Higher Education Review of Solihull College

February 2016

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Solihull College. The review took place from 23 to 25 February 2016 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Alan Howard
- Mrs Alexandra Day
- Mr Clive Turner
- Mr Christopher Maidment (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

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

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

The themes for the academic year 2015-16 are Student Employability and Digital Literacy,[2] and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

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

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] Higher Education Review themes: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859.
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review web pages: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Solihull College

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

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

Good practice

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

- The internal course design, development and approval processes that demonstrate rigour of College oversight and responsiveness to local and regional need (Expectations B1 and Enhancement).
- The higher education peer observation system that enhances approaches to teaching and learning and builds staff confidence (Expectations B3 and Enhancement).

Recommendations

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

By July 2016:

- ensure that the consideration of accreditation of prior learning evidence is fully aligned to learning outcomes, and appropriately recorded (Expectation B6)
- ensure that all website marketing information clearly and consistently identifies the awarding partner for all qualifications (Expectation C).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The deliberate steps being taken to promote a distinctive higher education learning community (Expectations B3, B5 and Enhancement).
- The introduction of an internal policy for the management of information (Expectation C).

Theme: Student Employability

Solihull College has clear strategic aims linked to employability and local employer needs. It is a central theme of the College's higher education strategy and is articulated through the vision and development of higher education student attributes. The College's curriculum development is closely aligned to local enterprise priority sectors, and the College has close links with groups such as the local Chamber of Commerce.

A significant number of the steps that have been taken to improve the employability of students and curriculum are designed and developed to promote employability and meet local employer need. Employers are engaged in a number of ways and are consulted, for example, regarding programme development and review.

Employability and personal development modules are embedded within many programmes, and students will often take work-based learning modules, work-related projects, or research projects based on an industry question or problem. Alumni are also used to provide inspirational talks and advise on progression routes.

The Careers Service provides tutorials, information, weekly drop-in careers sessions and support for students to apply for graduate schemes. Students are also offered opportunities to attend career fairs both on and off-site.

Students have the opportunity to engage with employers in a range of ways over the duration of their course. Facilities have been adapted to provide stimulating and realistic work environments; where appropriate, local employers have been used to help develop industry-standard competencies.

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

About Solihull College

Solihull College (the College) was established in 1954. It is a large general further and higher education college situated to the south-east of Birmingham. Eighty per cent of learners study at the Blossomfield campus in South Solihull, with the remainder attending the Woodlands campus in the north of Solihull. The College's student profile consists of 3,600 16 to 18-year-olds; 8,000 adult learners; 700 management and professional students; 1,000 apprentices; and 900 higher education students.

Higher education courses have been delivered at the College since 1991 and there are now over 40 courses available in a wide range of subject areas, including Animal Behaviour and Welfare, Business, Computing, Construction and Built Environment, Early Years and Education, Engineering, Fine Art, Graphics, Health and Care, Photography, Moving Image, Science, Social Sciences, Sport Science, and Youth and Community Work. Over 100 staff are now involved in the delivery of the higher education provision at the College and University Centre.

The College aims to make significant contributions to the local and regional economies and beyond by providing high-quality vocational education and training for individuals, employers and the wider community.

The College recognises it faces a number of challenges caused by the external environment, which include:

- increased competition due to freeing up student number controls
- declining demographic of 16 to 18-year-olds until 2020
- rising tuition fees
- the introduction of maintenance loans to replace grants in 2016
- the need to increase the number of higher apprenticeships and develop degree apprenticeships
- the Birmingham and Solihull Local Area Review led by the Further Education Commissioner.

In 2011 the College underwent a QAA Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review. An action plan was created that addressed all recommendations and built on the good practices identified. The plan has been followed successfully and signed off by the Higher Education Strategy Group. Since the review in 2011 there have been a number of major changes at the College. A new Principal and Chief Executive took up post in June 2014, and the College has since been restructured into three faculties: science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); creative; and professional and service industries. All of these faculties have higher education provision.

The higher education management structure has been strengthened with the creation of the new Dean of Higher Education and Curriculum Innovation post in June 2015. Two Higher Education Programme Managers (one for Enhancement and one for Standards) now further support the provision, along with the newly created role of Director for Quality Improvement.

The College has made a number of significant investments in estates since 2011. These have included redevelopment of the Blossomfield campus and an extension of the Woodlands campus. Additional facilities such as a new computer block, an Advanced Manufacturing Centre. and a higher education-specific common room and workspace have been added.

The College works with a number of awarding partners offering courses validated by Birmingham City University, Coventry University, Newman University Birmingham, Oxford Brookes University, the University of Warwick, and Pearson.

Explanation of the findings about Solihull College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College does not hold degree-awarding powers, and currently offers a range of qualifications validated by Birmingham City University, Newman University Birmingham, Oxford Brookes University, the University of Warwick and Pearson. From 2016 it will also offer a Higher National Diploma (HND) leading to a BEng in Aircraft Maintenance validated by Coventry University.

1.2 The College's higher education provision is therefore delivered under its agreements with its awarding bodies and organisation. Higher National programmes are offered through the College's agreement with the awarding organisation, using the programme specification aligned to the Qualifications and Credit Framework, which maps to *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ).

1.3 The College takes responsibility for ensuring it reviews qualifications and ensures that delivery and assessment align to the FHEQ. In many cases, programmes are designed by the awarding partner but in some cases the College has worked with partners to develop new programmes. It is in this activity that the College primarily engages with Expectation A1. The design of these arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.4 The review team reviewed the effectiveness of these arrangements through examination of relevant documentation, including partnership agreements, external examiner reports, programme specifications, validation and review reports, and assignment documentation. The review team also met senior and teaching staff, to explore how the College maintains the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies and organisation.

1.5 The evidence reviewed shows that the arrangements the College has in place ensure that the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements are appropriately applied to programmes with awarding partners. The programme specifications sampled consistently reference appropriate external reference points, including the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.6 The review team saw evidence of the College's engagement in validation and review, and the College has a comprehensive four-stage internal validation process. Staff were able to effectively articulate the process for making minor and major changes to university-validated and franchised programmes. Evidence from validation documentation demonstrates a clear engagement with a range of external reference points, and discussion relating to programme learning outcomes aligns with the FHEQ.

1.7 Senior staff conveyed a good understanding of their responsibilities for threshold standards and degree-awarding bodies. Furthermore, external examiner reports support the fact that the College maintains the academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies and organisation.

1.8 Confirmation that the College, within the context of its partnership agreements, manages its responsibilities for securing threshold standards effectively is provided through a range of activities, including internal and external validation processes and conclusions from external examiner reports. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.9   The College is not a degree-awarding institution, and therefore overarching responsibility for academic governance lies with its validating partners, who set and define all the qualification characteristics of the higher education curriculum. The College follows the academic frameworks and regulations as set out in the partnership agreements for the programmes validated by Birmingham City University, Newman University Birmingham, Oxford Brookes University and the University of Warwick, and has its own framework for all Pearson provision.

1.10   The responsibility for ensuring that provision meets national qualification standards as set out in the FHEQ is that of the respective university as the degree-awarding provider. The College follows national guidance on the procedures set out in the Pearson Vocational Quality Assurance Handbook, and supplements the Pearson documentation with its own policies and regulations.

1.11   For Pearson qualifications the College has its own Higher Education Assessment Board Regulations and Higher National Assessment Regulations. These provide the necessary academic governance arrangements to enable the standards of its awarding organisation to be maintained. The College's processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.12   The review team reviewed the effectiveness of these arrangements through examination of relevant documentation, including partnership agreements, external examiner reports, programme specifications, validation and review reports, and handbooks. The review team also met senior and teaching staff, to explore how the College secures academic standards through the use of transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations that govern the award of academic credit.

