cross-discipline standardisation of marking was reviewed.

1.33 Each of the four subject areas adopt a similar approach to assessing students in line with the Assessment Handbook, with particular attention being paid to the internal and external verification systems as means of securing robust assessment decisions. Examination boards are operated within each curriculum area and governed by policy in the Assessment Handbook. This includes a requirement that the membership will include 'at least one member of staff from outside the department', which was confirmed as usual practice by senior staff. However, in July 2015 a HND Business examination board went ahead without such a member present.

1.34 Given the serious nature of the examination board's remit, the College's clear policy and the benefit of an impartial view in such decisions, the review team considers that such oversights should not occur and go unnoticed. The review team therefore **recommends** the College ensure that examination boards are consistently operated in line with College policy.

1.35 The College's overall approach to assessment is robust and therefore the Expectation is met. However, the ability for lack of compliance with assessment policy to go unnoticed presents a moderate level of risk.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

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

**Findings**

1.36 The College requires each programme team to produce an annual review report, which includes a statistical analysis of student achievement and retention, an evaluation of the programme's operation, student feedback and external examiner reports, and an innovation and implementation plan for improving the quality of the programme going forward. These are produced at the end of the academic year and presented to the Academic Standards Committee for review as a collection of higher education programmes, and feed into their curriculum area's self-assessment reports alongside lower level programmes. There is some element of monitoring and review involved in the annual curriculum planning discussions between curriculum teams and the Senior Leadership Team.

1.37 During the academic year, each department is also subject to a termly Standards Review meeting, chaired by the Principal, which scrutinises performance against a number of indicators.

1.38 At the time of submitting documentation for the review, the College was considering the introduction of more holistic and structured periodic review for its higher education provision, but this is not currently in place.

1.39 The College does have a system of annual monitoring and review in place which feeds into a central committee for oversight. This would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.40 The review team explored programme monitoring and review during the review visit with senior staff, teaching staff, alumni and students. Further examples of documentation submitted as part of the Standards Review process was also received.

1.41 The process as it stands is clear and well understood. Curriculum teams make use of the opportunity to reflect on their programmes and to plan ahead, taking particular account of external examiner input to assure themselves that they are maintaining standards. Furthermore, the system of Standards Review together with an open, honest and data-driven culture of quality assurance and improvement ensure that programmes are transparent and well scrutinised.

1.42 The College's approach is rigorous and, taken together with Pearson's reporting requirements, constitutes a robust system of programme monitoring and review. 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**

1.43 The College is subject to an annual quality management review by a Centre Reviewer on behalf of Pearson. This confirms the College is effectively managing their quality assurance systems in line with Pearson's expectations. Furthermore, an external examiner (also referred to as a Standards Verifier) is appointed to each programme by Pearson to confirm that programmes are delivered and assessed in line with the academic standards set. The outcomes of external examiner reviews are reported through annual course reviews and subsequently monitored by the HE Academic Standards Committee.

1.44 The College also draws on the expertise of its STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Advisory Board to inform the maintenance of standards across all its science, technology, engineering and maths provision in a broad, general way. This would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.45 The review team explored the College's engagement with external examiners in meetings with senior staff and teaching staff during the review visit. The Centre Quality Review report was also reviewed along with minutes of meetings such as the Academic Standards Committee.

1.46 The College routinely engages with the external examiner system and quality management reviews, and draws on them in internal quality assurance systems.

1.47 There is an appropriate mix of College-level and programme-level engagement with external examiners, including through the consideration of annual course review reports. External examiners are also drawn on outside of the formal, regular reporting process, with programme teams often asking for advice on programme development and assessment queries.

1.48 The review team concludes that independent and external expertise is used in the maintenance of standards and that the College meets the Expectation with a low level of associated risk.

**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

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

1.50 Of the seven Expectations in this judgement area, all seven are met, with five having a level of risk identified as low. Two Expectations (A2.1 and A3.2) have a greater associated risk identified, both considered to be moderate. This has led to two recommendations being made. The first recommendation aims to ensure policies and procedures are reviewed in line with the College's own schedule. The second recommendation relates to the operation of examination boards in line with the College's own policy.

1.51 There are no examples of good practice and no affirmations associated with this judgement area.

1.52 As all Expectations in this area are met, but with some recommendations and moderate areas of risk, 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 **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 use of Pearson's qualifications framework enables the College to form programmes from core units and a selection of optional units. Each of these units is designed and approved by Pearson; however, the particular makeup of optional units is largely at the discretion of the College. It has an internal approval process for new programme proposals, with final sign-off by the Senior Leadership Team, but this does not appear to include consideration of the programme's content or teaching, learning and assessment strategies.

2.2 Because the College does not routinely consider the design and development of programme content and delivery in its approval processes, the Expectation is not met.

2.3 The review team requested further written information on programme approval processes although no detailed documentation was available. Programme approval featured prominently in review visit discussions with senior staff, teaching staff and professional services staff.

2.4 When new programmes are first proposed, they are subject to review and approval by the College's Senior Leadership Team before any arrangements are entered into with awarding bodies. These proposals predominantly consider the demand and strategic fit of the programmes rather than the content, approach to learning, teaching and assessment, or the coherence of the programme and its modules. Discussions with senior and teaching staff confirmed that these decisions are devolved to curriculum teams and that unit selections are subject to change, also at the discretion of the curriculum teams.

2.5 In exploring the rationale for choosing particular units and creating particular pathways, the influence of student demand was prevalent. It was less clear how employers and universities strategically influenced the selection of units and ongoing development of the programmes as the likely destinations for the College's graduates. This is at odds with senior manager assertions that the College is wholly responsive to and engaged with local and regional skills agendas.

2.6 While responsibility lies with Pearson for approving individual units and the framework within which a programme operates, the College does have the autonomy to shape a programme's content and delivery to meet the needs of its stakeholders. Furthermore, the College has responsibility for ensuring that the quality of learning opportunities will enable students to meet the learning outcomes of the programme. This responsibility includes consideration of these issues prior to the first cohort of students enrolling and at regular intervals thereafter. This should include the coherence, outline content, teaching, learning and assessment strategy, relevance to industry and skills agendas, and, where appropriate, arrangements for progression to further study. The review team therefore **recommends** the College ensure processes are in place for the approval

and reapproval of programmes that assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities. The Expectation is not met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Not met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.7 The College has a Higher Education Admissions Policy and a Higher Education Admissions Process document, which ensure that applicants are recruited to higher education programmes in a fair and transparent manner. The Higher Education Admissions Policy has been reviewed in order to ensure it meets this Expectation. The admissions process is clearly set out on the College's website.

