



Higher Education Review of West Thames College

November 2015

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at West Thames College. The review took place from 9 to 11 November 2015 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Francine Norris
- Howard White
- Cara Williams (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by West Thames 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 6.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key findings

QAA's judgements about West Thames College

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

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

Good practice

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

- The externality provided by the direct involvement of the Corporation in monitoring standards, quality and the enhancement of learning opportunities (Expectations A3.3 and B8).
- The engagement with industry that ensures that the curriculum supports employability (Expectation B3).
- The comprehensive arrangements for student support which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectation B4).
- The strategic approach to enhancement (Enhancement).
- The development and use of resources for digital literacy and e-learning (Enhancement).

Recommendations

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

By March 2016:

- ensure that programme specifications are accessible to external stakeholders (Expectation C).

By July 2016:

- ensure that procedures are formally articulated in process documents and that their observance is captured in clear and detailed minutes of relevant committees (Expectations B1 and B7)
- articulate, in a single document, a staff development strategy which captures and further develops initiatives to improve the understanding, quality and consistency of higher education teaching (Expectation B3)
- create a formal process to record, monitor and review the effectiveness of student engagement (Expectation B5)
- create opportunities for all students to provide anonymised feedback on their modules and programmes (Expectation B5)
- in partnership with students, continue to develop opportunities for higher education student representation on decision-making committees (Expectation B5)
- develop a periodic review process for the Pearson provision (Expectation B8)

- ensure that all documents addressed to students fully differentiate between further and higher education (Expectation C).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The steps being taken to continue development of study skills resources to further support student achievement (Expectation B4).
- The steps being taken to enact a strategy that maintains consistent information (Expectation C).

Theme: Digital Literacy

Commitment to improving the digital literacy of students is reflected in clear objectives in the College's Higher Education Development Plan. The College develops online materials and activities to develop students' knowledge and use of digital technology. Students are shown how to develop their own online collection of research material at induction. The ability to work effectively with digital technology is integrated with the students' learning experience and in particular with strategies to extend independent study skills.

Skills and knowledge are developed for some students through their use of digital technology for formative feedback, while others use reflective logs and some promote their own work for employability purposes. Enhanced physical resources and staff development facilitate the use of tools to enable independent and blended learning. These initiatives also support students' acquisition of digital literacy knowledge and skills. Increases in student satisfaction and use of digital technology demonstrate progress against the College's planned targets.

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

About West Thames College

West Thames College (the College) is a medium-sized general further education college with two sites in the West London Borough of Hounslow. The main campus is located in Isleworth and the Skills Centre is based in Feltham. The College's curriculum is primarily vocational and includes pre-entry to Level 6 qualifications. Higher education is offered only at the Isleworth campus.

The College vision states: 'West Thames will be a vibrant college, inspiring all our learners to fulfil their dreams and ambitions. Our outstanding education and training will contribute to a prosperous and cohesive community.' The College has approximately 4,000 part-time students and 2,500 full-time students. Of these, 235 are full-time higher education students enrolled on Pearson Higher National awards. There are also 71 part-time students studying franchised programmes at the College who are enrolled with their respective awarding bodies. College staff also teach 42 part-time students at St Mary's University in Twickenham. At the time of the QAA Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) in March 2011, there were approximately 4,500 further education students at the College and 388 full-time equivalent higher education students. The student population reflects the ethnically and linguistically diverse character of the west London boroughs in which they reside.

Extensive changes have been made to the facilities at the Isleworth campus since the 2011 IQER. New buildings and resources include a new Learning Resource Centre, upgraded virtual learning environment and a new management information system. A flatter management structure is also in operation.

The College identifies a number of key challenges, including: adapting to the significant changes to higher education funding; increasing the range of flexible and higher skills provision which directly meets the needs of employers; the rise in tuition fees in a competitive marketplace; and actively developing a distinct higher education community.

The College works with Kingston University as part of a consortium to deliver the FdA Early Years programme. The Certificate in Education and Professional Graduate Certificate in Education are delivered as part of a Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training consortium coordinated by the University of Westminster. This partnership arrangement is due to cease and provision for students to complete their teacher training programmes is in place. A new agreement for the collaborative delivery of the University Diploma in Teaching English or Mathematics with Canterbury Christ Church University is nearing completion. In partnership with St Mary's University in Twickenham, the College delivers the FdSc in Psychology and Counselling. The programme is delivered, assessed and quality-assured entirely at the St Mary's University Twickenham campus. The College also offers seven Higher National awards accredited by Pearson.

The College has addressed the recommendations from the 2011 IQER. The amount of progress made with each action differs. For example, the College has made progress in developing staff, but a comprehensive staff development strategy for higher education teaching staff is absent.

Explanation of the findings about West Thames College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College is responsible for delivering programmes offered in partnership with Kingston University, St Mary's University in Twickenham, the University of Westminster and Pearson. Ultimate responsibility for the academic standards of the programmes offered by the College rests with the three awarding bodies and the awarding organisation (Pearson). Each partner is responsible for setting academic standards during programme design, validation and review by ensuring that the requirements of the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements are given due consideration. The responsibilities of the College for maintaining academic standards are set out in the relevant partnership agreements. Each awarding body prepares programme specifications, or in the case of Pearson, qualification specifications, which identify threshold academic standards and learning outcomes.

1.2 Partnership arrangements with each awarding body differ. The College is an Associate College of Kingston University and delivers the franchised FdA Early Years in partnership as part of a consortium of Colleges. The College is responsible for delivery and the University is responsible for setting the standards of the programme through design and validation. The FdSc in Psychology and Counselling is designed and delivered in partnership with St Mary's University in Twickenham. College staff attend regular meetings, assessment boards and programme boards to quality-assure elements of the programme that are the

College's responsibility. This arrangement will finish at the end of this academic year. The College is validated by the University of Westminster as a delivery partner for the Certificate in Education and the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education as part of a Teacher Training consortium. The University will withdraw from the arrangement this year and arrangements are in place to support completing students.

1.3 The largest proportion of the College's higher education provision is Pearson-validated Higher National awards which are delivered and assessed at the College. Academic standards are set out in standard qualification documentation developed by Pearson and approved by Ofqual in terms of level. The College has responsibility for selecting appropriate modules from a suite provided, and in some cases designing modules, to meet local needs. Local needs modules are subject to validation and approval by Pearson. Responsibility for the design of effective learning and assessment materials also rests with the College. The College's own arrangements and its use of the awarding body and Pearson regulatory frameworks would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.4 The team reviewed partnership documents and regulatory and programme documentation including programme specifications, validation and quality review reports, and the reports of external examiners. The review team held meetings with College staff and a liaison tutor from Kingston University.

1.5 The evidence demonstrates the arrangements to be effective in practice. The College ensures that staff and students have access to programme specifications prepared by the awarding body that take account of the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and qualification descriptors. The College prepares programme specifications for the Pearson provision which set out aims, outcomes, entry criteria, teaching and learning methods. These programme specifications do not reference Subject Benchmark Statements but curriculum teams reference the qualification descriptors in the FHEQ, to inform their teaching and assessment practice and ensure assignments focus on skills development and outcomes for students.

1.6 Each awarding partner appoints external examiners who effectively monitor achievement annually to ensure that the College's provision meets the standard for the awards offered. Annual and periodic review processes are specified by awarding partners' bodies to ensure that the College fulfils its obligations to provide courses at the appropriate level on their behalf. This is monitored on an ongoing basis. Kingston University produces a module review and development plan following regular scrutiny meetings. Actions arising are addressed on an ongoing basis and formally recorded each year in a Course Summary Report submitted to the University for approval. St Mary's University review the provision through programme boards and the production of an annual review document. Pearson programmes are reviewed annually by programme teams as part of the Course Review and Evaluation (CRE) and Pearson provide the College with an annual Quality Review and Development Report that informs this process. Staff clearly articulated the structure of internal committees and reporting lines that oversee the higher education provision from programme level through higher education-specific subcommittees through to the College's Curriculum Quality Executive Group and then to the governing body, the Corporation.

1.7 While the awarding partners have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the relevant external reference points are adhered to, the College works effectively within its partnership agreements to manage its own responsibilities for ensuring adherence to external reference points. This is confirmed through, for example, validation reports, quality review reports and the conclusions from external examiner reports. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

1.8 The College has comprehensive academic governance arrangements, which are overseen by its Corporation. A Quality and Equality Advisory Group monitors quality at board level and receives reports from the College Executive and Curriculum Quality Executive Group. Two subcommittees, one responsible for strategic matters, the Higher Education Strategy Group, and the other operations, the Higher Education Operations Group, oversee the higher education provision and report on this to the College Executive.