1.13   The review team saw evidence that the College has developed effective methods for ensuring adherence to the regulatory frameworks of its awarding bodies at programme level. The review team found numerous examples of links from programme handbooks to the relevant awarding body's policy documentation. Evidence from meetings confirms that senior staff understand the College's responsibilities in terms of setting and maintaining academic standards. Staff at programme level understand that the regulations for their specific awarding body must be applied and adhered to, and students were clear about where to find the relevant awarding body documentation. Furthermore, as part of induction, staff are provided with information about higher education standards, and it is clear that they understand how the design and delivery of teaching and assessment impact the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards.

1.14   The review team sought verification that there is a suitable governance structure that enables consistent implementation of its validating partners' frameworks and regulations. It was concluded that through the Higher Education Strategy Group, the Higher Education Quality and Standards Board, and the role of Dean of Higher Education, the governance structure does provide for an appropriate level of higher education-focused monitoring and ensures that the guidance given by each validator is followed and adhered

to. The designation of two Higher Education Governors and a Student Governor further contributes to the creation of a governance structure that is sufficiently distinct from further education provision.

1.15   The review team found that the College fulfils its responsibilities in upholding academic frameworks and regulations through: clearly defined lines of responsibility between the College and its awarding bodies and organisation, the annual monitoring process, external examiner reports and associated quality assurance processes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.16   All awards offered at the College are underpinned by programme specifications, which are available to staff and students from the College's virtual learning environment (VLE). Arrangements for the production of programme specifications differ between the College's awarding partners. For franchise programmes the awarding bodies themselves will construct the programme specifications. For validated programmes the College develops the programme specification, which is approved through validation and reviewed according to processes agreed with the awarding bodies. In relation to provision delivered under arrangements with its awarding organisation, the College produces programme specifications and uses guidance from QAA in the process. These programme specifications are constructed on a College template and are subject to approval by the Dean of Higher Education. The definitive copy of each programme specification is held by the College's higher education administration.

1.17   The review team tested the operation of the processes and procedures that enable the College to meet the Expectation by scrutinising the relevant programme documentation and by talking to students and a range of senior, academic and professional support staff.

1.18   Programme specifications and associated handbooks vary in style but consistently include detail on programme structure and its assessment strategy, reference to the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement, and evidence of how the overall learning outcomes are aligned at the appropriate level of the qualification descriptors in the FHEQ. Students confirm that all programme-related material, including module descriptions, is available through the VLE and in handbooks issued at induction. Key staff understand the process for modifying and approving changes to programme documentation and could communicate an awareness of the key external reference points, including the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.19   The review team found that the College complies with its responsibilities set by the awarding bodies and organisation. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of associated 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

1.20   The College's awarding bodies maintain overall responsibility for approval of franchise and validated programmes. Internally, a multi-stage development and scrutiny process supports the progression of a new programme idea to a complete proposal for approval by the awarding body. For provision delivered under arrangements with its awarding organisation, the College produces programme specifications that are approved internally.

1.21   The review team tested the operation of the processes and procedures that enable the College to meet the Expectation by scrutinising documentation relating to programme development and approval, and by talking to a range of College staff and employers.

1.22   The College works with five university awarding bodies and with Pearson as its awarding organisation. Approximatley half of the provision at the College involves delivery of programmes franchised by its university partners. Several new validated programmes have recently been developed, including the BSc Applied Sports Science top-up degree with Oxford Brookes University, and a foundation degree programme in Special Educational Needs Disability and Inclusive Practice developed in partnership with Newman University Birmingham.

1.23   The College has a comprehensive and structured approach to programme development and approval. Staff involved in programme development demonstrate an understanding of key external reference points, including Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ. Programme development teams are supported by University link tutors who help ensure that academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification.

1.24   Internal College oversight is maintained by the Dean of Higher Education and the Higher Education Strategy Board, with progress evaluated and approved prior to progression to the next stage of the programme validation process. Approval decisions are informed by external academic expertise.

1.25   The review team is satisfied that the College operates robust procedures and processes leading to the approval of taught programmes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.26   The College is not an awarding organisation and offers a range of bachelor's degree and foundation degree programmes validated by or under franchise from four universities, and BTEC Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and HNDs as an approved centre of Pearson.

1.27   Each of the four university partners for which courses are currently running sets out the regulatory frameworks for their awards in their respective overarching agreements, and in Mapping of Responsibilities documents. In addition, the College conforms to the Operations Manual for each programme. All assessment results and the award of credit for validated/franchised programmes are governed by the assessment regulations and procedures of each awarding partner. These regulations are published on the partners' websites and are linked to the student VLE at Solihull. Although the detailed processes do differ between partners, they assure that the award of credit is only made where the learning outcomes for the programme have been met and UK threshold standards have been achieved.

1.28   All definitive student records for awarding partner programmes are kept at the respective awarding partner, and the College liaises with its partners regarding content as an additional confirmation of accuracy and consistency. Records of student achievement confirmed by the College's awarding partners are maintained by the Dean of Higher Education.

1.29   The BTEC programmes offered by the College go through an internal approval process organised by the College as deemed necessary to maintain currency and relevance.

1.30   In contributing to the design of validated programmes the College makes use of relevant external reference points, including the Quality Code, FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and the *Foundation Degree Benchmark Statement* as appropriate.

1.31   The College's responsibilities for Pearson qualifications are set out in mapping documents, and it has published assessment and accreditation of prior learning (APL) regulations for its Higher National programmes, which accord with the requirements of Pearson. All degree provision is subject to the regulations of the relevant university, and students are informed of those regulations in the first week of their course via the Higher Education Student Handbook, and course handbooks.

1.32   The College Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Scholarship Strategy sets out the requirements for assessment in general and College expectations for staff awareness of assessment data, students' module evaluations, external examiner reports and responses and student feedback. The College uses its own internal verification process but standards

are ultimately endorsed by the University moderation process or by the BTEC external standards verifier.

1.33   For bachelor's and foundation degree programmes, arrangements for oversight and management of the assessment process, the moderation of marked work and the conduct of assessment boards are set down by the partner universities. The College has devised its own regulations based on Pearson guidance to handle these matters with respect to its Higher National programmes. The design of these arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.34   The review team examined a range of documents, including programme specifications, minutes of assessment boards, records of APL, the Higher Education Student Handbook, course handbooks and records of student achievement. The team discussed the procedures and arrangements with senior staff, and with academic and support staff.

1.35   Students confirmed that they were well informed about the assessment arrangements and regulations that applied to their course, that they were provided with this information during induction by the provision of a data drive, and that all of the information they required was published on the VLE.

1.36   The reports of Pearson external examiners shows that the College is effectively managing the assessment process on behalf of Pearson. These reports show that there are no major issues identified for the Higher National programmes and that, where recommendations are made, they are acted upon by the College. For the external examiner reports for both university and BTEC programmes, the action plans and responses produced are collated and a summary paper is considered by the Higher Education Quality and Standards Board. This enables the College to be sure at the highest level within the University Centre that the systems for the award of credit and the maintenance of academic standards are effective. The procedures set down by the university partners, and the College preparations for participation in exam and assessment boards, confirm that these processes work effectively.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.38   For its franchised/validated provision, the College follows the published guidelines and materials laid out in the partnership agreements for each university, which are broadly similar to each other. In each case these arrangements include requirements for the design of programmes and the consequent production of programme specifications to make use of the Quality Code, FHEQ and external expertise on the approval process. Pearson programmes are designed by Pearson, and the College uses the published qualification specifications throughout. The College is responsible for the annual review and evaluation of its Pearson programmes in line with the published guidelines and as set out in the Mapping of Responsibilities document. The College is aware of, and preparing for, the revised procedures for quality assurance to be introduced in 2016.

1.39   The College has produced a Quality Enhancement Cycle that informs the annual review and evaluation process. The College has conducted course approvals for its Higher National programmes, which include arrangements for ensuring that delivery and assessment will meet national standards.