2.8 The majority of the College's higher education applicants apply through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). There is a non-standard entry route for mature students with relevant experience who may have alternative non-academic qualifications. The College also has an internal process for students who may be requesting recognition of prior learning (RPL), although there is no formal policy in place.

2.9 The College requests students to declare any particular support required during the application process, so that the nature of the support required can be determined and put in place when the student commences their studies. The design of these policies, processes and arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.10 In order to test the Expectation the review team checked the higher education section of the College website, paying particular attention to information on the application and admissions process. The team also reviewed the Higher Education Admissions Policy and Admissions Process documentation, Pearson HN entry criteria, interview notes, and the outcome of student surveys on the admissions process. The review team discussed the application and admissions processes with academic staff, learning services staff and students.

2.11 The College is diligent in applying the Pearson entry requirements for the HN programmes it offers. Prospective students are able to access information on applying for a place on a higher education course via their website. The website contains clear information on the selection, interview, admissions and enrolment processes currently in use by the College. Applicants who are unable to access the website prospectus information can request alternative presentation of information. The website permits students to magnify content to support visually impaired students.

2.12 The website provides higher education applicants with a detailed overview of the College's higher education provision comprising the application process, careers advice and guidance, financial information (including Disabled Student Allowances), links to programme specifications and detailed programme information such as term dates, units of study, entry requirements, progression opportunities to top-up degree programmes, and enrolment information. Students who require assistance in preparing their UCAS applications may approach the College's Learner Services teams for support. Students are also provided with information on how to appeal an admissions decision, if they are unhappy with the outcome of the application process, including information on the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

2.13 For applicants who meet the programme admissions criteria and have applied through UCAS, a formal interview may not be required. Students who are requesting non-standard entry will be interviewed by the course leader, who will forward their recommendation to the curriculum manager for a decision. Students claiming RPL will have their claim explored by the programme team, but the final decision will be made by the curriculum manager. International students who are transferring on to the HND Computing from a Level 3 programme, attend a pre-entry workshop in order to aid the acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge.

2.14 Student surveys elicit information on student satisfaction with the application process, and student evaluation of the applications and admission process is very positive.

2.15 The College's recruitment, selection and admission policies adhere to the principles of fair admission. The Higher Education Admissions Policy and Admissions Process document ensures that students applying to the College follow a transparent, reliable, valid and inclusive process that accurately assesses the suitability of the applicant to enrol on their selected programme. Students are made aware of complaints and appeals procedures should they feel the process was not fair or they have been disadvantaged in their application. The review team therefore considers 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 College identifies a strategic approach to learning and teaching through its Teaching and Learning Handbook which contains its Teaching and Learning Strategy 2014-16. The Teaching and Learning Strategy aims to ensure higher education students become independent learners who are able to demonstrate research skills and critical thinking.

2.17 The College has introduced a cross-College initiative the 'Gold Standard' which all teaching and learning aims to meet. The Gold Standard articulates what the College aims for in enabling all students to develop as independent learners. In order to achieve these aims the College manages its overview of teaching and learning through a cycle of observations, self and student review of programme delivery and management, and by ensuring students have access to a range of learning resources.

2.18 In order to monitor and enhance classroom delivery, the College carries out observation of teaching and learning including probationary and capability observations. Learning walks are undertaken by senior and middle managers, and may review an identified theme across programme levels and qualifications. Observations are not formally graded and are normally carried out by heads of department or curriculum managers, although other middle managers and learning innovation champions may also participate in the observation process.

2.19 The College collects information on learning and teaching from students through surveys; informal feedback and focus groups; from undertaking observations and learning walks; and the teaching and learning audits of planning documentation, schemes of work, learning resources and a review of student work. Information used to further evaluate the student learning experience is also sought through analysis of attendance, retention, achievement and success data, high grade and value added analysis, and progression data.

2.20 The College's HE Operational Group meets half-termly to provide a forum for staff who teach on higher education programmes to share and harmonise practice across programmes. This group is supported by the Professional Development and Training Manager, who reports to the Head of Learning Development & Innovation.

2.21 Students are able to access study and research skills development support through the Website and Learning Resource Centre (LRC) resources, including e-books and online resources to support independent learning and study skills. Students have access to specialist resources, for example modern laboratories for Applied Science students and computer suites for Computing students. Business students have access to the Enterprise Centre. See Section B4 for a further discussion on resources.

2.22 The current processes and procedures in place allow for effective review and enhancement of provision and incorporates both student and staff input at all levels. The review team concludes that this would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.23 The review team tested the Expectation through a review of the Teaching and Learning Handbook, The Gold Standard booklet, the Successful Student Attributes booklet, lesson observation documentation and reports, continuous professional development (CPD) documentation, student voice documentation, schemes of work, teaching and learning data, role descriptions for the learning innovations champions and learning advisers, learning resources data and minutes of meetings. The team held discussions with the Principal, senior and teaching staff, students, and professional support staff.

2.24 The College has clear strategic and operational approaches to enhancing teaching and learning, and assessment activity. The College's Gold Standard for the student journey set out the College's aims and objectives for developing students' cognitive skills to enable them to enhance their learning attributes, such as flexibility and adaptability; resilience, confidence and empowerment; and self-management in order to become independent learners. The Gold Standard is applicable to all students but differentiation between levels is applied during programme and lesson planning. The Gold Standards are a continuum contextualised to the learner. The format of the programme self-assessment report mirrors Gold Standard aims. In addition the Harrow College Graduate Student Attributes are promoted to students through the Successful Student Handbook.

2.25 Higher education teaching staff are required to take account of module learning outcomes, the Gold Standard and Graduate Student Attributes when preparing schemes of work and individual lesson plans. Students have access to schemes of work on the VLE.

2.26 Lesson observation outcomes are reviewed during teacher appraisal and may impact on the content of the teacher's Professional Learning Plan. Post-observation discussions focus on meeting the strategic priorities of enhancing learning, for example, innovation and creativity as a learning tool. Observed good practice during a teaching observation is shared during course team meetings and HE Operational Group meetings.