1.9 For the University-validated provision, the College works with the separate regulatory and quality assurance frameworks of each of its University partners, as described in Expectation A1. Kingston University, St Mary's University in Twickenham and University of Westminster each provide a partnership or collaborative provision handbook document that provides guidance for the College in understanding and enacting the different regulatory frameworks. Assessments are set by each University, and the College is responsible for the first marking of work with the University conducting moderation. For the Kingston University and Westminster University programmes, moderation is across several partner colleges within each consortium.

1.10 For the Pearson provision, the College has more direct responsibility and has developed comprehensive standards and assessment procedures. Assessments are monitored by Course Leaders and Internal Verifiers for their quality and appropriateness and are checked annually by the external examiner to ensure they meet the required standards. Assessment Boards are organised by the College and the external examiner, while not in attendance, confirms standards through comprehensive reports and an annual Quality Review and Development Report. The College operates within the frameworks of its awarding bodies who are responsible for the award of credit and qualifications and has established its own internal governance arrangements in support. These arrangements would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

1.11 The team reviewed programme documentation including regulatory frameworks, policies and procedures from awarding partners and the College's internal documentation including programme specifications, Standards and Assessment Guidelines and validation and quality review reports. The team also met a range of academic staff, a link tutor from Kingston University, and a member of the Corporation.

1.12 The team learned that the arrangements with the University partners work well in practice and that the relationships with awarding bodies are effective on both a strategic and operational level. Adherence to awarding body regulations and policies are well established in the College. In addition to the awarding body arrangements, the College has developed its own internal processes for oversight of higher education. At individual programme level curriculum team meetings are in operation that report to the Higher Education Operations Group. This group reports to a Higher Education Strategy Group which is a subcommittee of the College's overarching Curriculum Quality Executive Group. The terms of reference of these groups are clear and understood by staff. Comprehensive assessment policies and procedures set out in the Standards and Assessment Guidelines have been developed to support the areas of the provision for which the College has more responsibility.

1.13 The awarding partners have responsibility for academic frameworks and regulations. Evidence including external examiners' reports and quality review reports indicates the College operates effectively to uphold the regulatory frameworks and regulations. Therefore within the context of the partnership agreements with its awarding partners, the 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

1.14 Responsibility for maintaining the definitive record for each programme and qualification, in the form of programme specifications, resides with each awarding body. For Pearson provision the College has responsibility for producing contextualised programme specifications with reference to the definitive information provided by the awarding organisation. These approaches would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.15 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of these arrangements by examining programme specifications, programme handbooks, the College website and its virtual learning environment (VLE). The team also discussed the availability of programme specifications and their use with teaching staff and students.

1.16 Overall the evidence reviewed demonstrates arrangements to be effective in practice. Programme specifications prepared by the College for Pearson provision set out aims, outcomes, entry criteria, teaching and learning methods. External examiner reports confirm that the College designs effective learning and assessment materials to meet the learning outcomes for each qualification. Curriculum teams also reference the qualification descriptors in the FHEQ, to inform their teaching and assessment practice and ensure assignments focus on skills development and outcomes for students. Programme specifications and module descriptors are made available to staff and students on the VLE. The College understands its responsibility to use programme specifications as reference points and teaching staff are familiar with specifications and their purpose.

1.17 Students confirm that handbooks are provided to them during induction and that these are also accessible on the VLE. The review team observed that programme specifications are unavailable to prospective students and external stakeholders. The team makes a recommendation for programme specifications to be made available to prospective students and external stakeholders in Expectation C of this report.

1.18 Within its partnership agreements the College fulfils its responsibilities for maintaining definitive records. The College works closely with its awarding partners and information is made available to students in a number of ways including University-devised handbooks and the VLE. A recommendation in Part C is relevant, but the review team concludes that the College meets the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.19 The College's awarding bodies and organisation are responsible for ensuring that academic standards are set at an appropriate level in accordance with their academic frameworks and regulations. The partnership agreements and their respective approval processes identify the framework within which the College works. The College delivers foundation degree programmes in collaboration with Kingston University and St Mary's University in Twickenham which are designed by the awarding partner. As part of a consortium the College also delivers programmes in teacher education validated by the University of Westminster, although this arrangement is being terminated and the College is negotiating the validation of equivalent programmes by Canterbury Christ Church University. In each case the awarding body approves the College as a partner, approves the delivery of the programme by the College, and conducts quinquennial revalidations. In addition, the College develops its own Higher National programmes for validation by Pearson. These arrangements would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

1.20 The review team explored the effectiveness of these arrangements by examining documentary evidence of programme design, validation and revalidation, partners' academic frameworks and regulations, partnership agreements, and external examiners' reports. The review team also met the Principal, and senior and teaching staff, including a link tutor from an awarding body.

1.21 Re-approvals by all three current awarding bodies within the last five years, the recent Partner Approval Event for teacher education programmes at Canterbury Christ Church and annual approval by Pearson indicate that partners are satisfied with the College's management of its responsibilities in this area. The College understands its responsibility to seek approval from Pearson for modules and programmes and to operate them as approved. The team saw evidence of formal approval being sought from and granted by Pearson for 'meet local needs' modules and for a new HNC programme. Programme and module specifications drawn up by the College for Pearson provision specify the level of the qualification and intended learning outcomes. There are no concerns about threshold standards in external examiner reports.

1.22 The review team concludes that, within the context of the partnership agreements with its awarding bodies and arrangements with the awarding organisation, the College fulfils its responsibilities in programme approval. The College works closely with its awarding partners, understands its delegated responsibilities and operates appropriately to comply with academic frameworks and regulations. Therefore the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.23 The College operates within assessment regulations established by its awarding partners as set out in partnership agreements. Assessments for the foundation degrees and the teacher education programme are agreed with the awarding body, marked by College staff, internally moderated by staff at the awarding body and externally moderated by examiners appointed by the awarding body, which also convenes assessment boards. For Pearson provision, the awarding organisation's regulations are supplemented by a Standards and Assessment Guidelines booklet which establishes procedures for assessment boards, internal moderation, reasonable adjustments and dealing with malpractice. Intended learning outcomes are set out in programme specifications and module descriptors which are available to staff and students. Assessment Boards which confirm achievement of standards are held at the College for Pearson provision. College staff attend moderation meetings and assessment boards held by partners for awarding body provision. External examiner comments on standards and process are considered at these boards. Marks and awards are subsequently confirmed by the awarding partner.

1.24 An Assessment Standards subgroup of the Curriculum Quality Executive Group has particular responsibility for ensuring that assessments for Pearson provision are set at the right level and that internal moderation is conducted. For awarding body provision this is the responsibility of link tutors. Taken together, these arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.25 The review team explored the operation of the arrangements by examining awarding body collaborative provision manuals and the College's guidance booklet, documentary evidence of assessment design and moderation, and assessment board minutes and external examiner reports for all programmes. The team also met senior and teaching staff, including a link tutor from an awarding body, and students.

1.26 Procedures set out in partner regulations and in the Standards and Assessment Guidelines booklet are followed and effective in practice. Guidance in the booklet is clear and accessible. Staff were familiar with the procedures and support staff were able to explain how reasonable adjustment and mitigating circumstances were managed so as not to compromise standards.

1.27 The review team saw evidence of internal moderation of assessment briefs and marking and also of tracking of this process. It noted that the College is praised in a number of recent Pearson external examiner reports for the effectiveness of its internal moderation system.

1.28 Teaching staff, including those new to higher education, are aware of the level descriptors in the FHEQ and are able to articulate the differences between further and higher

education. Students told the team that they had confidence in the standards of assessment, confirming the reports of external examiners who had met students in previous years.

1.29 Assessment boards are properly constituted and conduct their business appropriately although the team noted some variation in the quality of the minutes of boards for Pearson provision.

1.30 External examiners' reports confirm that threshold standards are met. Concerns were expressed in 2013-14 about the articulation of merit and distinction criteria in new Pearson provision, to which the College responded by commissioning a Pearson training event and reports for 2014-15 record improvement.