1.40   The arrangements for external examining for programmes validated by university partners are set down in their respective partnership agreements, and by Pearson for the Higher National programmes. The College has mechanisms in place for consultation with a range of employers to ensure that their programmes are relevant and up to date.

1.41   The review team concludes that the frameworks set down by the validating partners and Pearson, together with the College's internal procedures and arrangements for consultation with employers, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.42   The review team tested the Expectation by a thorough examination of a wide range of documentary evidence submitted by the College, including: programme specifications; course handbooks and policy documents, including Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) blanks; AMRs; minutes of the Higher Education Forum; Higher Education Strategy Group reports of Programme Reviews; and minutes of Programme Quality Boards (PQBs). The documentary evidence was used as the basis for discussions with senior managers, academic staff, students, professional support staff and employers.

1.43   The College follows university procedure in the annual review and evaluation of its validated/franchised provision, and this is evidenced in the internal validation, AMRs and Programme Review Reports.

1.44   Similarly, there is substantive evidence that the College system for annual monitoring and review of its BTEC programmes is effective.

1.45   Students contribute to course review at PQBs, which results in action plans for course teams.

1.46   The minutes of the Higher Education Strategy Group and Higher Education Forum show that the AMRs and arrangements for Periodic Review are considered in forums that involve both senior managers and students. These minutes show clearly that issues raised by students in feedback and through student representatives are noted and acted upon, and that the actions taken are fed back to students.

1.47   The meeting with employers confirmed that their regular engagement with the College helps to ensure that the programmes are kept up to date and relevant to the expectations and needs of the workplace.

1.48   The adherence to procedures set down by the university partners and Pearson to the College's internal procedures - and the effective engagement with a range of key stakeholders, including external examiners, students and employers - allow the review team to concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.49   The College states that programme validation processes involve independent expertise, including use of employers as external experts, as part of the review and approval process. The College states that consultation with employers has shaped resource requirements and funding bids, and that it has responded to employers changing unit/modules to suit industrial demands and requirements.

1.50   External examiner and standards verifier reports are made available to students through the College VLE. Student representatives are briefed regarding external examiner/standards verifier reports via PQBs, and the reports are used to inform College AMRs and Quality Improvement Plans. An overview of external examiner and standards verifier reports is compiled by the Dean of Higher Education, which is reported annually to the Higher Education Quality and Standards Board. The College has a clear policy for discharging its responsibilities for BTEC Higher National external examining. The College's processes would therefore allow the Expectation to be met.

1.51   The review team reviewed the effectiveness of these arrangements through examination of relevant documentation, including partnership agreements, external examiner reports, programme specifications, annual monitoring, validation and review reports, and handbooks. The review team also met senior staff, teaching staff and employers to explore how the College uses external and independent expertise at key stages to maintain academic standards.

1.52   Evidence confirmed that while the awarding bodies and organisation are responsible for the appointment and training of external examiners and standards verifiers, the College succeeds in providing its external examiner community with a comprehensive range of College and course-specific information to enable them to carry out their role effectively. External examiner reports suggest satisfaction with the maintenance of academic standards - although because of the franchised nature of some of the programmes, not all external reports are College-specific. The College has recognised this and has discussed with awarding bodies the need for more specific information relating to individual providers within these reports.

1.53   Discussions with senior staff confirmed that the College considers external involvement necessary to support Programme Review and the maintenance of academic standards. Although there is no overall formal strategy for external involvement, it was clear from the meeting with employers, and from validation and review reports, that external expertise is used in programme development and review, as well as in programme approval processes and informal contribution to AMRs and Quality Improvement Plans.

1.54   The review team saw and heard evidence that academic staff are well qualified. A significant number of tutors have past or current industry experience, and staff curricula

vitae record recent engagement with employers. The team acknowledges that this brings valuable external expertise for informing course design, delivery and review.

1.55   The review team concludes that the evidence from documentation and meetings clearly shows that the College is effectively managing its responsibilities for maintaining academic standards through the use of external expertise. Confirmation of this is provided through: the use of external academic and sector experts in programme development; external examiner reports; industry-relevant experience of academic staff; and the positive relationships established with employers. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.57   Of the seven Expectations in this judgement area, all are met with the associated level of risk for each identified as low. There are no examples of good practice, recommendations or affirmations associated with this judgement area.

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

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1   Market analysis, including consideration of employer demand and identification of gaps in local and regional higher education provision, informs identification of potential new programmes. Programme development involves a four-stage process leading to completion of a Programme Validation Form (PVF), involving a programme design team comprising key College staff and representation from the awarding body. Progression from each stage follows internal scrutiny and approval. Stage 1 of the PVF articulates the strategic case, which is subject to approval by the College Higher Education Strategy Group. Stages 2 and 3 involve stakeholder and external consultation and development of the programme content; this is subject to internal review prior to delivery to the awarding body for validation and completion of stage 4. Validation panels include external subject expertise. These processes and procedures for programme development and approval would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.2   The review team tested the approaches taken by scrutinising the relevant documentation, including validation reports, the PVF and descriptions of the multi-stage development process. The review team also met a range of staff, local employers and students.

2.3   Links exist with the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership, Chamber of Commerce and local employers. Such links enable the College to develop an understanding of the local labour market and enterprise partnership priorities and to be responsive to their needs. Employers met by the review team were appreciative of the opportunity to contribute to curriculum design and to be consulted in the identification of potential new programmes. The validation panel for new programmes in Mechanical and Electrical and Electronic Engineering praised the industry contributions to programme design and development. Similarly, in validating the Applied Sports Science programmes, the applied nature of the curriculum intended to meet the needs of employers and students was commended. Local veterinary practices were consulted in developing FdSc and BSc programmes in Advanced Veterinary Nursing Studies. Likewise, market research undertaken in developing a foundation degree in Special Educational Needs, Disability and Inclusive Practice enabled the needs of employers to be identified.

2.4   The College also solicits feedback and ideas from current and prospective students. For example, responses to a questionnaire survey indicated a high level of interest among current students in pursuing engineering courses at both foundation degree and BSc level. The review team found that stakeholder consultation in programme design and development is well established and consistently practised.

2.5   Support is provided throughout the development and approval process by link tutors assigned by the awarding universities. Internal oversight of the process is maintained by the Dean of Higher Education and the Higher Education Strategy Board, with progress

evaluated and approved prior to progression to the next step in the process. Processes and procedures are applied systematically and operate consistently.

2.6   The internal course design, development and approval processes that demonstrate rigour of College oversight and responsiveness to local and regional need is **good practice**.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.8	The College has a mission statement and vision centred on vocational learning and contributing to local economies. This aim is embedded in the strategic goals that contextualise the College's Higher Education Teaching and Learning Strategy, and is part of the terms of reference for the Higher Education Strategy Group. The priorities of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) set the context for this, with the College targeting growth in disciplines that align with the LEP's priorities. Equally, the College seeks to be a partner in groups such as the LEP and local Chamber of Commerce.

2.9	The College offers access to higher education programmes that have seen prospective students progress to become current students at the institution and at other local universities. This is reflected in a significant percentage of the College's higher education students being drawn from a widening participation background. The demand for progression beyond level 3 is described as a key driver behind decisions to develop new programmes. The importance of this is highlighted by 50 per cent of the College's higher education students having transitioned from level 3 further education programmes. Recent new degree programmes are designed for mature students seeking qualifications that complement their employment.

2.10	The higher education admissions policy was revised during 2015, with an external audit of compliance with the new policy scheduled for May 2016. The improved process is intended to increase consistency and improve record keeping. The Student Charter sets out the admissions process and commits the College to providing students with appropriate course information.

2.11	The admissions process for partner institutions is reviewed annually. The admissions process for courses offered by the University of Warwick was revised, in partnership with the University, following staff and student feedback. Changes to entry criteria are discussed during course review and evaluated as part of the annual monitoring process. Where courses are offered in partnership, the responsibilities of each partner are mapped.