2.27 There are no discrete observation record forms for higher education. All higher education observations are recorded on cross-College observation forms. Although teaching staff are aware of level descriptors in their classroom teaching and assessment activity, they were unable to report how the lesson observation forms differentiated the FHEQ level descriptors skills and knowledge requirements at Levels 4 and 5. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College ensure lesson observations support learning and teaching at the appropriate academic level.

2.28 The College is committed to the development of a culture of experimentation and innovation in teaching and learning. Learning innovation champions and learning advisers have been appointed by the College and are available to support academic staff to enhance their teaching skills and devise innovative learning strategies to challenge and stimulate students. Two of the learning innovation champions have higher education experience.

2.29 The College has demonstrated its commitment to developing students to be independent learners and critical thinkers. This is achieved through the implementation of the Gold Standard and by developing the Successful Student Attributes through innovative and creative teaching and learning activities. The team therefore identifies as **good practice** the culture of innovation and support in learning and teaching.

2.30 The College has not developed a higher education staff development plan because it has a small higher education provision and higher education teaching can form a small proportion of a lecturer's teaching roles in the College. Staff who are new to the College, or new to teaching at Levels 4 and 5, are mentored by the course leader.

2.31 All teaching staff undergo annual appraisals to monitor performance, set targets and identify developmental needs, these are recorded in Professional Development Plans. CPD needs may be identified and planned during annual appraisal discussions.

2.32 Although the size of its higher education provision is relatively small, the College has been diligent in enabling higher education teaching staff to access internal and external higher education specific CPD opportunities, for example, HEFCE's Student Success in Higher Education conference, enhancing knowledge of the Quality Code, the West London HE in FE Group conference, and training from Pearson subject experts on delivering the new HN programmes launched in 2012. An individual Applied Science staff member attended a work placement at the University of Westminster. The College is currently considering supporting higher education staff to undertake Higher Education Academy qualifications.

2.33 The College is committed to enabling higher education teaching staff the opportunity to develop higher level teaching skills. The College is proactively supporting staff to develop their understanding of, and participation in, scholarly activity. Three staff attended a University of Westminster higher education in further education Level 7 course titled 'How to do scholarly activity within the classroom'. The College has held additional internal training to support staff to develop an operational understanding of the concept of scholarly activity for enhancing their own practice, and for instructing students in the development of scholarly activity during their studies at the College. The review team **affirms** the College's support for staff to engage in scholarly activity. However, there is currently no College-wide definition of scholarly activity. Students are happy with the teaching they receive at the College, and state that their teachers are knowledgeable and experienced.

2.34 The College is effectively working with staff and students to review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, in order that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner while studying at the College. The College is diligent in providing opportunities for both teaching staff and students to enhance their professional skills and knowledge, and for students to develop and enhance their analytical, critical and creative thinking skills. The 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**

2.35 The Higher Education Strategy 2015-16 sets out the College's aims for managing and developing its higher education provision. The College's Corporation Board and senior management have put in place a series of strategies and initiatives to support student development and achievement. The Teaching and Learning Handbook, its Gold Standard initiative, and the Successful Student Attributes Handbook aim to provide students with a positive and supported learning environment enabling students to become independent learners who will achieve their current programme successfully and progress to a higher level of study or employment.

2.36 Programme management and delivery, quality assurance and achievement are subject to an internal reflective self-assessment annual monitoring of each higher education programme. The Annual Review documentation is designed to mirror the sections of the Gold Standard document ensuring that programme review is focusing on the student journey and learning experience. Pearson monitors student progress and programme management and quality assurance through their annual Quality Review and Development visit and programme external examiner visits.

2.37 All students receive a programme and LRC induction. Programme inductions have a student-led focus, which reflects the College's expectation that higher education students will be more independent and less reliant on guidance than Level 3 students. Discussions focus on the course structure, how it is delivered and run, and what students can expect. Alumni are invited to speak to students about their learning experiences at the College, offer learning advice to new students and provide information on their academic progression and/or career opportunities following programme completion.

2.38 Students have access to a higher education study room/centre which is equipped with laptops and a slide show presentation projector, which enables them to work independently or in small groups. They can borrow further equipment and learning resources from the LRC for use in the study room. Computing and Applied Science students have access to modern science and computer laboratories. HNC/HND Business students have use of the new Enterprise Centre. HNC/HND Health and Social Care students do not have access to specialist on-site facilities, instead using specialist facilities at their place of employment, or work experience placement.

2.39 The College works with a work experience provider (WEP) based at the College ensuring that students have suitable work experience placements. There is a close working relationship between the WEP staff and the Applied Science and Computing HNC/HND programme teams. A WEP representative meets all students and discusses with them their placement preferences and desired learning outcomes. Students are guided on how to manage placement interviews.

2.40 These processes would enable the Expectation to be met and provide the opportunity to allow the effective monitoring and evaluation of arrangements and resources, which enable students to develop to their potential.

2.41 The team reviewed the HE Strategy, the Gold Standard initiative, Successful Student Attributes, WEP placement documentation, careers documentation, Employer

Aware lists, and programme specifications. The review team saw a VLE demonstration and explored areas of the VLE to confirm content. The review team met students, senior staff, teaching and professional support staff, including a representative of the WEP.

2.42 The College's Successful Student Handbook provides information to students on the attributes they should aim to develop in order to become independent learners, such as, critical thinking and independent research skills. Teaching staff support the development of these attributes during lesson planning and delivery as set out in module schemes of work. Students commented that as mature students, often with family and work commitments, independent learning skills were essential to personal study and achievement.

2.43 Students reported that they found the LRC Induction 'extremely valuable' as it enabled students to locate study, support and other information on the VLE and in the library. Students were also introduced to the College's internal social media phone application (see Section C: Information about higher education provision).

2.44 Students benefit from the small scale of the College's higher education provision. Class sizes are small and this permits teachers to understand the academic strengths and areas of development of their students. Every learner is allocated a personal tutor and has the right to a termly personal tutorial, although there is variation between the HNC/HND programmes on how they are managed. Students are asked for their feedback through the First Impressions Survey and rate highly the quality of discussions with their personal tutors.