1.31 Evidence from the documentation and meetings shows the College's management of responsibilities within partnership arrangements is effective. For Pearson provision assessment design and methods are appropriate and provide suitable opportunities for students to achieve the learning outcomes. Inconsistencies in recording assessment decisions in some assessment boards for Pearson provision are not so significant that they pose a risk to the award of credit or qualifications. Where concerns are raised in external examiners' reports, they have been addressed. Therefore the review team concludes that the College manages its responsibilities for the award of credits and qualifications effectively. 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

1.32 The College's awarding bodies specify processes for annual and periodic review which explicitly address academic standards. Annual monitoring reports are prepared by the awarding body's programme manager and considered at the awarding body before being sent to the College where they are considered by the Curriculum Quality Executive Group and Higher Education Strategy Group. Periodic review processes are explicitly linked to revalidation although St Mary's University also conducts a separate Internal Subject Review. The College undertakes to participate as requested in Pearson's periodic review process, which also addresses standards.

1.33 Kingston University requires its partners' programme team leaders to complete Module Review and Development Plans and a Course Summary Report each year. These are considered at an Executive Meeting with each partner, attended by partner staff, and form the basis of the Annual Review and Development Plan for the programme. The College's curriculum team leader for teacher education contributes to the University of Westminster's annual Course Leader's Report through regular programme coordinator meetings. The one member of College staff who teaches on the St Mary's programme contributes to its Annual Statement of Programme Evaluation & Review in a similar manner. For annual monitoring of its Higher National programmes the College applies its own Course Review and Evaluation procedure. Pearson also issues an annual Quality Review and Development Report on the College's management of its provision. All the annual monitoring processes include consideration of external examiners' comments on outcomes. These arrangements would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

1.34 The review team explored the operation of the College's arrangements by examining documentary evidence, including monitoring reports and the minutes of relevant committees of the College and its awarding bodies. The team also held meetings with senior and teaching staff, including a link tutor from an awarding body.

1.35 Overall, the arrangements for programme monitoring and review are effective. The team examined evidence of annual and periodic review of programmes for which the College's awarding bodies are responsible and found that their procedures are followed correctly. College staff contribute to them and attend relevant meetings at the partner.

1.36 The College's Course Review and Evaluation requires programme teams to comment on the effectiveness of assessment and on student performance. Completed forms seen by the team address these issues, making frequent reference to external examiners' reports.

1.37 Curriculum Directors are required to present annual self-assessment reports based on Course Review and Evaluation forms to the Quality and Equality Advisory Group of the Corporation. Half the members of the Quality and Equality Advisory Group are external to the College and some bring expertise of higher education which is used to challenge and support the College's monitoring of academic standards and quality. The review team heard from the Principal, the Chair of the Quality and Equality Advisory Group and senior staff that

the governors monitor performance closely and often challenge internal self-assessments. The review team saw evidence in the Quality and Equality Advisory Group minutes of specific requests for additional evidence and adjustment of targets. The team concludes that the externality provided by the direct involvement of the Corporation in monitoring standards, quality and the enhancement of learning opportunities at the College is **good practice**.

1.38 The College does not have its own periodic review process for Higher National programmes. Pearson does not require it to have one and its absence does not compromise standards but the team considers it a weakness in the management of the quality of learning opportunities and recommends later in Expectation B8 of this report that one should be developed.

1.39 Overall, the evidence demonstrates that the College is managing its responsibilities for monitoring and reviewing its programmes by effectively implementing the annual and periodic review processes of its awarding bodies and the annual review process of its awarding organisation. The review team also saw evidence that the College's own processes for monitoring and review are effective; in particular, the contribution made by the Corporation in monitoring standards. Therefore the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.4): 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

1.40 The awarding bodies and organisation are ultimately responsible for making use of external and independent expertise to set and maintain academic standards. For awarding body-validated programmes, the use of external input and expertise in the design, operation and review of programmes is specified in the regulatory frameworks of the validating partner and set out in partnership handbooks. There is external input in the form of external panel members at validation and periodic review.

1.41 The College has a strategic objective in relation to employability and as such uses external stakeholders including employers in curriculum development, monitoring and review. For the Pearson provision, for which the College has some programme design responsibility, the College refers to National Occupational Standards where appropriate and has worked with employers to develop specialist modules in response to local industry needs. The College has no periodic review process in operation.

1.42 External examiners are appointed by each awarding body and the awarding organisation to oversee the academic standards of programmes and provide independent input and external perspective. University of Westminster and Kingston University appoint shared external examiners to oversee provision in partner Colleges. For St Mary's University in Twickenham, modules for which the College is responsible are overseen by the external examiner processes at the University. External examiners appointed by Pearson oversee the Higher National provision and review samples of assignment briefs as well as completed work. Reports are reviewed at programme team and management level and are discussed at the Higher Education Strategy Group along with programme-level action plans. These arrangements would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

1.43 The review team examined a range of course documentation including programme specifications and module descriptors for local needs modules, minutes of curriculum team, programme board and approval panel meetings, and external examiner reports. The team also reviewed correspondence and notes from meetings with industry. It met senior staff, teaching staff and those involved in programme development including support staff with responsibility for developing links with industry.

1.44 The review team found these arrangements to work effectively in practice. External examiners are a key mechanism for providing external and independent expertise and are used consistently across the provision. In the case of the Kingston University and University of Westminster provision, external examiners are used across the consortium of Colleges, providing an additional aspect of externality.

1.45 The team heard how the Colleges' governing body, the Corporation, is very active in providing a range of external perspectives through the professional skills and experience of its members. The College has a strategic objective to develop higher apprenticeships and

has developed effective approaches to working with industry to develop its provision and provide opportunities for current students.

1.46 Teaching staff whom the review team met demonstrate a high level of relevant knowledge of industry requirements through their own training experience and ongoing industry engagement. Students were positive about the wide range of work-related activities that the College provides including employer visits, guest speakers and live project opportunities.

1.47 Overall, the evidence from documentation and meetings shows that the College is managing its responsibilities for maintaining academic standards and making use of external and independent expertise effectively. The awarding bodies have ultimate responsibility for setting and maintaining academic standards and for making use of external and independent expertise when doing so. The College meets the requirements of its validating partners and this is confirmed by external examiner reports. Additionally the College has developed a range of industry links and networks which it uses effectively to support its curriculum. The review team therefore 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 other awarding organisations: Summary of findings

1.48 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook. All the Expectations for this judgement area are met. All of the Expectations have low risk. The team highlighted a feature of good practice which is the externality provided by the direct involvement of the Corporation in monitoring standards (Expectation A3.3). There is also one recommendation in Part C which is relevant to this area. There are no affirmations in this area.

1.49 The review team therefore concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards 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 and Approval

Findings

2.1 Responsibility for the design, development and approval of programmes resides with the awarding bodies and the awarding organisation. The College has a curriculum planning process for which the Deputy Principal is responsible. The Higher Education Strategic Group considers proposals from curriculum areas for new programmes and refers them to curriculum teams and the Executive Director for Funding and Finance for separate consideration of academic rationale and resource requirements; once signed off by the Deputy Principal, they are submitted to an awarding partner for validation. Specifications are written for Pearson programmes as part of the approval process. The College's adherence to the procedures specified by its awarding partners together with its own processes would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

2.2 The team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining documentary evidence of programme design and validation. The team also held meetings with senior and teaching staff, including a link tutor from an awarding body.

2.3 Overall the arrangements for the design and approval of programmes work effectively. The team reviewed evidence of recent validations and revalidations by all of the College's partners and concluded that their procedures had been followed correctly. The Higher National programmes consist largely of modules selected from standard menus but the HND Specialist Makeup includes three 'meet local needs' modules written by College staff. The team looked at the internal process of approval of the College's new HNC in Software and App Development and at minutes of a curriculum team meeting showing collective academic deliberation, externality through engagement with a prospective employer and appropriate allocation of resources. The team was provided with evidence of similar discussion and externality in the design of the 'meet local needs' modules.

2.4 The College's internal programme approval process is not formally articulated in any policy document and the team had some difficulty in tracing its operation because of a lack of detailed records of deliberation at the Higher Education Strategic Group and curriculum team meetings. The review team **recommends** that by July 2016 the College should ensure that procedures are formally articulated in process documents and that their observance is captured in clear and detailed minutes of relevant committees.

2.5 Overall, the College adheres to the procedures of its awarding bodies, and its own processes for the design, development and approval of programmes are effective. Despite the recommendation in paragraph 2.4, the team is satisfied that the process of programme approval operates as described by the College. Therefore the Expectation is met; however, the lack of clarity in formal records constitutes a moderate level of risk to the provision. This suggests a weakness in the operation of part of the College's governance structure.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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*

Findings

2.6 The College takes responsibility for recruitment, selection and admission of students for the Kingston University award, the University of Westminster awards and Pearson awards. For the award of St Mary's University in Twickenham all activity takes place at the University. The College's clearly documented application process is managed by the Information Centre Manager and overseen by the College admissions team. The College admissions team report directly to the Director of Higher Education who is a member of the Higher Education Operations Group as well as the Higher Education Strategy Group. Recruitment, selection and admissions are monitored by these two executive groups, where overall responsibility sits and higher education is a standing item at the weekly Curriculum Quality Executive Group (CQEG) meetings.