2.12	Staff responsible for interviewing prospective students and making offers are briefed on the process and observe an interview undertaken by an experienced course leader. A checklist is provided for those undertaking interviews.

2.13	Entry criteria are reproduced from programme specifications and communicated to prospective students through UCAS, the College website and partner university websites. Admissions tasks are used as an alternative where the minimum points tariff cannot be met. Conditional places may be offered following interview, depending on the production of additional work. The entry requirements for foundation degrees are flexible and include an interview. Prospective students' qualifications are verified during enrolment.

2.14   Admissions to higher education courses are overseen by a single Higher Education Admissions Officer. This officer manages the interview process, liaising with course leaders to arrange interviews. The College encourages applications from students with particular learning needs. Following recent changes, a member of the College's Additional Needs Support Team will discuss with students any additional needs, including planning transitional support where appropriate.

2.15   The Dean of Higher Education and Curriculum Innovation has oversight of the admissions process. Application data is circulated to senior higher education staff and is monitored for trends through the Higher Education Strategy Group via the Quality and Standards Board.

2.16   A Fitness to Study Policy sets out the College's expectations of students when they make the transition from prospective to current student. An increase in students being unfit to study has led to the formalisation of the principles through this policy.

2.17   The College has both a written policy and charted process for addressing admissions appeals, including addressing whether staff retraining is needed as the result of a successful appeal. Admissions appeals are managed initially by the Higher Education Admissions Officer, who advises other staff on this process. The process sets a timescale within which prospective students may make an appeal and for informing prospective students of the appeal outcome. The admissions appeal process is accessible through the College website.

2.18   The College publishes information about the availability of higher education courses on its website. Example leaflets include information about who programmes are suitable for, what the entry requirements are, what prospective students will study and how courses are delivered.

2.19   Applicants receive a standard offer letter, followed by a set of joining instructions when the conditions of the offer have been met. Students receive texts to remind them to attend interviews.

2.20   The admissions process is designed around a set of policies and procedures that would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.21   To test this the review team considered a range of evidence provided by the College, including strategic planning and visioning documents that set the context for admissions; the College's admissions policy, criteria and associated correspondence with students; documented agreements with students, including how they can be supported through the process and how they can appeal against an admissions decision; examples of how admissions criteria are recorded and communicated; student views about the process; staff competence to undertake the admissions process; and how admissions processes are monitored and managed, including with partner institutions. The team then met students and staff during the review visit. This enabled it to consider whether the design of the system was reflected by the experiences of different groups.

2.22   Students suggest that the College does not always effectively communicate its offer of higher education programmes, and the associated support, clearly. However, there is evidence that the College responds quickly to applications, in line with the expectations set out in the Student Charter. In addition, students feel well supported in the transition from further education to higher education studies. This was confirmed by students met during the visit, who suggested that the admissions process was easy to navigate and that the College was responsive. Students all reported being interviewed and mature students confirmed that they had been admitted on the basis of appropriate alternative experience.

2.23   Staff responsible for admissions confirmed they were able to access professional development opportunities, including with partner institutions. Staff were able to articulate clearly where responsibilities for the admissions process lie, including for admissions appeals.

2.24   The College's clear admissions criteria and procedures are translated into effective practices. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.25   The College uses a variety of approaches to support students both as they transition on to higher education programmes and throughout their course. The quality of teaching and learning is routinely reviewed via College-wide quality review mechanisms, including course updates, course reviews, module monitoring and module review processes. Student satisfaction with teaching is monitored through higher education focus groups, the Higher Education Student Council, the Student Voice Steering Group and PQBs. Information from PQBs and the Higher Education Forum feeds directly into the Higher Education Quality and Standards Board. The College's Solihull Higher Education Activity and Research Group (SHEAR) Strategy provides an opportunity for scholarly activity and research to be shared across the College. The design of these processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.26   The review team reviewed the quality assurance and curriculum approval documentation, external examiner reports, monitoring and review evidence from the awarding bodies and organisation, programme and module specifications, assignment briefings, staff qualifications, and evidence relating to staff development. The team also met senior staff, academic staff, employers, alumni, students and support staff.

2.27   There is a clearly defined strategy for higher education teaching, learning, assessment and scholarship aligned to this Expectation. Staff and student involvement in the creation of the strategy and its ongoing review by the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee indicate that a shared understanding of the strategic approach to teaching and learning is promoted.

2.28   In meetings the review team found that issues raised by students are listened and responded to quickly. Examples of this were providing lockers in the Art block and printers in Graphics, and improving the feedback loop to students with the recent addition of a You Said, We Did section on the VLE. The students confirmed that they have a real say in directing and improving both the College as a whole and their own individual learning. They feel listened to, their input is taken seriously and their message makes a difference. They were also able to articulate how they contribute to the quality cycle through PQBs, the Student Voice Steering Group, the Higher Education Student Council, the Higher Education Quality and Standards Board, focus groups and the Higher Education Student Governor.

2.29   Students whom the review team met confirmed that staff are responsive and supportive. The team heard examples of changes made to physical resources as a consequence of student feedback, including the provision of a Higher Education Centre, which is in response to student desire for a more university-type ethos. The team found that students are very positive about the creation of the new Higher Education Centre, had an opportunity to be involved in the design of it, and feel that it is effective in creating the desired higher education learning environment. In addition, the College has made improvements to the learning resource centre; most notably, more books and journals are available online and there are longer opening hours for part-time students. The team also

heard that the College is putting more training in place for students to ensure they are able to make full use of these resources. On the basis of this evidence the review team **affirms** the deliberate steps being taken to promote a distinctive higher education learning community.

2.30   Results of the National Student Survey and the College's own programme survey show high levels of student satisfaction with teaching, academic support, learning resources and personal development, with scores higher than national benchmarks for further education colleges over a number of years. In meetings students spoke very positively about the level of support, accessibility and responsiveness of their tutors to meeting their needs. They were particularly appreciative of one-to-one tutorial opportunities, which have been increased in number over the past years, and tutor responses to emails outside taught sessions.

2.31   Students feel that their learning is very personalised to them, that they experience good teaching and that there are effective processes in place to enable transition between levels. The review team recognises the value that students place on the quality of the personal tutoring system involving formal and informal one-to-one meetings for the provision of general support, as well as progress reviews.

2.32   The review team found that there is a clear and distinct induction and mentoring process for new higher education staff and that teaching staff are well supported to undertake training and completion of additional qualifications, including PhDs, as well as obtaining professional recognition. Some staff have Higher Education Academy (HEA) recognition as a Fellow and membership of the HEA is actively encouraged by the College. Staff also participate in opportunities offered by partner institutions. Staff development for higher education programmes is distinctive and the higher education continuous personal development programme has a clear focus on equipping staff with the necessary skills to enhance the teaching and learning of students.

2.33   The recent introduction of the SHEAR Strategy and the existing higher education specific peer observation process further endorse the College's commitment to staff development at higher education level. Staff clearly value the professional discussion process associated with peer observation and found it a very productive method for providing the opportunity to share good practice, as well as thinking about scholarly activity and quality issues. Outcomes from the observation process are often shared with students, and their opinions are sought and discussed in Higher Education Forums.

2.34   Overall, there is a very open approach to observation and an ongoing dialogue between colleagues and students to enhance teaching and learning. A summary of findings from the higher education peer observation process will be presented at the next higher education conference, and staff confirmed that actions from peer observation are fed into staff appraisal and development plans. The higher education peer observation system that enhances approaches to teaching and learning and builds staff confidence is **good practice**.

2.35   The evidence from documentation and meetings shows that the College has effective learning and teaching practices. Overall, students are happy with the teaching and learning available at the College. In particular, the peer observation and professional discussion process was found to be good practice, while the review team affirmed the College's actions to promote a distinctive higher education learning community. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.36   The College's key strategies relating to enabling student development and achievement are: the Higher Education Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Scholarship Policy; its Student Voice Strategy; and its policies relating to equality and diversity, which provide a clear commitment to equity. There is also a generic student support and welfare policy. The Higher Education Forum and Higher Education Quality and Standards Board provide a structure for monitoring and evaluating arrangements to support student development and achievement.