2.45 Students are happy with the library resources available to them, and commented very favourably on the College's responsiveness to requests for new texts, or additional copies of existing texts. There is some duplication of library stock across the two Harrow College campuses and there is a facility for transferring books/journals between the two libraries in response to a specific student request. The LRC has invested in learning resources specifically to support students on HN programmes, including 572 new hard copy and electronic titles being added over the last three years. Programme teams update module reading lists annually through their annual programme reviews and submit these to the College librarian. Students commented very favourably on the accessibility of the online library facility.

2.46 Students have access to a five-unit Skills for Study programme, which covers topics such as reading and note-taking, and information on how to plan and manage projects and dissertations. The College also offers taught sessions to support the acquisition of study skills. Learning resources staff were described as helpful and supportive. Staff confirmed that there is an established procedure for transferring requested texts between the College campuses.

2.47 Higher education students approach the College's careers advisers on an individual basis. The careers team provide individual support to students seeking help or guidance on progression opportunities to top-up degree programmes. Currently, only the HND in Business course has a programme agreement in place with Coventry University.

2.48 The WEP team provide placement providers with copies of programme modules and programme generated student placement information, and discuss student expectations of the placement experience. A WEP representative undertakes placement visits to ensure the placement is mutually satisfying for both student and placement provider. The WEP team receives feedback from the student on their experience. There is no formal report produced by the placement provider on the student's performance, although they are provided with the opportunity to comment on key attributes. Should issues arise during the period of the placement, a WEP team member will review the situation and take appropriate action. Students spoke positively of their placement experiences.

2.49 In addition to placement and workplace involvement in programme and module learning outcomes, the College's career and employability team organises employer engagement events including Prepare for Work (designed to give students the skills necessary to successfully apply for and participate well in job interviews).

2.50 At programme team level, higher education programmes are initiating some innovative activities to enhance student interactions with local employers. The HNC/HND Business team have launched HNC/HND Breakfast Morning meetings, where invited guests such as a winner of the BBC Apprentice programme and business entrepreneurs (including an Alumni member), challenge students' entrepreneurial thinking and give their views on business skills development.

2.51 Employers have been invited to attend an IT Speed Networking event organised for the HNC/HND Computing students. This event enabled students to discuss skills and knowledge requirements and employment opportunities with a range of employers from the IT sector. HND Computing students have benefitted from employers attending the College and delivering 'Guru Lectures'. Both the HND in Computing and the HND in Applied Science have engaged with local and regional businesses to give students the opportunity to work on live projects under the direction of business staff. Students found this a positive and rewarding experience. The review team regards the College's engagement with external partners in supporting the professional development of students and staff to be **good practice**.

2.52 The College has suitable processes in place, to monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. 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**

2.53 The College has a Learner Engagement Policy which outlines how students should be engaged in assuring quality; this focuses on consulting students in different ways and closing the feedback loop. Academic staff are encouraged to collect student feedback on their teaching and this contributes to individual performance reviews as well as programme monitoring and improvement. Feedback is also collected through focus groups and surveys administered by curriculum managers or central College staff.

2.54 Each programme nominates student representatives to contribute to discussions about the quality of the student experience including, more recently, through being invited to some curriculum team meetings. To support student representatives, the College provides a handbook which outlines their role, what to expect, what has been achieved previously and how to submit agenda items to meetings.

2.55 The Student Council provides a forum for representatives from across disciplines to come together and discuss shared interests, and the College has recently introduced the Higher Education Student Council, which deals exclusively with higher education issues. The focus of the Council is on facilities, services and enrichment activities rather than on the learning experience. The College have also made the Higher Education Lead Student Representative role a substantive and sustainable role following its initial introduction for the purposes of this review. The lead student representative chairs the Higher Education Student Council and is a member of the HE Academic Standards Committee, although they had not yet attended a meeting of the latter.

2.56 The College's engagement with students and responses to the issues they raise is overseen by the Corporation's Learner Voice Committee. The membership of this committee, and of the Corporation itself, includes two student governors.

2.57 The College has a range of mechanisms for engaging students in the assurance and enhancement of their learning experience. Although there is currently a particular emphasis on individual engagement and consultation through surveys and focus groups, there is evidence of this maturing into a more collaborative model and this would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.58 The review team explored student engagement throughout the review visit with students, student representatives, senior and teaching staff, and professional services staff. Furthermore, evidence of meetings and programme monitoring and enhancement processes were scrutinised to track how student issues are captured.

2.59 There is a strong commitment throughout the College to the concept of the 'learner voice' and using student feedback as an indicator of quality. In practice this often manifests as staff collecting student feedback and using this to inform their own monitoring, review and planning activities, rather than working in partnership with students to jointly take decisions on the student experience. This approach does inform continuous improvement of programme delivery and design, but it confines the focus of these improvements to the issues staff seek feedback on, and it creates a culture of mainly identifying problems rather than seeking ideas for improvement.

2.60 The College's engagement with students occurs mainly within curriculum areas, and between students and those who teach them directly. There is limited opportunity for higher education students and their representatives to discuss the quality of their learning experience across subject areas and to represent their collective views in College-level discussions. The Higher Education Student Council goes some way to resolve this. However, the College sees the focus of this group as not explicitly relating to the student learning experience and instead relating to the wider College experience. The review team therefore **recommends** the College facilitate greater individual and collective engagement of higher education students as partners.

2.61 At College level, discussions are had and decisions are taken on the student learning experience largely without direct higher education student input. The College has begun to address this through the introduction of the lead student representative for higher education and their addition to the HE Strategy and Academic Standards Committee. However, the success of this is partly due to the enthusiasm and commitment of the incumbent and careful consideration needs to be given to sustaining and increasing the capacity of this engagement. The review team therefore **affirms** the introduction of the higher education lead student representative and higher education student representation on College-level decision-making bodies.

2.62 Overall, the College has solid foundations in place to collect student feedback and use this in informing programme development. There has also been some progress to ensure the higher education voice is explicitly heard in decision making and this will be further enhanced by shifting the engagement from being consultative to being based on a partnership with students. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.63 The College's Assessment Handbook provides a framework for the operation and management of assessment of enrolled students. The handbook is reviewed annually by the Curriculum Management Group to ensure it remains current and compliance with it is audited annually by curriculum managers. There are clear processes in place to address issues of non-compliance.

2.64 Assessments are designed by curriculum teams in line with the requirements of Pearson's criteria and are verified both internally and by the external examiner. Assessment briefs are used to give instructions to students on what they are required to do, the learning outcomes they must demonstrate and how to achieve higher marks. In addition, course handbooks contain assessment guidance and marking criteria, as well as information on good academic practice and the avoidance of plagiarism. The format of the higher education course handbooks have been standardised across programmes.