2.7 Prospective students can access information about the College's higher education offer via the prospectus, the College website or through the UCAS website and all students are interviewed by curriculum specialists. Students enrolled on the Kingston University award and the University of Westminster awards attend an induction at their respective university in addition to the College induction programme. Students enrolled on Pearson programmes attend a College induction programme. The College's procedures for recruitment and admissions would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.8 The review team tested the operation and effectiveness of recruitment, selection and admission by considering information contained within the admissions policy, partnership agreements and responsibility checklists, and information produced for applicants and enquirers by reviewing the College website, and for current students by examining the induction material available on the VLE. The team also held meetings with students and academic and support staff.

2.9 The procedures for recruitment, selection and admission work effectively in practice. During a meeting with students the review team heard that the website, open evenings, personal recommendations from previous students and the prospectus were the main sources of information about how to apply. Entry requirements are clearly articulated on the College's website under each programme summary page. However, programme specifications are not made available on the website and a recommendation that these be made available to external stakeholders has been made in Part C of this report. Recognition of prior learning is handled by partner universities and communication of standard and non-standard entry requirements is transparent. The review team learned that students find the induction programme useful and that this year online induction has been considerably developed using the VLE.

2.10 Effective procedures are in place for identifying and supporting additional needs before admission, at interview, during enrolment and throughout the programme; students confirmed that they are offered individual support to assist them at each stage of the process. This support includes signposting and supporting students in making applications for student finance, or the offer of support for students throughout the process where a learning difficulty or disability has been disclosed.

2.11 Overall, the evidence found in documentation and meetings demonstrates that the College's recruitment, selection and admission procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. Procedures are successful in offering appropriate support to those who require it. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.12 The College has a stated educational goal to align its provision to the needs of non-academic students and adult returners, which is consistent with its portfolio of programmes and approach to teaching and learning. The annual College Development Plan sets targets for improving the quality of individual taught sessions across the College and this is reviewed and monitored through lesson observations and student survey outcomes. The Higher Education Strategy Group produces a specific development plan for the higher education provision aligned to the College's overall objectives.

2.13 The College has made considerable investment in physical learning resources to meet the needs of higher education students and has also developed a comprehensive VLE. The College has recently introduced a grading system for the VLE to support greater consistency, and the further development of blended/interactive content.

2.14 The College has put in place mechanisms to assure oversight of the quality of teaching and learning. A Quality Improvement Team was created to work with lecturers and managers to monitor and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Systems are in place to monitor student engagement with their programme, which manage tutorial contact and identify students at risk on the basis of attendance and achievement. The College's arrangements would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.15 The review team examined the effectiveness of teaching and learning procedures by reading relevant documentation including the College Development Plan, staff CVs, training records and appraisals, meeting minutes and the details of the peer observation scheme. The review team considered student feedback from questionnaires, progression and achievement data and, where available, module evaluation forms. It also met students and staff including managers and teaching, quality and support staff.

2.16 The review team found that the arrangements the College has in place are effective in practice. The College is demonstrably committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning. In acknowledgement of the differences between higher and further education, it has recently developed a peer observation scheme specifically mapped to the Expectations of Chapter B3 of the Quality Code. Staff have relevant industry experience and qualifications appropriate to the vocational nature of the provision. Qualifications are checked and approved annually by Pearson and at validation by the University awarding bodies.

2.17 Across the provision there are three development days programmed each year covering topics such as assessment feedback. A specific higher education conference day took place in May 2015 concerned with assignment writing to FHEQ levels, developing scholarship and sharing good practice in developing digital literacy. The team also learned that the College supports individual teaching staff to undertake higher degrees and also supports short sabbaticals to enable staff to undertake industrial updating. The team heard that take-up rates for these opportunities are not as high as the College would like.

2.18 Student feedback about the quality of teaching is mixed, but students met by the team were positive about their recent experiences. Students are able to provide feedback on individual modules, but this is not consistent across the provision and students have raised concerns that this is not anonymised.

2.19 In the last three years success and retention rates on some programmes have been lower than the College would like and the team learned that senior staff attributed this to the quality of teaching and had taken action to address this. The need to improve the quality and level of teaching has been recognised by the College and some higher education-specific staff development has taken place as described above. This work is in its early stages and its impact has yet to be fully evaluated. The team **recommends** that the College articulate, in a single document, a staff development strategy, which captures and further develops initiatives to improve the understanding, quality and consistency of higher education teaching.

2.20 Both physical environments and VLEs provided by the College are effective and students met by the team were enthusiastic about the availability of specialist resources and equipment to support their achievement. The review team met staff responsible for developing the VLE and heard how digital literacy was being embedded in the curriculum through work-related assignments requiring students and staff to engage with a wide range of software and social media platforms.

2.21 During the visit the team heard from students and staff about the opportunities for work-related learning activities that the College provides for students. In addition to formal placements, the College has developed effective networks with industry to ensure students have access to live projects, visits to employers and a wide range of guest speakers. The engagement with industry that ensures that the curriculum supports employability is **good practice**.

2.22 The College has a clear commitment to developing the quality of teaching and learning. The team did make a recommendation for the College to articulate, in a single document, a staff development strategy, which captures and further develops initiatives to improve the understanding, quality and consistency of higher education teaching. As a result the review team concludes that although the Expectation is met, the associated level of risk is moderate. This is primarily because although the need to improve the quality of teaching has been recognised, there is a need to safeguard against future difficulties effectively. This suggests a weakness in the operation of part of the College's governance structure.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.23 Supporting students to develop to their full potential is regarded by the College as a strength of its provision. Strategic oversight of resource planning is provided by the Higher Education Strategy Group and at Corporation level by the Finance and Capital Project Group. The College provides a wide range of resources to support higher education students, which comprise industry-standard facilities including fully equipped makeup studios, dance studios, biology laboratories and computer suites. Recently, a new dedicated study suite and common room for higher education students have been developed. The College provides a comprehensive range of advice and guidance services including accommodation, finance, welfare, sexual health and counselling. In addition to the College's own provision, students on University-validated programmes are able to access a range of support services from the partner institution.

2.24 The College has a stated commitment to equity and provides comprehensive information for students about the support available to them. The majority of students with specific learning support needs are supported to access Disabled Students' Allowance. Individual needs are usually identified prior to students commencing their programme of study, enabling the College to plan resources appropriately. Services provided by the College are set out on the website, in an annually updated Disability Matters booklet, and made visible throughout the College. This provision meets the Expectation of Chapter B4 and specifically is intended to support the transition of non-traditional learners into higher education and then into employment or further study. Level 3 students are provided with screening and assessments where appropriate in preparation for moving into higher education. The processes the College has in place would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.25 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's arrangements and resources by scrutinising documentation including College and Higher Education Development Plans, student and staff guidance information, programme handbooks and student questionnaire results. The team also met a range of academic and support staff, as well as students from across the provision.

2.26 Overall, the procedures for implementing, monitoring and evaluating arrangements and resources work effectively in practice. The College provides a comprehensive induction which introduces key staff, the programme of study and the higher education peer group. For University-validated programmes students also attend induction at the partner institution. The team learned that students find the induction programme useful and that this year online induction using the VLE has been considerably developed.

2.27 The College's approach to the provision of individual tutorial support for all students was identified as good practice in the last review and this has continued to be developed. Since the review, a dedicated role of Higher Education Coordinator was established to oversee the tutorial arrangements and provide induction to staff new to teaching. The College clearly articulates students' entitlement to a consistent and high-quality tutorial experience via Course Handbooks and the VLE. Each student has a weekly tutorial, which is used for study skills, one-to-one academic and pastoral advice and to monitor progress. The review team learned that students find the tutorial system effective in supporting them to achieve.

2.28 The College has developed a range of specialist training fact sheets and guides that are available to staff to enable them to work effectively with a range of students with differing support needs. These include overall guidance on best practice in terms of equality and diversity as well as specialist information for staff working with students with autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia and mental health issues.