2.37   The College systems and processes are designed to assist students to make an effective transition from previous study to higher education or for transitions advancing to higher education levels. Staff ensure that inductions take place for all new levels and that the FHEQ is incorporated in this induction. These policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.38   The review team considered relevant documentation, including external examiner reports; and minutes from periodic review, PQBs and the Higher Education Quality and Standards Board; and discussed aspects of student support with senior, academic and professional support staff as well as students.

2.39   The review team found that there are effective measures in place to support student transition. There is a planned induction process supported by essential documentation on the College VLE and in a flash drive issued to all students, with relevant links to awarding body websites. The College is developing systems for assisting students' progression before starting their programme. Feedback from students suggested that they found the recommended online material quite time-consuming but a useful insight into higher education study.

2.40   Students feel well supported in developing their academic skills through a variety of processes, including regular group tutorials, one-to-one sessions that can be requested at any time, and more formal termly progress reviews. The College has effective measures in place to provide student study support outside the classroom with provision of a tutor for one-to-one support in the Higher Education Centre, and a recently introduced higher education study skills help desk in the library. There is also a diverse range of electronic study guides, including a recent purchase of a study skills toolkit, which was introduced in response to student feedback. The students welcomed the recent creation of a higher education-specific hub on the VLE, which has improved accessibility.

2.41   Students are very positive about their learning environment, and acknowledge the high level of support they receive as a consequence of the relatively small class sizes and the ready access to a range of teaching and support staff. In some cases this was the reason they had decided to study at the College.

2.42   Resources in the learning resource centre encourage independent student learning. Subject librarians visit classes to deliver sessions on researching and resources, and there is a clear process for the learning resource centre to identify resources required. Library staff are involved in the validation process meetings with higher education curriculum teams to discuss resources as well as induction and feedback. In response to student feedback the

learning resource centre has also provided targeted links to partner university resources to facilitate student access. The Library and Open Access Manager also receives copies of all PQB minutes. The National Student Survey results demonstrate consistent satisfaction with the access and quality of learning resources.

2.43   Personal professional development and employability modules are built into many level 4 programmes, and the recently used online study skills package is being used within these, enabling students to reflect upon their own learning, performance and achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development.

2.44   The review team found that careers advice for higher education students is effectively managed through a higher education-specific careers adviser providing both drop-in advice and arranged appointments. This is supplemented by materials on the VLE, careers fairs, delivery of tutorials and bespoke careers events working in collaboration with subject tutors. The effectiveness of the careers provision is evaluated by students and this data is fed into a student services self-assessment report.

2.45   A dedicated higher education support tutor organises additional learning support. Students can disclose special needs on course as well as at interview. Learning walks have been introduced to assess and evaluate support, and the higher education support tutor meets with students to review their individual needs and make amendments. A dyslexia referral process has been established to screen and assess higher education students who do not have a dyslexia report.

2.46   Course leaders identify students at risk of not achieving and signpost them to further support. Other in-house teams support students with mental health issues or students in crisis. A number of case studies were supplied to illustrate the variety of issues students present with and the work the College engages in to coordinate support, enabling students to continue their study and achieve.

2.47   On the basis of this wide-ranging evidence, the review team found that there are effective measures in place to monitor and evaluate student support. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.48   The Student Charter commits the College to providing opportunities in relation sto the student voice. A new Student Voice Engagement Strategy has been written with the aim of encouraging both more, and more effective, student involvement, and to encourage student leadership. This has included the creation of the role of Student Voice President and Student Voice Executive Committee. Students are made aware of the available representative roles at the beginning of each academic year. The College operates a Student Voice Steering Group and holds a Student Conference.

2.49   The College operates a formal student representative system. Student representatives also sit on the Higher Education Strategy Group and Higher Education Quality and Standards Board. In the appropriate terms of reference a student representative is listed as a member of the Higher Education Strategy Group, and of the Quality and Standards Board. Additionally, a Higher Education Student Governor has been appointed through a competitive interview process. The College ensures efforts are made to respond to students who offer feedback.

2.50   Student representatives are nominated by their peers or volunteer, with the role either shared or a ballot taking place if there is more than one nominee. They are trained by and logged with the Student Enrichment Coordinator. Written guidance on the student representative role is made available through the Student Hub.

2.51   The AMR template includes a requirement to show how programme quality is influenced by student feedback.

2.52   The College has a Higher Education Student Council to provide a forum for student views on College facilities and resources. This sits on different days to maximise the ability of the student body to attend. However, the College acknowledges the difficulty of encouraging part-time students to engage with the Student Council. The Higher Education Student Council has previously been chaired by a head of school, but has also been chaired by the Lead Student Representative for 2015. The success of this will be reviewed at the end of the year. Comments made at the Student Council are reported to the Student Voice Steering Group.

2.53   Student views are taken into account during the programme approval process through market research, including questionnaires and focus groups. Students are asked to complete biannual online questionnaires and module reviews. The results of these are communicated to students through the Student Hub and reported to the Higher Education Quality and Standards Board. Additionally, a recent development is that feedback to comments made by student representatives is posted on the VLE in a You Said, We Did format.

2.54   Focus groups with higher education students were used to inform the preparation of a new Higher Education Teaching and Learning Strategy, approved in June 2015. The College also uses externally facilitated focus groups to further develop its understanding of comments made in the National Student Survey. Among the principles of learning and teaching that this seeks to promote, the Strategy includes a strategic objective to engage students in the College's quality enhancement processes. This is about both increasing

student participation at all levels and continually monitoring the effectiveness of the engagement. Additionally, the Strategy suggests that student feedback will inform staff development needs and appraisals.

2.55 Student representatives are included in programme design, development, approval and monitoring processes. Students also participate in periodic review processes and PQBs. Students are issued guidance notes to prepare for PQBs and can submit written comments if they are unable to attend.

2.56 Student satisfaction is monitored through a number of mechanisms, specifically including higher education focus groups, the Higher Education Student Council, the Student Voice Steering Group and PQBs. Actions are reported in Quality Improvement Plans and through PQB Meetings.

2.57 The design of the policies and procedures outlined would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.58 The review team tested the effectiveness of student engagement by considering a range of evidence. This included documentation setting out the College's commitment to student engagement and the mechanisms through which students are encouraged and supported in their engagement. The team also considered evidence of how student feedback is acted upon, the views of students on engagement mechanisms, examples of how student feedback is included in quality enhancement processes and examples of where student engagement has led to enhancements. The team also held meetings with a range of staff, students and student representatives.

2.59 Initially, students suggested that the College does not always effectively communicate where improvements are being made. However, students stated that the College has improved how it communicates the changes made as a result of their feedback. During the visit, both students and staff were able to articulate a wide range of changes made as a result of student feedback. Students reported that they were told about changes made as a result of feedback from the previous cohort. Examples of this included shaping the Higher Education Centre, a higher education-specific part of the VLE, and teaching practices changed as a result of student feedback. The innovative visual methods used to collect feedback from students are welcomed.

2.60 The College library collects and responds to student feedback through a variety of mechanisms, including attending the Higher Education Student Council. Furthermore, students praised the culture of cooperation they share with staff.

2.61 Students demonstrate a strong understanding of representative structures. Students also demonstrate an awareness of being able to contribute to quality assurance through PQBs, and feel that the College is responsive to suggestions made in this way. More generally, student representatives reported that they felt integral to the meetings they attended.

2.62 Staff articulate how student feedback was fed upwards through the hierarchy of College committees. To close the loop student representatives are given time to feedback to their peers.