2.65 The College does not have a policy on RPL. The Assessment Handbook states that RPL will be granted in line with Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidance. However, this guidance states it is intended to inform institutional policies rather than be a substitute. There is no clarity on how the College operates RPL, such as who makes decisions and what the maximum allowances are.

2.66 The College has a clear framework in place for the assessment of students once they are enrolled onto a programme; however, there is no policy in place to manage the RPL. The policies and procedures currently in place therefore do not allow this Expectation to be met.

2.67 The review team discussed the College's approach to managing assessment with senior staff, curriculum managers, teaching staff and students. Further evidence on the use of formative assessment was also requested. Documentation such as Assessment Handbooks, assignment briefs and external examiner reports was also considered.

2.68 The College effectively implements the policies and frameworks set out in its handbook for the operation of assessment, which provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate that they have achieved the intended learning outcomes during the programme. There is a broadly consistent approach to managing the submission of draft work to help students develop their ability to engage successfully with assessments, with some variation allowed to accommodate the needs of individual programmes. Further harmonisation of practices across higher education programmes is achieved through discussion and sharing of practice at HE Operational Group meetings, although this stops short of a formal standardisation activity across subjects.

2.69 For students seeking RPL, there is no formal, robust or consistent approach or policy to managing this within the College. The review team heard several different views on how decisions about RPL are made, with some staff expecting that external examiners would make the decision on the College's behalf. There were also different views on how

prospective students are made aware of the option for RPL, which may go some way to explaining the low uptake of this option. The review team therefore **recommends** the College introduce, promote and consistently apply a policy on the RPL.

2.70 Overall, the College is proactive and robust in most areas of assessment. However, by not having a policy on the RPL and by not ensuring decisions are equitable, there is a weakness in the College's approach. The Expectation is therefore not met and there is a moderate level of associated risk.

**Expectation: Not met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

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

**Findings**

2.71 Pearson appoint an external examiner to each of the higher education programmes run by the College. They are responsible for confirming the College is maintaining standards, including through the sampling of assessed work and engaging with programme teams on the design of assessments.

2.72 External examiners visit the College once a year to meet staff and inspect students' work and they are also invited to attend examination boards. Reports are produced by external examiners which are considered directly by the programme teams and responded to through the annual course reviews, as well as being considered by the Associate Director, Quality who receives all reports automatically.

2.73 The College engages with external examiners as required and this would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.74 The review team discussed the College's engagement with external examiners during the review visit with senior staff, teaching staff and staff responsible for the development of the VLE. Documentation, including external examiner reports, was reviewed and minutes of annual course reviews were also considered.

2.75 External examiners are considered approachable and supportive and were often cited by staff as a source of guidance in matters of quality assurance and assessment. The engagement of external examiners in assessment processes and programme monitoring was routine and well-embedded into the College's operations. The College has recently taken steps to make reports from external examiners available to students and has since acted to make them more prominent on the VLE.

2.76 Overall, the College's engagement with external examiners is thorough and effective, particularly in maintaining standards during assessment. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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



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

**Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review**

**Findings**

2.77 The College requires every programme to undergo an annual course review, whereby the course leader reflects on the operation of the programme over the previous academic year. Course review draws on student success and retention data, student feedback and external examiner reports as well as the course team's own reflections. The course review reports are presented to and discussed by the College's HE Strategy and Academic Standards Committee at its October meeting, which allows for College-level issues, trending issues and areas of good practice to be identified, shared and addressed.

2.78 There is a consistent College-wide approach to the annual monitoring of programmes, which draws on a number of sources of data and has oversight from the HE Strategy and Academic Standards Group. This would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.79 The review team explored the monitoring, review and development of programmes throughout the review visit in meetings with senior and teaching staff, students and alumni. Evidence from minutes of annual course reviews and the College's HE Strategy and Academic Standards Committee was also considered.

2.80 There is a culture of regular reporting, monitoring and action planning in the College as part of the overall approach to quality improvement and the aims of becoming an outstanding College. There is particular emphasis on individual staff review and development, such as through lesson observations and Professional Learning Plans. The results of this were clear to see during the review visit: staff are ambitious in their own development and doing the best for their students.

2.81 In contrast, the approach to considering course reviews, student feedback and external examiner reports across the higher education provision as a whole could be more robust, strategic and productive. For example, the notes from the HE Strategy and Academic Standards Committee meetings together with the notes of the HE Operational Group suggest course review reports are not always ready on time and not always discussed at the planned meeting in October. This limits the opportunity to identify any issues trending across subjects.

2.82 During the review visit, there was limited evidence of the College considering its higher education provision as a whole, rather than just in curriculum areas, to inform a strategic approach to quality enhancement. The review team therefore **recommends** the College place greater emphasis on identifying and responding to trends across higher education programmes.

2.83 As part of the focus on individual review and reporting, there is a clear commitment to each member of teaching staff collecting and considering student feedback to inform their professional development. There is a degree of autonomy allowed on how this feedback is collected and the review team heard a number of creative examples used to engage students in the process. However, while this autonomy has a number of benefits, it also poses questions over the validity and robustness of the data being collected. Furthermore, there was limited evidence of how a course leader accessed such feedback, was able to monitor for any unresolved issues or use it to inform course reviews. While the review team

does not consider complete consistency to be necessary at the expense of the creative and engaging approaches adopted by teaching staff, greater use of this feedback could be made beyond the individual member of staff. The review team therefore **recommends** the College improve the reliability, oversight and use of unit-level student evaluation.

2.84 Overall, the College's system of course review sufficiently enables the monitoring and review of its programmes in order to maintain the quality of student learning opportunities. However, the College would benefit from greater use of, and reflection on, existing data in the process, such as student feedback collected within units. In addition, the College could strengthen its system and adopt a more efficient approach to quality enhancement, if it gave greater consideration to its higher education provision as a whole. These improvements will enable the College to mature its approach but do not prevent the current system from producing satisfactory outcomes. The Expectation is therefore 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**

2.85 The College has a Complaints Policy and Procedure which outlines the process students can follow to make a complaint. This specifically excludes academic appeals, which are dealt with separately. Higher education students also have the option to engage the Office of the Independent Adjudicator once they have exhausted the College's own procedure. The Complaints Policy and Procedure is available to students on the Student Portal.