2.29 Individual student progress is regularly reviewed in programme team meetings; however, the College has recognised that it needs to do more to evaluate the impact of its support systems on student retention and achievement. As such the College has introduced a new software system to monitor the impact and effectiveness of its support provision. The team learned that this would enable staff to better identify students at risk or failure of withdrawal at an early stage.

2.30 The College provides a range of advice and guidance on progression opportunities for students through its Careers and Employability service, the Employability Hub. Staff are active in making contact and building networks with large local employers. This service successfully complements the work-related curriculum in individual programmes which is demonstrated by the outcome of the most recent first destinations survey showing 83 per cent of graduates in employment or further study. The service also provides comprehensive support for students wishing to make applications for further study via UCAS. The comprehensive arrangements for student support which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential is **good practice**.

2.31 Support for developing study skills is provided both by the College and validating partners. Kingston University hold weekend study skills sessions and St Mary's provides individual supervision meetings to support the programme of study for students registered on their programmes. The College provides an internal study skills programme for Pearson students intended to support the development of research and academic skills. This is delivered through the tutorial system and coordinated by Learning Resource Centre staff. Students indicate, however, that they would benefit from further support to develop their academic writing skills.

2.32 The College has identified the need to further support the development of students' independent study skills. There are plans to establish a Learning Centre Strategy Group with membership including staff and students to progress this, and during the visit the team heard about specific plans to further develop study skills resources online to better support transitions between Level 3 and 4 and beyond. The team **affirms** the steps being taken to continue development of study skills resources to further support student achievement.

2.33 Overall, the College has effective arrangements to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The team identified one feature of good practice regarding the comprehensive nature of the arrangements for student support. The team also made one affirmation about the steps being taken to continue development of study skills resources to further support student achievement. The review team therefore concludes that the College meets the Expectation 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

2.34 The Higher Education Strategy 2014-16 sets out the College's commitment to increasing student involvement by engaging students in more committees and quality meetings and seeking students' views. Students are represented on the College Corporation and on its Quality and Equality Advisor Group, in the Executive Team Plus groups on Teaching, Learning and Assessment and Student Policy. Students enrolled with awarding bodies feed back to, and receive feedback from, their respective university using mechanisms including participation in regular consultative committee meetings, student evaluations, meetings by email and the online portal. Key Student Union posts at the College may be occupied by either further or higher education students; consequently, higher education student representation is absent from the Learner Involvement group. Although there have been some recent invitations, student representation has been absent from the Curriculum Quality Executive Group, Higher Education Strategy Group and the Higher Education Operations Group. Thus the arrangements would partially allow Expectation B5 to be met.

2.35 The team reviewed the effectiveness of the arrangements to engage students by examining documentation including sources of student feedback and minutes of meetings. The team also held meetings with students from a variety of programmes, student representatives, staff and senior management.

2.36 The College seeks to gather students' views in a variety of ways, including the National Student Survey (NSS), course representative meetings, course committee meetings, tutorial meetings, one-to-one tutorials and general College student surveys. Results of the NSS are disseminated to the Higher Education Operations Group and reported to the Higher Education Strategy Group. The College's Learner Voice Executive Team Plus monitors student engagement, although not in a formal manner. The review team therefore **recommends** that, by July 2016, the College should create a formal process to record, monitor and review the effectiveness of student engagement.

2.37 Student representatives are elected through a vote by class members and meetings held every six weeks. Newly appointed student representatives are waiting to receive their training and a higher education student appointed to the Students' Union Vice President role is also awaiting training to fulfil that role. Students have one hour of tutorial timetabled each week, enabling them to meet as a group or one-to-one with their personal tutor to share their views and those of the group. An important means of feedback for students about the quality of their learning experience is through module evaluations. Module feedback is gathered for some Pearson provision but implementation is inconsistent. Module evaluations are not systematically implemented for all programmes, feedback is not anonymous and completion is optional. The team therefore **recommends** that, by July 2016, the College should create opportunities for all students to provide anonymised feedback on their modules and programmes.

2.38 The review team heard that student engagement is taken very seriously and it accepts that the College values the student contribution, encourages feedback and employs a variety of mechanisms to collect student views. Curriculum teams consider changes suggested through Course Representative and Committee arrangements and the National Student Satisfaction survey and include agreed changes in the Quality Improvement Plan.

The College introduced a 'You said, we did' Board in March 2015 where minutes of the Representatives meetings are displayed and responses added. The review team heard several examples of how student feedback has been responded to including phased assignment deadlines, revisions to the nature of assessments and improvements to the VLE to make access easier and faster. The addition of a higher education common room is also a highly valued resource. The review team accepts that students are encouraged to feed back about their learning experience, particularly for the purpose of issue resolution.

However, there is little evidence of deliberative structures and systematic arrangements to create and maintain an environment within which staff and students engage in discussions as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. The team examined minutes from student representative meetings and found these meetings to be chaired by College staff, and questions set by the Higher Education Strategic Group. Students confirm they do not feel constrained by this. Therefore, the team **recommends** that, by July 2016, in partnership with students the College should continue to develop opportunities for higher education student representation on decision-making committees.

2.39 Although there are opportunities for student engagement and the College is committed to consulting students about their educational experiences, the team make three recommendations which concern student engagement, student representation and student feedback. As a result, the review team concludes that the Expectation is not met. The level of associated risk is moderate because of the need for the College to more actively engage students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. This suggests insufficient priority is given to assuring quality in planning processes, and quality assurance procedures are adequate, but have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Not met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.40 The College is required to apply assessment regulations established by its awarding bodies and organisation as set out in partnership agreements and collaborative provision manuals. For the foundation degrees, recognition of prior learning is the responsibility of the awarding bodies; for teacher education this is delegated to the College but using criteria and procedures set and subject to audit by the awarding body. For Pearson provision the organisation's regulations are supplemented by a Standards and Assessment Guidelines booklet, which establishes procedures for assessment boards, internal moderation, reasonable adjustments and dealing with malpractice, and makes clear the College's commitment to inclusive assessment practices.

2.41 Assessments for the foundation degrees and the teacher education programme are agreed with the awarding body. Assignment briefs for the Pearson provision that specify learning outcomes are designed at the College and approved through an internal moderation process. Staff are required to have teaching qualifications and to be familiar with the UK Professional Standards Framework. The College has a Quality Improvement in Teacher Education Team led by the Director for Quality and Workforce Development which works with teachers and managers to improve the quality of assessment. Students are given advice on assessment in their programme handbooks and an assessment schedule which includes when feedback can be expected; these are visible on course pages in the VLE. The College uses plagiarism-detection software. The College's own approach to assessment together with its approach to complying with its awarding bodies' and organisation's regulations would enable it to meet the Expectation.

2.42 The team reviewed the effectiveness of the approaches and procedures by examining documentary evidence including assessment regulations, examples of formative and summative assessments, records of marking and moderation, feedback on marked work, together with the minutes of assessment boards and external examiner reports for all programmes. The review team also held meetings with senior and teaching staff, and students.

2.43 Overall, the evidence reviewed showed the procedures to be effective in practice. The team reviewed evidence of the operation of assessment regulations and concluded that partner procedures had been followed correctly, including those relating to recognition of prior learning and reasonable adjustment. The team saw evidence of internal moderation of assessment and also of tracking of this process. It noted that the College is praised in a number of recent Pearson external examiner reports for the effectiveness of its internal moderation system. Assessment Boards are properly constituted and conduct their business appropriately. External examiners' reports are generally positive about the quality of assessment, except for some issues with merit and distinction descriptors in new Pearson provision which the College addressed by arranging additional training for staff. An Assessment Standards subgroup of the CQEG has been given particular responsibility for ensuring that assessments for Pearson provision are set at the right level. The review team heard from staff new to teaching in higher education that they had been closely supported by the Quality Improvement in Teacher Education Team.

2.44 The College employs a wide range of assessment methods which suit its diverse student body, including presentations, performances and many 'work-realistic' assignments. Formative assessment activities with feedback help students prepare for summative assessment; electronic assessments such as quizzes are increasingly used for this purpose. Students are involved in shaping assessment methods through the course representative meetings.

2.45 In the 2013-14 NSS, students expressed some dissatisfaction with assessment; students also registered concerns about the number of simultaneous deadlines, lack of understanding of plagiarism and referencing, and the timeliness and quality of feedback. The College has responded by drawing up and publishing assessment schedules at the start of each year, developing an academic writing skills induction package, and improving tracking and monitoring of assessment with audits conducted by Curriculum Directors which are reported to the CQEG. Current students acknowledge that their concerns are being addressed. The review team saw a number of examples of helpful and appropriate feedback on assessment, confirming the positive views expressed by external examiners about its quality.