2.63 The efforts to embed student engagement at each level of the College and the College's responsiveness to suggestions made by students are linked to the affirmation under Expectation B3, which recognises the deliberate steps being taken to promote a distinctive higher education learning community. Examples of this include the position of a Higher Education Student Governor and the creation in 2015-16 of the Student Voice

Executive Committee. The engagement of the latter with senior College staff members is expected to reinforce the progress towards finalising the affirmation.

2.64   The review team concludes that Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, as there is clear evidence that the College is taking steps to systematically involve students in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.65   With respect to its franchised and validated provision, the College follows the procedures set down in the respective partnership agreements. Responsibility for the design of assessments varies depending on whether the provision is validated or franchised. The College has produced a map of responsibilities for each of its partners that includes the arrangements of reassessment. With respect to assessment of BTEC Higher National programmes the College is responsible for the design, setting, marking and internal verification of all assessments. The College uses the published BTEC guidelines and its own Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. Arrangements for assessment of BTEC programmes are included in the map of responsibilities for Pearson.

2.66   All processes leading to the award of credit for franchised and validated programmes are set out and managed by each of the individual universities. The College has a set of regulations and procedures for assessment of BTEC programmes, which includes higher education assessment regulations and assessment board regulations. The College has an APL Policy, which is used primarily for BTEC programmes, as APL for the degree programmes is dealt with using university procedures.

2.67   Guidance on assessment procedures and academic regulations is included in the Higher Education Student Handbook, programme handbooks and on the VLE.

2.68   The College uses information from its internal review and evaluation process, from external examiner reports, and from the National Student Survey outcomes to evaluate its assessment and feedback performance. While employers and work placement providers do not make assessment decisions, these being the preserve of College academic staff, they do, where appropriate, provide advice and feedback to academics in making those judgements.

2.69   The design of the arrangements for assessment and APL are comprehensive and would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.70   The review team examined a range of documentary evidence, including the College Higher Education Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Scholarship Strategy, the Higher Education Student Handbook and appendices, course and student handbooks, examples of feedback and evaluation of the assessment process, and minutes of the Business PQB and AMRs. Evidence of grading and internal verification, examples of an assessment schedule, the APL Policy and records of APL claims, external examiner reports and responses thereto, and the external examiner reporting flowchart were also considered. The team discussed aspects of the assessment processes in all of the meetings it had with senior staff and managers, academic and professional support staff, and students and employers.

2.71   Students confirm that they understand grading criteria and consider marking to be fair, and that they are aware of the internal verification process. Students also confirm that tutor feedback on assignment work, together with the individualised support they receive

from staff, is timely, constructive and enables them to improve their performance and to progress. External examiner reports confirm that assessment is to expected standards, that internal verification is effective and that the assessments set are fit for purpose, current, relevant and enable students to demonstrate both personal and academic development.

2.72   Minutes of PQBs show that student feedback is used to stimulate a review of the assessment process, which has resulted in modifications and improvements.

2.73   In examining the records of APL the review team found that in one example the evidence did not show the coverage of learning outcomes. The team considers that this may be because of the permissive nature of the requirement for mapping used in the APL Policy. The review team **recommends** that the consideration of accreditation of prior learning evidence is fully aligned to learning outcomes, and appropriately recorded.

2.74   The evidence provided shows very clearly that, with the one exception of the consideration of APL, for which a recommendation is made, the arrangements for and processes of assessment are equitable, valid and reliable, and applied consistently and with rigour. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.75 The College does not have degree awarding powers, therefore external examiners are appointed, managed, and their role defined, by the awarding organisation or validating institutions. For Birmingham City University, University of Warwick and Oxford Brookes University, the responsibility for responding to external examiner reports is that of the awarding body.

2.76 Guidance to programme teams regarding how they should work with their external examiner is detailed in the College's External Examiner Policy. This provides a clear process for the College's role in external examining for both Pearson and university-validated programmes. It also records the College's expectations of external examiners in line with the Quality Code, *Chapter B7*.

2.77 Overviews of external examiner reports are compiled based on commonality of provision and reported annually to the Higher Education Quality and Standards Board. The College's processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.78 The review team reviewed the effectiveness of these arrangements through examination of relevant documentation, including partnership agreements, external examiner reports, AMRs and associated Quality Improvement Plans, minutes of the Higher Education Quality and Standards Board, and through meetings held with students and senior and academic staff.

2.79 The Dean of Higher Education collates the outcomes of external examiner reports, which feed into the Higher Education Quality and Standards Board. Minutes from the Higher Education Quality and Standards Board indicate that outcomes from external examiner reports are considered and actions noted. Although there are no overall College-wide actions identified as a result in these minutes, staff in meetings were able to provide examples of how feedback from external examiners had been used to enhance provision, in particular the creation of the SHEAR group and the formation of a dissertation practitioner community.

2.80 Students confirmed that they are briefed about the latest external examiner report and the College's response via the PQBs. There was some evidence that students valued the process of consultation on the external examiner report, and students were very aware that access is provided via the VLE, although few appear to make use of it. The College carries out an annual audit of the VLE, which checks that the latest external examiner reports have been uploaded.

2.81 Overall, the College has clear guidelines for staff regarding how they should work with their external examiner, and provides external examiners with the necessary College and course-specific materials to enable them to undertake their role effectively. Reports and College responses are shared with students and there is evidence to demonstrate that feedback is used to enhance provision. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.82   The College arrangements for programme approval and periodic review are set out in the Programme Approval Procedure, which was included in evidence as the programme approval process. With respect to its provision of foundation and bachelor's degrees, the College offers programmes validated or franchised by four universities, and the requirements for monitoring and review are set out in the 'overarching agreements' for each institution. Each university provides guidance for the approval of new programmes. The College follows the published guidelines and materials laid out in the partnership agreements for each university, which are broadly similar to each other. In each case, the College is required to undertake internal monitoring and review, and to produce an Annual Programme Report or AMR. In addition, each programme is subject to periodic review, which is evaluated by the validating university.

2.83   With respect to its Higher National programmes the College is responsible for the annual review and evaluation of these programmes in line with the Pearson-published guidelines, which are set out in the Pearson Checklist of Responsibilities. The College is aware of, and preparing for, the revised procedures for quality assurance to be introduced in 2016.

2.84   The review team found that the design of arrangements in place for reviewing, updating and evaluating programmes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.85   The review team examined a significant volume of documentary evidence, including the programme approval process, AMRs and Periodic Review Reports, and Programme Review Reports. Minutes of the Higher Education Forum, Higher Education Quality and Standards Board, and PQBs were also considered, along with the Higher Education Student Handbook and a faculty health check presentation. The team reviewed a sample of external examiner reports and responses, and discussed arrangements for monitoring and review with key stakeholders, including senior managers, and academic and professional support staff, employers, students, and student reps.

2.86   The College has produced a Quality Enhancement Cycle, which informs the annual review and evaluation process. Each programme produces an AMR, which is considered internally by the College senior academic committees.

2.87   The College has a deliberative committee structure, including the Higher Education Strategy Group, the Executive Management Team, the Higher Education Quality and Standards Board, the Senior Leadership Team Quality Forum, and PQBs. The various issues and procedures arising out of Programme Review are considered, monitored and actioned as necessary. Students are represented in these procedures up to and including governor level.

2.88   The review team found that the evidence demonstrates a monitoring and review system that is systematic, robust and effective. The views of students and external examiners are fully considered and responded to, action planning is incorporated at appropriate levels and monitored through the College committee structure, and the sharing of good practice is facilitated.

2.89   The system is rigorous and satisfies the requirements of university partners, the external examiners and Pearson, and the processes for programme monitoring and review are robust, effective and thorough. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.90   Procedures for complaints and academic appeals are set out in separate policies. The College's own appeals process is detailed on the website and on the VLE. Students are encouraged to resolve matters informally before using this process and are made aware that they should use the College system before taking any appeal further. If the issue cannot be resolved at the College level, students are directed to the partner university, and then the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for complaints.