2.86 The Assessment Handbook outlines the College's policy on academic appeals, which is then consistently conveyed to students in student handbooks through a flow chart. However, the grounds upon which an appeal can be made were not similarly available to students at the time of the review.

2.87 Without the grounds for academic appeal being documented, the College risks applying the policy in a way which is not fair, accessible and timely, thereby not allowing the Expectation to be met.

2.88 The review team reviewed the College's policies on Complaints and Appeals. Meetings were also held with senior staff and students where the College's approach to managing complaints and appeals was discussed.

2.89 The review team specifically requested the grounds for appeal in advance of the review visit, but were initially referred back to the Assessment Handbook, which did not contain the information. Subsequently, the College informed the review team that an amendment to the Assessment Handbook was being proposed which would include clear grounds for appeal, this was approved by the College's Senior Leadership Team shortly before the review visit.

2.90 The College's policies on complaints and appeals, including the newly approved grounds for appeal, are clear and thorough. There is some awareness of the College's complaints process among students and where support can be sought for addressing any issues informally. The awareness of the basis for an academic appeal was, however, more limited among students.

2.91 The College's senior staff recognised the need to introduce grounds for appeal and have taken steps to address this. However, further action will be necessary to embed and raise awareness of the academic appeals process. The review team therefore **affirms** the implementation of grounds for making an academic appeal and promotion of these to students and staff.

2.92 Overall, the College now has a robust policy in place for handling complaints and appeals fairly. The Expectation is therefore able to be 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**

2.93 The College has an Enterprise and Employability Strategy which was published in 2011 and reviewed in 2012, but has not been reviewed since. While it is unclear of the extent to which the references to proposed initiatives are still current, the Enterprise and Employability Strategy does make reference to the then KPIs.

2.94 The Harrow College Implementation Plan 2014-2017 contains KPIs that aim to embed a range of employer, local and regional government partnerships into curriculum development and delivery. The College is establishing a range of external partnerships which will allow it to be involved in the identification of employment skills gaps and training needs. The College supports current students in the acquisition of an understanding of the working environment through work experience placements, working with employers on live projects, external speakers and talks from alumni.

2.95 The College is 'STEM assured' and has an advisory board with membership from universities, the NHS, bankers, local businesses and industry. The Harrow College STEM Advisory Board meets at least once a year, and advises STEM higher and further education curriculum areas on the current and future needs of local industry and businesses. The intention is to inform programme and module delivery and curriculum development, ensuring students obtain employment required skills and knowledge.

2.96 The strategies in place allow for some learning opportunities to be delivered with partner organisations and the policies and procedures followed allow provision for these to be safely implemented and managed. The design of these arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.97 In considering whether the Expectation is met in practice, the team looked at documentary evidence, including strategies and policies, programme specifications, minutes of network and partnership meetings, marketing material for HND Business Breakfast activities and placement evidence. The review team discussed the way in which the College manages its engagement with local and regional partnerships and employers in order to enhance the work-based knowledge and skills element of its higher education programmes. How local and regional developments are used to inform programme planning and development were also discussed during meetings with senior staff members.

2.98 The Harrow College Implementation Plan 2014-2017 states that one of the College's priorities is to 'pursue strategic partnerships and collaborative arrangements that will enable the College to respond to local, regional and national priorities'. In order to achieve this objective the College intends to become a 'hub for enterprise and engagement' by creating enterprise programmes with employer engagement. The College is taking proactive steps to achieve these strategic and operational objectives.

2.99 Another KPI quoted in the Harrow College Implementation Plan is to 'Strengthen employer and partnership engagement in the Curriculum'. The College acknowledges that this is an area for development.

2.100 The College is proactive in exploring, with a range of partners, the future skills development needs of West London, local borough councils and local employers. For example, the College is represented on the West London Principals and Chair (of Governors) Group, Enterprise Harrow Steering Group, and Harrow Council's Large Employers' Network. This aims to ensure that optional modules studied by students provide them with the skills and knowledge required by the business, computing, applied science, and health and social care employment sectors.

2.101 A College representative is a participant in the Local Skills Partnerships and attended a recent meeting discussing the 21st century skills working gap 'Review of Local Skills Partnership', and cyber security in order to contribute to the Science and Technology Committee inquiry into digital skills gaps held at the House of Lords. Computing students have participated in a live project exploring cyber security with a local employer.

2.102 The College makes effective use of its links to local employers who visit the College to participate in Prepare for Work Week, Career Fairs, Working Knowledge events, IT Speed Networking, and to provide specialist input as external speakers to support module delivery.

2.103 Computing and Applied Science HND students, who are not in employment benefit from the opportunity to undertake work experience placements. HNC/HND Business are encouraged to gain part-time employment in order to relate theory to practice. It is a requirement of the Health and Social Care HNC/HND programme that students are either employed in the sector or undertake a specified period of voluntary work in order to develop and/or enhance practical skills and the ability to apply theory to practice. There is no assessment of activities within the placement setting, but students complete work related assignment activities in order to achieve module learning outcomes.

2.104 The College has undertaken a variety of partnerships in order to ensure that it is fully appraised of potential educational and training needs within Harrow and West London by engaging with employer and skills networks and partnerships. These networks and partnerships are enabling the College to be fully informed of sector-specific current and future skills and knowledge needs, thus enabling it to ensure that its higher education students are attractive applicants for employment. In order to provide students with additional work experience exposure, all four HNC/HND programmes have an element of student work experience used to support module learning outcomes (although in the case of Business students this is through encouragement to seek part-time employment). These arrangements are implemented securely and managed effectively, therefore the Expectation is met and the level of associated 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**

2.105 The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

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

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

2.107 Two Expectations (B1 and B6) are not met, the former of these assigned a low level of risk and the latter a moderate level of risk. All remaining Expectations are met with low risk. There are two areas of good practice, six recommendations and three affirmations.

2.108 The first area of good practice relates to Expectation B3 and the way in which the College has developed a culture of innovation and support in teaching and learning. The second primarily relates to Expectation B4 (but is cross-referenced to B3) and recognises the efforts made by the College to engage with external partners in supporting the professional development of students and staff.

2.109 The team make six recommendations in quality of learning opportunities which relate to the Expectations B1, B3, B5, B6 and two recommendations relating to B8.