2.46 Information on assessment in programme handbooks is clear and accessibly written, including advice on avoiding plagiarism. There is also an assessment policy statement for students on the College's VLE which applies to both further and higher provision. However, it does not mention that university partner regulations apply to some programmes, and consequently a recommendation is made in Part C of this report about differentiating information for higher education students.

2.47 The review team found that the arrangements in place are effective in ensuring that students have appropriate opportunities to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the award of credit or qualification. The review team concludes that the College's assessment processes are reliable and that students are supported to demonstrate their learning through assessment. The College has made assessment the focus of enhancement initiatives; it manages the performance of staff closely and moves quickly to address any weaknesses. Therefore the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.48 External examiners for all programmes are appointed by the relevant awarding body who define both the role and criteria for approval. The College operates with the comprehensive external examiner system in accordance with the regulations of each of its awarding bodies. The procedures for the external examiners' engagement with the programmes vary but meet the regulatory requirements of each validating partner and are set out in the relevant partnership handbook.

2.49 For the University of Westminster Teacher Training consortium three shared external examiners ensure consistency across partner Colleges and undertake teaching observations of students alongside staff. For the provision validated by Kingston University and St Mary's, comprehensive samples of student work are submitted to external examiners. For Pearson programmes, the external examiner visits the College annually to review student work and engage with staff. Assignment briefs are also sampled by the external examiner from Pearson to ensure that they meet the required standards.

2.50 Internally, all external examiner reports are seen by the Director of Quality Improvement and Director of Higher Education and taken to the Higher Education Strategy Group to enable actions that require high-level intervention to be identified and addressed. At programme level, individual Course Leaders respond to reports and prepare an external examiner action plan in response to any issues raised. In the case of provision validated by a University partner, responses to external examiner reports are prepared by the curriculum team and submitted to the partner. The College's own internal processes are comprehensive and these arrangements, together with its adherence to those of the awarding partners, would enable it to meet the Expectation.

2.51 The team reviewed the effectiveness of these procedures in practice by examining documentation including external examiner reports, associated action plans, Course Review and Evaluation reports, minutes of meetings where reports are considered, and the regulatory requirements of each validating partner. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and senior staff and the link tutor from Kingston University.

2.52 The team heard about the range of ways staff and students from across the provision engaged with external examiners. In addition to the Course Leaders' formal response in the form of an action plan, external examiner reports are discussed at curriculum team meetings to inform enhancement. Minutes seen by the team did not always demonstrate this, however, and a recommendation about capturing the observance of procedures in clear and detailed minutes is made in Expectation B1 of this report.

2.53 The review team learned that in instances where the external examiner was shared between partner Colleges, and hence comments in the report were not differentiated, programme staff were rigorous in responding comprehensively to all recommendations.

2.54 For students, in addition to reports being discussed at meetings with course representatives, they are published on the intranet so that all students can access them. Some students are able to participate in feedback meetings with external examiners during their visits.

2.55 Although these processes are well understood by staff in practice, they are not currently set out as a formal procedure. The recommendation made about formally articulating procedures and capturing clear and detailed minutes in Expectation B1 also applies here.

2.56 The role of external examiners is embedded in the College's processes and the College makes effective use of reports. The review team makes one recommendation about ensuring that procedures are formally articulated and that their observance is captured in clear and detailed minutes. Despite this recommendation, the 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

2.57 The College's awarding partners have their own procedures for annual monitoring and periodic review (linked to re-approval) in which the College is required to participate. For annual monitoring of its Higher National provision the College uses its own internal procedure of Course Review and Evaluation with a template adapted for higher education programmes through mapping against the Quality Code. Course Review and Evaluation reports, including Quality Improvement Plans, are drawn up in July by curriculum team leaders and feed into self-assessment reports drawn up by Curriculum Directors who present them in person to the Corporation's Quality and Equality Advisory Group. The College also receives annual reports from its awarding partners which are considered at the CQEG and Higher Education Strategy Group. The outcomes of annual monitoring feed into the College's Higher Education Development Plan. The College does not have a local process for periodic review of its Pearson provision but undertakes to take part in Pearson's own procedure when requested. These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.58 The team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements for programme monitoring and review by examining documentary evidence including monitoring reports and the minutes of relevant committees of the College and its awarding bodies. The team also held meetings with senior and teaching staff, support staff and students.

2.59 The evidence reviewed showed annual monitoring to be robust and effective in practice. University partners' procedures are fit for purpose and correctly operated by the College. Course Review and Evaluation forms seen by the team vary in their reference to raw data but show conscientious reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the programme and have credible action plans. The team had some difficulty in tracing collective deliberation by curriculum teams and the Higher Education Strategy Group because of a lack of detailed records, and consequently a recommendation is made in Expectation B1 of this report about capturing the observance of procedures in clear and detailed minutes of relevant committees. After talking to senior and teaching staff and receiving further evidence, the team was satisfied that it takes place. Teaching staff demonstrated a clear understanding of the purpose and procedures and annual monitoring. The review team heard from the Principal, the Chair of the Corporation's Quality and Equality Advisory Group and senior staff that the governors monitor performance closely and often challenge internal self-assessments. The team saw evidence in the Quality and Equality Advisory Group minutes of requests for additional evidence and adjustment of targets. As noted in Expectation A3.3 of this report, the review team concludes that the externality provided by the direct involvement of the Corporation in monitoring standards, quality and the enhancement of learning opportunities is good practice.

2.60 The College has a system for putting poorly performing programmes on Notice to Improve or in Special Measures which could lead to closure by executive decision, but no higher education programmes have been subject to them in recent years. The College does not have a formal statement on how the interests of current students would be met in such an eventuality, but senior staff assured the review team that programmes would be taught out in full and gave examples.

2.61 University partner procedures for periodic review are well designed and correctly observed by the College; staff involved had a clear understanding of its purpose and the processes relevant to them. However, the review team consider the absence of a local periodic review process for Higher National programmes to be a weakness even though senior staff advised that most of these programmes were relatively new and had been under continuous review. Such a process is not explicitly required by the awarding organisation, but it is considered sound practice in the Quality Code as it ensures the continuing local relevance of programmes and provides an opportunity for enhancement. The team therefore **recommends** that by July 2016 the College should develop a periodic review process for the Pearson provision.

2.62 All the sets of procedures for annual and periodic review draw on management information, including student feedback, and are designed to promote enhancement. Management information is provided separately to the Corporation to enable governors to evaluate the self-assessment reports. However, other than student governors (who may not be in higher education), students are not directly involved in annual monitoring of Higher National provision.

2.63 The College has robust procedures for programme monitoring and review and manages its responsibilities, particularly for annual monitoring, effectively. However, the team makes a recommendation which requires the College to develop a periodic review process for the Pearson provision. Despite this recommendation, 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

2.64 The College's responsibilities for handling complaints and appeals vary according to the awarding body or organisation involved. Responsibility is shared with Kingston University; arrangements are set out in their handbook and student pocket guide. For students enrolled at St Mary's University in Twickenham responsibility rests with the University and procedures are set out in their handbook. Responsibility for appeals and complaints for students enrolled with the University of Westminster initially rests with the College and arrangements are set out in the College complaints procedure or on the university website. The College is responsible for complaints and appeals from students' enrolled on Pearson programmes. College policy states that a complaint or appeal will be investigated and answered within two weeks of being logged, monitored by the Deputy Principal, and referred to the Director of HBSM and Higher Education for investigation. The Executive Team and the Corporation receive reports on the number and type of complaints. The College's procedures and adherence to the arrangements of its awarding bodies would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.65 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's policies and procedures by examining documentation including records of appeals and complaints, course handbooks and partnership agreements. The team also held meetings with students, support staff, academic staff and senior management.

2.66 Overall, the processes for academic appeals and complaints work effectively. The College receives very few complaints or academic appeals from higher education students. The reasons for complaint are dissimilar and thus no pattern can be established.

2.67 The tutorial framework ensures close and regular communication with students, helping to address problems and support needs promptly. Assessment guidance is clearly stated in course handbooks provided to students during induction and this helps to manage student expectations appropriately. Students understand how to complain or appeal, know it is a staged process, and all agreed that their views were listened to and valued by the College. They provided examples of addressing queries about the grading of assessed work with their tutor. The Pearson Quality Review and Development report 2014 confirms that there is a wide awareness of malpractice and appeals procedures at the College.