2.91   Students are made aware of the complaints process at induction. The expectations of students are set out through a Student Code of Conduct. A commitment to supporting students through the complaints process is clearly set out by the Student Charter. This also states that the complaints procedure will be set out in the Student Handbook.

2.92   The monitoring of complaints and appeals is included in the course-level AMRs. Any complaints are monitored by the College's Quality Coordinator, reporting to the Deputy Principal. The College respects confidentiality where requested but does not accept anonymous complaints. Mechanisms are available for students to report issues without talking to teaching staff and a standard complaints form is available.

2.93   Following the receipt of a complaint, supporting information is requested from the student and a hearing is convened. A formal report of the outcome is issued to the student. Academic appeals follow the policies and timetable set by partner universities or, for Pearson-validated qualifications, the College follows its own appeals process. These policies and procedures set out by the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.94   The review team tested the Expectation by first considering documentary evidence of the College's academic appeals and complaints policies and procedures. How these are managed, monitored and reviewed, including mapping of responsibilities to partner institutions, and logging and reporting documentation, was also scrutinised. The College publication of these policies through induction documents and handbooks, and the rights of students using the procedures, were also reviewed. The team then considered the effectiveness of the policies by meeting staff and students to test how widely they were understood.

2.95   The course handbook template expects handbooks to signpost the procedures. Although not consistent in format, four out of the five course handbooks presented guided students to where they could find information on how to make a complaint. One handbook encouraged students to first address the matter informally. Additionally, the Higher Education Student Handbook sets out each process.

2.96   The processes for the resolution of complaints and academic appeals are clearly and separately articulated. Additionally, each policy clearly details the limit of its scope and signposts the other policy where appropriate. Clear timescales are set out for their resolution.

2.97   Where courses are delivered in partnership with other institutions, there is evidence that the responsibilities of each institution are appropriately recorded. Procedures have been

reviewed appropriately in response to external drivers, for example updated guidance from the Competition and Markets Authority. Clear records are kept, indicating whether complaints and academic appeals have been resolved. These are reported to the College governors.

2.98   Both staff and students demonstrated a clear awareness of where to find the appropriate procedures. Students reported that the procedures were explained during induction and they were able to articulate where a concern about teaching style had been resolved informally but effectively. Staff reported that they were able to access opportunities for professional development. This included those organised by partner institutions such as Oxford Brookes.

2.99   The College publishes clear and separately articulated policies for handling complaints and appeals, and both staff and students demonstrate a clear awareness of how these operate. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.100   The College's processes and procedures for organising and managing placements and other work-based learning opportunities are described in the College's Student/Apprentice Work Placement Policy. Responsibility for approving placements and oversight of their organisation rests with the heads of school. All proposed placements are subject to risk assessment by a work placement coordinator or equivalent. Employers complete a record of the students' activities and liaise with the placement coordinator with any queries, or if problems arise. In some cases further programme-specific guidance is provided, such as a handbook for supervisors and managers involved in placements on the Health and Social Care foundation programme.

2.101   The College policy on placements and its associated procedures would enable the Expectation to be met. The review team tested this by scrutinising the relevant policy and by talking to staff, employers and students who had experience of supporting or participating in work placements.

2.102   Work experience and placement opportunities of different types and duration are a feature of several programmes delivered by the College. For example, all part-time Engineering and Construction students are in relevant paid employment, and students taking the Diploma in Veterinary Studies must complete at least 12 full-time weeks in paid or voluntary employment as a clinical veterinary nurse to meet the requirements of the Royal Veterinary College.

2.103   Staff understand the College's responsibilities under this Expectation for the secure implementation and effective management of work-based learning. Policy and procedures have been strengthened since the College's last QAA review through the creation of a single College-wide policy on placement learning. The policy defines the requirements and responsibilities of those involved in the organisation and operation of placements, and provides standard templates for risk assessment, learner agreement and employer feedback and reporting. While some variation in practice exists depending on subject area and placement type, staff and students seen by the review team recognise this policy as an internal reference point for placement organisation.

2.104   While close links exist with local employers, the full range of 200 placement providers used by the College extends from Wales to Derbyshire. Students do not report access problems and express the view that experience on placements makes their programme feel more relevant. Management of academic standards or assessment responsibilities are not delegated to employers, but employers evidently play a role in enabling learners to achieve through ongoing formal and informal support and feedback. Employers confirm from experience that placement organisation is sound and that good communication and support is provided by relevant College staff.

2.105   The review team concludes that 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

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

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.107   In reaching its judgement the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. There are two areas of good practice, one recommendation and one affirmation identified in this judgement area.

2.108   The first area of good practice recognises the robust course design, development and approval process that engages employers and aims to respond to their needs. The second feature of good practice recognises that the College runs a higher education-specific peer observation process that is valued by staff as a way to build confidence and improve teaching and learning strategies. Both of these features of good practice are cross-referenced to the Enhancement Expectation, as the review team also recognise the steps taken at College level to support these initiatives.

2.109   A number of steps had been taken to create a distinctive higher education learning community within the College. This has provided the basis for effective teaching and learning, improved the learning environment and helped to engage students in a number of ways. The review team therefore makes one affirmation in Expectation B3, cross-referenced to both Expectation B5 and the Enhancement Expectation.

2.110   When considering Expectation B6, the review team reviewed an example of when APL had not been fully aligned against learning outcomes and appropriately recorded. This led to the one recommendation in this section and a moderate risk level being applied.

2.111   Overall, all 10 of the applicable Expectations have been met. Nine have a low associated risk level and one has been allocated a moderate risk level.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 Information is provided to students and interested parties in a range of formats. The online Student Hub, VLE and programme handbooks are seen as the primary source of information for students, whereas public information is primarily made available through the College website. Responsibility for the production of definitive programme information is shared with the College's university awarding bodies. Online material is approved and monitored internally according to the College's published procedures. A new information management and communication policy was introduced in February 2016.

3.2 The review team tested the policy, process and procedures that would enable the College to meet the Expectation by scrutinising a range of information sources and policy, and talking to students and a range of senior, academic and professional support staff.

3.3 The College website is the main outward-facing means of communication with prospective students, employers and the general public, and includes sections on College regulatory information such as key information set data, governance information and statements on freedom of information, data protection and equality and diversity. Higher education provision is listed centrally on the College homepage and has its own area branded as 'University Level Learners'. Information for prospective students includes electronic course leaflets, which display the Unistats widget, where available, and links to the programme specifications.

3.4 The review team noted some inconsistency in identification of the awarding partner for higher education programmes on some web pages. For franchised or validated programmes the university awarding body is always named, but Pearson is not always clearly identified as the awarding partner for HNC/D awards. Potentially, this may cause confusion for prospective students. To ensure accuracy and transparency, the review team **recommends** that, by July 2016, the College ensure that all website marketing information clearly and consistently identifies the awarding partner for all qualifications.

3.5 Course leaflets are supplemented with digital video content showcasing current and former students and College facilities. Video content is produced through external agencies and checked by the College Marketing Manager. Website content is subject to regular review. Overall, students express satisfaction with the quality of information provided in applying and choosing to study at the College.

3.6 The Higher Education Student Handbook is coordinated and prepared by the Higher Education Quality Administrator and checked by the Dean of Higher Education. A course information section is provided as a template for course leaders to follow. Once prepared, it is checked and signed off by heads of school to ensure that information is accurate and complete. Handbooks are also produced for each programme and include content defined in a programme handbook checklist. All handbooks appear up to date and fit for purpose, though not all programme handbooks include everything on the checklist.

3.7   Handbooks are issued to students on a memory stick and uploaded to the VLE. An online Student Hub supplements the VLE and includes cross-College student information and news items. Students are made aware of policies and procedures relating to appeals, assessment and assessment malpractice, mitigating circumstances and complaints through the induction programme, and these policies are made available on the VLE. Some student feedback suggests that internal systems for conveying information to students about the College's operations, activities and policies are not considered to be particularly effective. However, the review team found the Hub and VLE to be accessible and content rich.