2.110 The College has made some recent changes to its policies and practices that will positively impact on the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team therefore make three affirmations that relate to the Expectations B3, B5 and B9.

2.111 The review team notes that of the 10 applicable Expectations, eight have been met. The provider has acknowledged the need for action in some of these areas and provided evidence of actions already being undertaken to address some of the issues. In addition, none of the Expectations was considered to pose a serious risk to the management of this area. The review team therefore concludes that the quality of learning opportunities **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's Marketing Strategy forms part of the Marketing Policy. The Marketing Policy clearly states the roles and responsibilities of the Marketing Department in preparing and approving publicity materials, including website copy; advertising College programmes and activities using a variety of media; managing publicity events; preparing press releases; and managing and protecting the College brand. The Marketing Campaigns Manager reports to the Director of Curriculum and Community Engagement.

3.2 The Marketing Campaigns Manager uses programme and curriculum manager meetings to speak to staff to ensure that marketing data is accurate and current; and that published marketing materials and events information meet programme needs. Course leaders and curriculum managers are responsible for ensuring that the information published about their programmes is accurate and current. Curriculum managers work with the Marketing Team to prepare and upload information on student progression onto the website. It is the responsibility of curriculum managers to periodically review website content for the programmes under their responsibility.

3.3 The website contains the College Mission Statement, the Public Values Statement and the minutes of the Corporation Board meetings. Links from the higher education landing page enables students to access data on UCAS and non-standard application procedures; student finances; study skills support data; and relevant student policies and procedures, such as the Equality and Diversity Statement. It is possible to magnify the written content of the website and students who need additional support in accessing information can contact the Marketing Team for alternative formats.

3.4 The review team considers the design of the processes, policies and lines of responsibility adopted by the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.5 The review team was given access to the College's VLE, and was given a demonstration of both the VLE and an integrated learner monitoring and support system. The review team considered programme handbooks, programme specifications, induction materials, hard-copy marketing materials and the website. It met senior and teaching staff, professional and technical staff, and students.

3.6 The College makes good use of its website as a mechanism for providing prospective students with comprehensive information about the College. The website is easily navigable and information is presented in a clear and succinct manner. The College also uses it to advertise higher education events, such as higher education fairs and College open days. There are links to social media including access to the College's internal social media site. Website information relating to careers advice and guidance and higher education progression is managed by careers and employability staff. Higher education programme information is set out in a user-friendly style. Student surveys record a high level of student satisfaction with the presentation of information on the College website. Students are able to download a website form to provide additional feedback to the Marketing Team.



3.7 Students have access to a VLE which is maintained and managed at programme level. Students value the resources available to them on the VLE which provides them with an effective learning resource when not attending College and prompts their independent learning. The College has recently launched its own social media application. The College has procedures in place to ensure that the information it publishes about itself is current and accurate.

3.8 Students receive three inductions on commencing their higher education studies. There is a College general higher education learning induction for all HN students which familiarises students with the College and a programme-level tutor group induction where students receive a range of programme level information. Programme handbooks are standardised across higher education programmes, and contain definitive information on the delivery and management of their programme of study, assessment strategies and criteria, and how final programme grades are calculated. Programme handbooks are available in hard copy, on the website and the VLE. Programme handbooks clearly set out information on acceptable student personal and academic behaviour, as well as key information relating to student related policies, such as the Complaints Policy. Programme specifications are not normally available in hard copy. The Learning Centre induction introduces students to the range of services offered by the College, including library provision of hard copy and e-copy books and journals, study skills and careers facilities services and resources.

3.9 The College provides students with access to two VLEs. VLE1 permits students to access information only while they are on the College site. VLE 2 is a commercial patented VLE, which students are able to access internally and externally to the College. The content of the latter contains a range of general higher education information relating to finances, student life, the Students' Union, careers and study skills information, and College policies. Students and staff are able to access pertinent programme level information such as programme specifications and handbook, timetables, and external examiner reports. Staff are able to access team meeting minutes and the learning innovation coaches share best practice via the VLE. Programme module information is available for students, and may include reading lists (which are updated annually), assignment briefs, taught session information such as slide show presentations, handouts, links to video clips, and to online texts or journals. Written assessments can be submitted via the VLE making use of the anti-plagiarism software installed on the VLE. There is also the capacity for online marking and assignment feedback. Students reported that they valued their access to the VLE especially while off campus, as it provides access to a good range of online learning resources. However, there is some inconsistency in the nature and volume of information held on the individual programme VLE sites as there are no guidelines which define the minimum standard of information which should be available to students across all higher education programmes. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College identify and implement minimum standards for VLE content across all programmes.

3.10 The College has introduced new software to replace the previous student tracking system. Not all teams are currently using the new programme. The new student tracking system will enable staff and students to review individual learning plans and targets, track grades and create projected final grades. Information stored on the student tracking system software will be used to inform tutorial discussions. Staff are able to enter information and use the student tracking system to manipulate data to identify trends by programme and track, for example, student attendance. The new software would allow parents of students under 18 years to have access and monitor their progress.

3.11 The College has encouraged students and staff to use its internal social media phone application facility, known as WAMedu, in order to maintain contact with programme staff and student colleagues. Using this application students are able to blog with student colleagues and contact staff, ask any questions or queries, or notification of their non-

attendance. Students spoke very positively of the use of this application as it is a reflection of the communication methods they use in their daily lives. Although in its early stages, staff are already seeing the benefits of its use as a communication link to their students.

3.12 The College has effective processes in place to ensure that the information produced for their existing and prospective students about the higher education they offer is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The Expectation is therefore met, and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

3.13 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

3.14 There are no areas of good practice identified and no affirmations made. In order to encourage consistency of information available to learners across all programmes, one recommendation has been made - to identify and implement minimum standards for VLE content across all programmes.

3.15 Despite this recommendation, the review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

### Findings

4.1 In line with the College's overall approach to managing its higher education and other provision in an integrated way, there is a whole-College approach to enhancing student learning opportunities. The end goals of this approach are articulated through the Gold Standard in the College's Teaching and Learning Handbook, which result from the College's overall strategic objectives around teaching, learning and assessment.

4.2 The Gold Standard sets a number of expectations for all programmes and individual teachers. They inform the College's strategy for professional learning for staff, which in turn ensures that staff review and develop mechanisms that are aligned with these expectations. Through a continuous process of review, action planning and monitoring, the College develops the practice of teaching staff to meet the Gold Standard and monitors the progress it is making.