2.68 Students receive a special guide that informs them of the procedure for making appeals, in addition to the consequences of plagiarism and malpractice and a leaflet explaining the process of appeal (How to Appeal Against Course Assessment). The leaflet and the 'How to Complain' entry on the public website are clearly written, but do not fully encompass higher education provision, the role of awarding partners or the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

2.69 The review team concludes that the appeals and complaints procedures are clear and accessible. Informal opportunities are available to enable students to resolve their concerns at an early stage and support is available. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk 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

2.70 The College has responsibility for the management of its arrangements with employers and placement providers where this constitutes an integral part of a student's programme of study. The College provides a range of types of work placement in accordance with the differing requirements of its provision and validating partners.

2.71 The College's principal responsibility is for the compulsory work-based learning that is part of FdA Early Years validated by Kingston University. The College uses procedures and standard documentation developed by the University to inform students and work-based mentors of the responsibilities and expectations of each party and indicate how to access further information if required.

2.72 Access to work-based learning is a specified entry requirement for the Certificate in Education (CertEd) and Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) validated by the University of Westminster, although in this instance the arrangement with employers is outside the scope of the College's responsibilities.

2.73 Work placement is also a feature of some of the Pearson-validated HND programmes. This is not compulsory and students are expected to be responsible for organising this. The College does, however, provide support and guidance for students in making these arrangements at programme level. It supports a range of types of placement in accordance with the procedures of the relevant awarding body and in all cases no assessment is devolved to placement providers. The College's arrangements would be sufficient to meet the Expectation.

2.74 The review team tested the College's arrangements for implementing and managing work-based and work-related learning opportunities by scrutinising documentary evidence, including handbooks and guidance information from validating partners and the College's internal guidance documents. The team held meetings with academic and support staff who are responsible for placement and work-related learning, as well as with students from a range of programmes.

2.75 The College provides comprehensive handbooks provided by the respective validating partners to brief mentors designed to ensure that they understand the requirements of the programme the student is undertaking, their respective roles and responsibilities and how they can support the student. For Pearson programmes the College has designed its own guidance booklets and log books that it provides to students to enable them to manage their work-placement learning.

2.76 The review team met staff involved in giving careers advice and developing industry partnerships and learned that the College had a clear commitment to developing its industry networks to support its strategic objective to offer higher apprenticeship programmes. The review team heard how through close working with industry the College had identified a broad range of skills required by employers and was working to embed these in programme design through its 'T-shaped student' initiative. The 'T' symbol characterises the College's

aim to develop a depth of specific subject knowledge complemented by a wide range of transferable and soft skills necessary for success in the workplace.

2.77 Students on University-validated programmes the review team met confirmed that placement arrangements were appropriate and effective. For students on the Pearson-validated programmes, placement had yet to take place but the review team heard how staff had supported students to find opportunities and that generally students felt well supported by the College in accessing relevant work-related activities including industry visits, shadowing and live projects.

2.78 The College has effective procedures in place to manage the work-based and placement learning provision in collaboration with employers. The College has a demonstrable commitment to developing strong partnerships to support its strategic growth in this area. Students comment positively about the support they receive from the College. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

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

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.80 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook. Nine of the 10 applicable Expectations are met. The risk to the quality of learning opportunities for seven of the nine met Expectations is low, with moderate risk for B1 and B3. Expectation B5 is partially met and has a moderate level of risk. The moderate risks in Part B indicate insufficient emphasis or priority given to assuring quality in the College's planning processes, weakness in the operation of part of the College's governance structure or lack of clarity about responsibilities, and shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which quality assurance procedures have been applied.

2.81 The review team makes six recommendations in this section which relate to the following: ensure that procedures are formally articulated in process documents and that their observance is captured in clear and detailed minutes of relevant committees (Expectations B1, B7 and B8); articulate, in a single document, a staff development strategy which captures and further develops initiatives to improve the understanding, quality and consistency of higher education teaching (Expectation B3); in partnership with students continue to develop opportunities for higher education student representation on decision-making committees (Expectation B5); create a formal process to record, monitor and review the effectiveness of student engagement (Expectation B5); create opportunities for all students to provide anonymised feedback on their modules and programmes (Expectation B5); and develop a periodic review process for the Pearson provision (Expectation B8).

2.82 The review team makes one affirmation in this section which relates to the steps being taken to continue development of study skills resources to further support student achievement (Expectation B4). There are three features of good practice which concern the externality provided by the direct involvement of the Corporation in monitoring standards, quality and the enhancement of learning opportunities (Expectations A3.3 and B8); the engagement with industry that ensures that the curriculum supports employability (Expectation B3) and the comprehensive arrangements for student support which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectation B4).

2.83 Despite the recommendations and the moderate risk in three Expectations, the team are confident the College is aware of the significance of these matters and proposes to rectify them. Nearly all of the applicable Expectations have been met, and there is evidence that the College is fully aware of its responsibilities for assuring quality as previous responses to external review activities provide confidence that areas of weakness will be addressed promptly and professionally. The review team therefore concludes that, overall, 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 about higher education provision is primarily made available to intended audiences through the College website, the prospectus, the College VLE, open days and for students enrolled with awarding bodies the VLE of the respective university. The College produces information for prospective students and the public including details of available programmes, the admissions process, fees and the support. Information about the College mission and values, governance, a freedom of information policy and complaints procedure are also available on the website. For current students information is available in course handbooks, programme specifications, and course materials, all of which are available on the College VLE.

3.2 The College is responsible for providing definitive programme information relating to the Pearson programmes, including a tailored programme specification, while Pearson is responsible for providing the definitive information including the overall qualification specification. Responsibility for preparation of information for programmes validated by awarding bodies rests with each body.

3.3 Oversight of the website rests with the Head of Marketing. Information is updated by the marketing team with Course Leaders and the Higher Education Director. Student handbooks for all Pearson-accredited programmes are signed off by the curriculum area director before they are issued to students. The Higher Education Operations Group agenda includes information as a standing item which permits updating and checking of information including that about the College's higher education offer on UCAS and information on the College website. These matters are reported by the Director for Hair, Beauty, Specialist Makeup and Higher Education to the Curriculum and Quality Executive Group and the Higher Educations Strategy Group. Information is also reviewed regularly for accuracy by the Higher Educations Operations Group and programme information is thoroughly checked and updated as necessary as part of the annual curriculum planning process. Partner universities check the College website annually to ensure the accuracy of the information displayed about their awards. The College's processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.4 The review team tested the effectiveness of the process by reviewing the College website, VLE, prospectus, handbooks, programme specifications and minutes of meetings. It also held meetings with students, senior staff, teaching and support staff.

3.5 Overall, the College processes are appropriate in practice. Clear information is available for prospective students about available programmes, entry criteria, university partners, the College environment, fees and the support available. Students confirm the information prior to enrolment is helpful. However, the team found some minor errors in course pages on the website which reflect minor oversights. The team also found that programme specifications are unavailable to prospective students and external stakeholders. The team **recommends** that the College should ensure that programme specifications are accessible to external stakeholders.

3.6 Students and staff the review team met were very positive about the information available for them on the VLE. The VLE contains some helpful resources for staff which include guidance on supporting students with additional needs and best practice guidance on equality and diversity issues. Appropriate management information is also available for staff to support annual monitoring. The review team found some inconsistencies in the quality of information on the VLE. The College has recognised these inconsistencies and proposes that the VLE will be monitored by the Higher Education Strategy Group and E-learning Manager. Information available for students on the VLE includes course handbooks, course materials, external examiner reports and programme specifications. There is also a user-friendly online induction pack; however, this does not differentiate between further education and higher education students. There is also an assessment policy statement for students in the College's VLE which applies to both further and higher provision, but it does not mention that university partner regulations apply to some programmes. The review team **recommends** the College should ensure that all documents addressed to students fully differentiate between further and higher education.

3.7 The IQER in 2011 made an advisory recommendation to develop a robust process to ensure the correctness of information in course handbooks and all reference publications relevant to higher education students. The College process for producing and checking information is understood by staff and considered to be clearly articulated and actioned through meetings. The College confirms the process is not formally described in a document. The team **affirms** the steps being taken to enact a strategy that maintains consistent information.