3.8   The review team **affirms** the introduction of an internal policy for the management of information, published in February 2016, which coherently defines objectives and responsibilities for information management and communication. The policy draws together a range of existing policies and demonstrates understanding that the College is responsible and accountable for the information it produces about the higher education learning opportunities it offers.

3.9   The College produces information that is timely, current, transparent and focused on the needs of its intended audiences. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate, due to the need to amend or update details in website documentation.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

3.11   The Expectation in this section is met and the associated risk level is moderate. There are no areas of good practice, one affirmation and one recommendation recorded in this judgement area.

3.12   The review team affirm the introduction of an internal policy for the management of information, recognising that it defines objectives and responsibilities for information management and communication.

3.13   There is inconsistency in the way that different awarding partners and organisations are identified in website information, which leads to the recommendation cited in this section.

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

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College has published a Higher Education Strategy, and a mission and values, which set out key targets for enhancement in both resources and the quality of the student experience. These plans for the University Centre refer to the College commitment to provide high quality learning environments, an IT infrastructure to support the needs of future students, a best-in-sector external digital communication platform, access to information that will continuously improve and monitor individual and organisational performance, and IT content that will enhance the learning experience for students.

4.2 The College has in place arrangements for governors, the Executive Management Team, the Senior Leadership Team, the Higher Education Strategy Group, the Higher Education Quality and Standards Board, the Higher Education Forum, the Student Voice Steering Group and the Higher Education Student Council to exercise scrutiny, monitoring and engagement with the formulation and development of the published strategies, and the formulation, development and evaluation of new opportunities for enhancements.

4.3 Responsibility for strategic management of higher education provision lies with the Deputy Principal. The College has also appointed a Higher Educational Enhancement and Access Programme Manager, who reports to the Dean of Higher Education. The College identifies its staff development strategy as a key factor in supporting the enhancement agenda.

4.4 The design of the College approach to enhancement provides mechanisms that allow for initiatives to originate from the top down and from the bottom up. Initiatives, once formulated for implementation, are monitored for operation and impact by the Dean of Higher Education, at Vice-Principal level, and through the College's most senior committees, which in turn inform the College's senior management and governors. The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.5 The review team considered minutes from the Higher Education Strategy Group, the Higher Education Quality and Standards Board, the Student Voice Steering Group and the Higher Education Student Council. Documentary evidence was also reviewed, including the Solihull College University Centre Strategic Plan 2015-18, the Solihull College University Centre Vision and Values, and the College's redevelopment plans. Evidence was further explored in meetings with College senior managers, academic and professional support staff, and students, including a group of student reps and employers. These meetings included members of the internal deliberative and advisory committees of the College with responsibility for higher education.

4.6 The review team found evidence of the effective oversight of the College's higher education provision detailed in the Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review report of May 2011. This oversight incorporates a commitment to enhancement, and the College was able to offer many examples that, in discussions with students and employers, were confirmed to have impacted positively on the students' learning experience and on their ultimate employability.

4.7 The creation of the Higher Education Centre has provided higher education students with their own learning and social space, and has contributed significantly to their

sense of identity as higher education students. This is an example of the College's commitment to the creation of a distinctive higher education learning community, which is helped by the College branding as a 'University Centre', affirmed in Expectation B3.

4.8 Encouragement and support are given to academic staff to undertake personal and professional development and to seek membership of the Higher Education Academy, together with the introduction of the differentiated system for classroom observation and the peer review system, identified as good practice in Expectation B3. These approaches were recognised by staff as enabling them to develop in their roles as professional teachers but also by students, who recognised the expertise so engendered in their tutors. The creation of SHEAR further emphasises the importance given to higher education in the College and promotes the strategy for academic development, particularly at level 6.

4.9 The review team also noted the introduction of, and continuing support for, the higher education conference, which acts as an effective platform for sharing good practice. Participation in the Associate College Partnership group and conference brings external parties to the agenda for sharing good practice.

4.10 The review team was also impressed by the extent to which students recognised the efforts made by the College to improve the facilities and resources provided, and the many improvements made as a result of their formal and informal feedback to the College through representatives and direct communication with staff.

4.11 There are examples of deliberate and strategic steps taken by the College that demonstrate commitment to enhancement by its management team. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.13   There are no areas of good practice directly situated in this section, but two features of good practice from Expectations B1 and B3 are both secondarily linked to Enhancement. This is in recognition of the steps being taken at College level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

4.14   Similarly, there are no affirmations situated directly in Enhancement, although there is secondary linkage from Expectation B3 where an affirmation is made regarding the steps taken to promote a distinctive higher education learning community.

4.15   There are no recommendations associated with this judgement area.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1   The College has clear strategic aims linked to employability and local employer needs. The College's curriculum development is closely aligned to local enterprise priority sectors and the College has close links with the local Chamber of Commerce.

5.2   It is clear that the College has taken a significant number of steps to improve the employability of its students. Curriculum development and design have been constructed to promote employability and meet local employer need. Employers have been consulted regarding the most useful units to deliver, and over decisions regarding maximising investment to bring the most benefit to students in the workplace. An example of this is the investment in the materials testing lab, which enables both construction and engineering students to develop the skills needed to fill future deficits in the locality. Employers confirmed that they had been involved in programme development and review, contributed to bids for additional funding, and seen AMRs.

5.3   In addition, employability or personal development planning modules are embedded within many programmes. Programme specifications for Pearson and degree-awarding bodies embed employability skills; often this is directly achieved through work-based learning modules or work-related projects. Higher National student research projects are frequently based on an industry question or problem. On other programmes students present their research in seminar to employers.

5.4   Although a College analysis of its own Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education data suggests that students find their programmes are better at preparing them for further study than employment, this needs to be considered in the context of the fact that many of the College's students are already employed, which can skew the data. In meetings with students, and in the evidence submitted, there were clear examples of how the College's higher education programmes had helped students find employment or develop their career, and students were enthusiastic about the opportunities they had received to engage with employers during their course. These included: participation in real work activities, exhibitions, research or live projects; carrying out ecological surveys for Warwickshire Wildlife Trust; development of student entrepreneurial skills through working with specialists on materials; and enabling graphic design students to develop 'pen skills' to help them in job interviews, while other students are given opportunities to 'pitch for roles', meet with photographers and artists to discuss potential incomes, network with employers at events, use industry-standard hardware and software, and participate in work placement opportunities.

5.5   Students also valued the fact that alumni often came in to provide inspirational talks about their career progression. Alumni were highly positive about how the programmes had been devised to improve their employability.

5.6   College facilities have been adapted to provide simulated working environments such as the veterinary nursing suite; new science labs, which offer an industry-standard laboratory environment; and investment in cutting-edge and emerging technology, and processes such as the 3D printer in the Advanced Manufacturing Centre.

5.7   Local employers have been involved in helping the College develop industry standard competences in health care, and employers are involved in the delivery of some courses. For example, an employee of Jaguar Land Rover has a part-time contract to teach performance management and provide feedback on presentations, which ensures that

current industry practice is embedded. Employers are also involved in sponsoring awards at the higher education graduation.

5.8   The Careers Service provides tutorials, information, weekly drop-in careers sessions and support for students to apply for graduate schemes. Students are also offered opportunities to attend career fairs both on and off-site.

5.9   The employability case studies submitted by the College further demonstrate the comprehensive and diverse nature of what the College can offer in terms of developing employability. It is clear that the College places a strong emphasis on the employability of its students, and it is without doubt a central theme in the development of the College's higher education provision and its vision for a higher education student, which is well understood by all stakeholders.

5.10   Collectively, these initiatives promote the development of students' enterprise and entrepreneurial skills and ensure students develop the professional skills needed to increase their employability.

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning

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

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

Flexible and distributed learning
A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations.
See also **distance learning**.

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

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

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.