4.3 The Gold Standard largely relates to the actions and approaches of staff. However, one section on the development of the Harrow College Graduate Student Attributes does give some strategic steer on the outcomes for students. These are largely centred around the notion of independent learning.

4.4 The College has in place a provider-level approach to enhancing student learning opportunities. This permeates through staff review and development processes, which enables the College to monitor progress made. This would enable the Expectation to be met.

4.5 The review team discussed the College's approach to enhancement with senior staff, teaching staff and professional support staff. It also reviewed the minutes of meetings where issues relating to enhancement were discussed.

4.6 The College has a major focus on proactively improving the quality of the student learning experience across its entire provision, as articulated through the agreed and widely known Gold Standard, which includes a set of Harrow College successful student attributes. These standards are comprehensive and set out a multitude of criteria which every curriculum area is expected to work towards and is assessed against. There is clear senior level commitment and leadership for this work.

4.7 The College has also placed a particular emphasis on developing students' employability, which has resulted in programmes evolving to achieve this. The College is supporting its staff to develop their own networking and relationship-building skills, and is drawing on its high level partnerships to connect its staff with a range of industry contacts. This, together with the connections staff are encouraged to make themselves through local networks and boards, is resulting in a range of interesting new opportunities for students to develop transferable skills and become more familiar with the workplace.

4.8 The College makes use of its existing staff performance review and development mechanisms, as well as specific self-assessment reporting by each curriculum area, to map progress so far and set out actions for reaching the Gold Standard. This results in a wide range of development activity at any one time, but often depends on the needs and preferences of individual staff. Therefore limited opportunity exists to catalyse a mass of innovative practice that can be shared to create a real step change in any one area. It also

results in a lack of coherence within and between groups of staff at different levels of seniority when asked what the College's specific current priorities are for enhancing learning and teaching.

4.9 All of this work is College-wide and covers further as well as higher education, with the overall ambition of becoming an outstanding College in all that they do. While the overall approach and ambitions are effective and compatible across the College's provision, there is no articulation of the distinctive characteristics of higher education programmes or graduates that informs the design, development or review of higher education programmes or the development of staff teaching and supporting those programmes. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College articulate the distinctive needs of higher education programmes when enhancing the student learning experience.

4.10 The College has a robust approach to enhancing student learning opportunities which will continue to mature over time with a more explicit focus on higher education. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

4.11 In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation in this area is met and the level of risk is low.

4.12 It was noted that the needs of higher education are not always sufficiently differentiated from the College's further education provision. Therefore one recommendation is made to articulate the distinctive needs of higher education programmes when enhancing the student learning experience.

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

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Findings

5.1 The College's Enterprise and Employment Strategy 2011 and Harrow College Implementation Plan 2014-17 provide the strategic and operational framework for developing student employability skills and opportunities. Key elements of the Enterprise and Employment Strategy have been embedded in the more recent Harrow College Implementation Plan 2014-17.

5.2 The College has become an active member of a range of employment and skills-related networks and groups in order to ensure that it is aware of possible training and skills needs which can be met through curriculum development at both higher and further education levels. Prior to the Area Review for West London, the College became an active member of the West London Principals' and Chair (of Governors) Group. At the October 2015 meeting, delegates considered, among other issues, the emerging skills priorities for West London. The College is a member of the IT Advisory Board which works with employers to enhance learner skills and involve sector employers in supporting Harrow College computing students in developing work-related skills, such as students participating in IBM mock interviews. The College is an active participant on the Harrow Council's Large Employer Network, which keeps businesses and the College informed of initiatives offered in the borough. Participation in the Enterprising Harrow Steering Group provides the College with information on proposed developments within the borough, enabling an examination of possible future curriculum development opportunities.

5.3 The College has structured module selection in its HN provision to ensure that all students are able to develop and/or enhance their sector professional knowledge and skills. All four HNC/HND programmes deliver modules aimed at enhancing employability skills. The HN Health and Social Care programme requires students to either be employed, or undertaking 200 hours of voluntary work in the sector. Computing and Applied Science students undertake work placements as an element of their programme's professional development modules. The College works with WEPs in order to allocate students to a placement that will enable them to enhance professional skills and knowledge of the employment sector they aim to join. The WEP is responsible for ensuring that placement providers receive relevant programme modules and programme information, and for making visits to support both students and placement providers. The HNC/HND Business students are encouraged to undertake part-time employment in the sector in order to enhance their ability to link theory to practice.

5.4 Computing and Applied Science students have had the opportunity to develop employability skills and knowledge through their participation in live projects with local organisations. Students worked as full participants alongside company employees. Students have found this an enriching and fulfilling experience.

5.5 On the College's VLE there is a section dedicated to careers and employability where students can access information on, for example, CV writing and interview techniques. There is also a hyperlink to National Careers Advisers.

5.6 The College's Careers Team uses UCAS Tracking data to identify students who have progressed to university programmes. Students not progressing to university programmes receive an exit interview with the course leader. Data from exit interviews is passed to the curriculum leader. The College has a Progression Agreement in place with Coventry University to enable Business students to top up to a full degree. Three Business students who completed their studies at the College in 2015 are currently studying at Coventry University. Of the 29 students who have completed their HND studies at the

College since 2014, 80 per cent have progressed to subject-related degree studies, 17 per cent have entered employment, one student (4 per cent) went overseas. Fifty-nine per cent of HNC students have progressed to the HND programme, but 41 per cent transferred on completing their HNC to degree programmes. The College is very effective in inspiring students to progress to full degree studies that will ultimately enhance their employment opportunities.

5.7 The College has a web-based alumni system. The alumni system is being further developed during the 2015-16 academic year. Alumni have been invited to speak to new students during their programme inductions. Business alumni have acted as guest speakers and one alumni is participating in the HNC Business Breakfast Morning meetings.



## Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 30 to 33 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#).

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

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

### Academic standards

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

### Award

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

### Blended learning

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

### Credit(s)

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

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

### Dual award or double award

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

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

### **Enhancement**

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

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

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

See also **distance learning**.

### **Framework**

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

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

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

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

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

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

**Programme specifications**

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

**Public information**

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

**Quality Code**

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

**Reference points**

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

**Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

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

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

**Threshold academic standard**

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

**Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

**Widening participation**

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

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