3.8 Overall, the College's process for producing information about its higher education provision is appropriate. However, there is a weakness in that programme specifications are not available to external stakeholders and not all information intended for higher education students is clearly addressed to them. This led the team to make two recommendations concerning the clarity and accessibility of documentation. Despite these recommendations, the team concludes that the College has appropriate processes for checking that information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy and therefore the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low. The level of risk is low because the need to amend or update details in documentation will not require or result in major structural, operational or procedural change.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.9 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook. The Expectation is met with a low level of risk. The review team makes two recommendations in this section which relate to the following: the need to ensure that programme specifications are accessible to external stakeholders and the need to ensure that all documents addressed to students fully differentiate between further and higher education. The review team makes one new affirmation in this section which concerns the steps being taken to enact a strategy that maintains consistent information. No features of good practice are identified.

3.10 Despite the recommendation, the team concludes that overall 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 is formally committed to improving its higher education provision and articulates an understanding of enhancement which is consonant with the Quality Code. Goals are defined in a Higher Education Development Plan which is drawn up annually. Committee structures are designed to combine general oversight with targeted intervention to improve the quality of learning opportunities. The College conducts focused campaigns to create an enhancement ethos and target specific areas of provision. Systems for the routine monitoring and review of provision including student feedback and external examiner reports are explicitly designed to promote reflection, improvement and the dissemination of good practice. These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

4.2 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the arrangements by examining documentary evidence including development and improvement plans, the terms of reference and minutes of committees and online learning resources. The team also held meetings with the Principal, senior and teaching staff, support staff and students.

4.3 The College's overall strategy is developed by the Senior Leadership Team in close consultation with the Corporation. A College Development Plan and Higher Education Development Plan are drawn up at the beginning of each year by the Curriculum Quality Executive Group and its Higher Education Strategy Group as the culmination of the annual monitoring process. They are approved by the Corporation.

4.4 In addition, the Senior Leadership Team target specific areas for investment, the most recent of which is e-learning and digital literacy. An e-Learning Strategy was developed in 2012; an E-Learning Development Manager and a Digital Resources and Information Lead were appointed in 2012 and 2015 respectively to drive this strategy forward.

4.5 To integrate and raise awareness of enhancement initiatives, the College pursues campaigns with easily identifiable badges. The current campaign 'Journey to Outstanding' is being supplemented by a new one on 'The T-Shaped Student' which focuses on skills and employability. Awareness of these campaigns among staff and students is high.

4.6 Formal responsibility for implementation of the development plans rests with the CQEG and Higher Education Strategy Group. A number of subgroups report to the CQEG on specific issues, including Assessment Standards and Learner Voice. These comprise relevant members of the CQEG and other stakeholders including professional services staff. There is also an Executive Team Plus Group for Teaching, Learning and Assessment on which members of the Senior Leadership Team join stakeholders including students. The College has an Executive Director for Quality and Workforce Development who has particular responsibility for the development of teaching staff and learning resources and manages the College's Human Resources, e-Learning and Quality Improvement in Teacher Education teams. The review team found that this structure enabled rapid and authoritative intervention in support of general strategy.

4.7 The College succeeded in meeting most of the objectives set in its Higher Education Development Plan for 2014-15. The College's strategic approach to enhancement is **good practice**.

4.8 Systems for the monitoring and review of provision are explicitly designed to promote reflection and enhancement through report templates and processes of scrutiny. Annual Course Review and Evaluation reports which incorporate Quality Improvement Plans feed into self-assessment reports for each curriculum area and then to a Higher Education and a College Self-Assessment Report, from which College and Higher Education Development Plans for the next year are developed. The template used for Course Review and Evaluation reports in higher education provision has recently been revised to map to the Quality Code.

4.9 Employer feedback is identified by the College as a significant driver of enhancement. The team was given evidence of consultation with employers in programme design and heard how they had inspired the 'T-Shaped Student' campaign. The review team was also told that the Quality Code was an important external driver of enhancement, with the examples of improvements in annual monitoring and lesson observation.

4.10 The results of the NSS and internal student feedback are given close attention and have demonstrably shaped initiatives such as the e-Learning strategy and provision of a common room for higher education students. The team notes that the Learner Voice subgroup of the CQEG created in 2012-13 had achieved some improvement in student feedback and representation. However, as noted in Part B of this report, higher education student engagement in committees and quality management is limited.

4.11 The review team saw clear evidence of enhancements driven by external examiner reports including the organisation of training on writing merit and distinction descriptors in Higher National assignment briefs. Management information on recruitment, success rates and leaver destinations also spurs enhancement and is used to set targets. Data is provided to the Corporation to enable it to monitor performance against key indicators. Support staff also explained to the team how they contributed to enhancement through cross-College managers' meetings including a strategic away day.

4.12 The team found evidence of the capacity to learn from others, for example through attending a higher education conference at Kingston University and (although with a further education focus) inviting speakers from Colleges rated as outstanding, and its staff development days. Recently the College has begun to encourage staff to join the Higher Education Academy and introduced an annual higher education conference for staff. However, as noted in Part B of this report, the College is recommended to articulate a strategy for staff development in a single document.

4.13 The College places a great deal of emphasis upon lesson observation as a tool and measure of enhancement, with performance being monitored closely and new or weaker staff being supported. Internal moderation of and feedback on coursework is also sampled by line managers. Overall targets for the proportion of lessons rated outstanding have been set. The Assessment and Standards subgroup of the CQEG was set up in 2012-13 to help the Quality Improvement in Teacher Education Team drive this forward. This approach is characteristic of further education but the team concluded that it was effective. The template for recording lesson observation has been revised to map to the Quality Code for 2015-16 and peer lesson observation is also being introduced.

4.14 The team explored implementation of the e-Learning Strategy at the College. One of its first targets was the VLE. Staff and students told the team that there had been very significant improvements in its design, technical operation and use and the team found that it now offered an experience comparable to a standard website. The College has introduced a bronze/silver/gold scheme for rating VLE course pages: all higher education programmes are currently rated silver with the target of becoming gold through extending resources for blended learning. Other targets in the e-Learning Strategy are the promotion of

digital literacy among students including guidance on how to build a professional presence in social media; the provision of a teacher's toolkit of electronic resources for teaching and assessment; and the creation of online training courses for staff and students including ones for use in induction. The review team examined these programmes and were shown a variety of electronic resources in use in current modules. A qualification in Digital Literacy for Educators is being developed. The College's development and use of resources for digital literacy and e-learning is **good practice**.

4.15 Other enhancement initiatives in higher education have focused on resources, particularly a student common room and access to facilities for independent study, and on cultivating a sense of identity for students through dedicated facilities, signage and an awards ceremony.

4.16 Overall, the review team concludes that the College takes deliberate and effective steps to enhance the quality of student learning opportunities. The strategic approach to continuous quality improvement creates an ethos of enhancement across the College. The review team therefore 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

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

4.18 The review team identifies two areas of good practice which relate to the following: the strategic approach to enhancement and the development and use of resources for digital literacy and e-learning. The review team makes no recommendations in this area and there are no affirmations.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacy

Findings

5.1 The Higher Education Development Plan 2014-15 and the Higher Education Strategy 2014-2016 set out the intention to further promote digital literacy skills for staff and students. Goals in the Plan include enhancing the VLE and developing staff use of tools to support independent and blended learning. In 2012 the College appointed a new e-Learning Manager and developed an e-Learning Strategy in the realisation that attention had previously been focused on the acquisition of technology rather than its use. Planning is currently underway to create phase two of this strategy to keep pace with technological advances. The College recognises that to develop students' digital literacy there is a need to develop staff. Consequently support has been provided for staff to use social media and sharing good practice in developing digital literacy took place in the higher education conference in May 2015.

5.2 Digital literacy is being embedded in the curriculum through work-related assignments requiring students and staff to engage with a wide range of software and social media platforms. The College has also moved to making more e-resources available in its Learning Resource Centre. The use of social media is understood to be key to working successfully in some vocational areas. Consequently students on Higher National Media and Higher National Dance programmes are encouraged to use blogs for reflection, to promote their own work for employability and networking purposes and to stimulate professional collaborations. Higher National Media students use pilot feeds and video casts. Makeup students use blogs and video clips when learning about period hairstyling. Students are also able to access lecturers' own video demonstrations and use mobile phones for quizzes. Learning material on the VLE for Higher National Travel students includes e-books and video clips. Blogs are used for assessment and students build portfolios over the year to take away with them on completion of the programme. HNC Applied Biology students use quizzes for formative assessment. The team notes the enthusiasm of staff and students to fully embrace new and emerging technology, with a particular focus upon using social media to encourage collaboration, and building individual e-portfolios, which can be used after graduation to assist with gaining employment. Since the implementation of the strategy, student satisfaction has increased.

Glossary

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

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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