

# Higher Education Review of Myerscough College

May 2014

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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 Myerscough College. The review took place from 7 to 9 May 2014 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Francine Norris
- Dr Carol A. Vielba
- Dr Amanda Wilcox
- Stuart Cannell (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - the setting and maintenance of threshold 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 7.

In reviewing Myerscough 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 2013-14 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,<sup>2</sup> and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

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

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

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106).

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

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

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Myerscough College

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

- The maintenance of the threshold academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities is **commended**.
- The quality of the information produced about its provision **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities is **commended**.

### Good practice

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

- The holistic preparation for and high-level engagement with the Periodic Course Review by higher education staff, students and employers (Expectations A4, B8, Enhancement).
- The practice of engaging employers as partners in the design, delivery and assessment opportunities within programmes (Expectations A5, B4, B10).
- The comprehensive support for learners in their transition to higher education (Expectations B2, B3, B4).
- The wide-ranging support mechanisms targeted to meet individual needs that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectations B2, B3, B4).
- The broad range of staff development opportunities available to support a distinctive College higher educational experience (Expectation B3).
- The Research Strategy that underpins higher education learning and teaching (Expectations B3, Enhancement).
- The strategy for developing and embedding the virtual learning environment as an effective and consistent learning and teaching tool (Expectations B3, Enhancement).
- The extensive and effective engagement of students at all levels (Expectation B5).
- The comprehensive management and oversight of actions arising from quality assurance and enhancement processes (Expectation B8, Enhancement).
- The use of management information systems to determine areas of priority for continuous improvement and to ensure those areas are addressed and monitored (Expectations C, Enhancement).

### Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The actions taken to address the timeliness and effectiveness of assessment feedback (Expectation B6).

## **Theme: Student Employability**

The College has an embedded ethos of student employability, which is stated throughout its Higher Education Strategic Plan. It also has a policy in place for the delivery and organisation of work experience that covers placement arrangements and is aligned to University regulations.

The review team heard numerous positive examples of student experience regarding their work placements. This is fundamentally embedded throughout each course within the Work Skills module. Each student has the freedom of selecting the employer with whom they wish to work. However, the College provides assistance where necessary. If the student doesn't have the necessary experience for their specific placement, the College will ensure the student makes use of the College's resources to develop confidence and up-skill prior to the placement commencing.

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

## About Myerscough College

Myerscough College (the College) is an incorporated college providing further and higher education in land-based and sports subjects. The College mission is 'to become the leading provider of education in the land-based & sports sectors and the natural choice for research, industrial partners and students who aspire to success'. The Myerscough College Strategic Plan 2012-22 identifies four key strategic aims that underpin the College mission:

- 'we will continue to build and enhance our brand and reputation for excellence within the land-based & sports sectors
- we will provide an outstanding teaching & learning experience
- we will create opportunities for all to succeed
- we will deliver great value for money'.

The College is one of the largest UK providers of higher education courses in land-based and sports subjects with over 1,100 full-time and part-time higher education enrolments in 2013-14 (around 900 full-time equivalents).

The College has a combination of directly and indirectly funded student numbers for higher education provision. The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) (the University) is the sole higher education awarding body. The College is the largest partner provider for UCLan. The majority of higher education courses are validated provision (delivered only at Myerscough College) with some networked provision (also delivered at other colleges).

The College has a close and mature working relationship with the University which has developed over a 22-year period. The introduction of the new tuition fees regime and arrangements for student number controls in 2012 provided significant challenges for University partnerships. The College and the University worked very closely through this turbulent period to ensure that the benefits of the partnership were maintained and to identify opportunities for closer collaboration. In 2013 the College signed a new institutional agreement to become an Associate School of the University. The agreement recognises the quality of provision at the College, builds on the achievements of the partnership and deepens the collaboration.

The College provision was subject to Periodic Course Review by the University in June 2013. All programmes were extensively revised and a number of new course titles were introduced. The Periodic Course Review Report approved all programmes, confirming that the curriculum is current and meets the needs of students and the relevant industry sectors.

The current higher education provision validated or networked through UCLan consists of:

Taught PgDip/MSc Degree	1 course
Postgraduate by Research	4 studentships (funded by the College)
BA/BSc (Honours) Degrees	19 courses (including top-up courses)
Dip HE	2 courses
Foundation Degrees	25 courses
Foundation Certificates (part-time)	7 courses
Certificate	1 course
Teacher Training Courses	PGCE, Cert Ed, PTTLs and CTLS

The College offers distance learning delivery (online or blended learning) in a range of subjects. Although the College offers further education provision at a number of other centres, all the higher education provision is delivered from the Bilborrow centre near Preston where the College has a dedicated Higher Education Centre. Courses in

arboriculture, waste management, sportsturf and veterinary nursing carry professional accreditation.

The College Research Strategy for 2010-15 confirms the significant continued commitment to original research by tutors and research studentships and provides appropriate underpinning of the curriculum, particularly at honours and postgraduate level. The College produces an annual research report, which summarises the College research activity and is published for staff and students on the main College website and in hard copy. The annual Myerscough Research Conference provides a formal opportunity for tutors to present their research to students.

The action plan from the 2010 QAA Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review report for the College identified five key areas of good practice, four advisable recommendations and two desirable recommendations. The College has progressed well in addressing the recommendations.

## Explanation of the findings about Myerscough 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: Maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards

**Expectation (A1): Each qualification (including those awarded through arrangements with other delivery organisations or support providers) is allocated to the appropriate level in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter A1: The national level***

### Findings

1.1 The College was recently subject to a Periodic Course Review, which was successfully completed in June 2013. This was a UCLan process that was implemented by the College.

1.2 UCLan's Course Developer's Guide is used in the development of new courses and as part of the periodic review process. This document states that a course must take account of the FHEQ. The FHEQ is fully embedded within the programme specifications. Each course is assessed through the annual monitoring process, during which any issues involving the FHEQ are raised. This includes external examiners who comment on the FHEQ annually.

1.3 The team reviewed documents which set out the College's policies and procedures for ensuring the appropriate level in the FHEQ. These included the reflective summaries which took place throughout the Periodic Course Review. Furthermore, the team discussed these with the appropriate members of staff to ensure there was consistency throughout the documentation and the way the College implemented its policies and procedures.

1.4 The review team found the policies and procedures used by the College to be appropriate. The College demonstrates an effective system across all programmes for monitoring course levels and volumes of study. Each course team takes responsibility to ensure the FHEQ is appropriately considered and that there is a discussion in place to address any issues. This was recently checked by the Periodic Course Review and is subject to the annual monitoring process henceforth. Any new courses will be developed in accordance with the Course Developer's Guide.

1.5 Overall, the review team concludes that the College has embedded the FHEQ across all current programmes successfully and meets the Expectation in *Chapter A1*. The Periodic Course Review is particularly effective in aligning the courses to their relevant level through extensive scrutiny. The annual monitoring process will identify and address any problems that arise. The team therefore concludes that the College successfully meets the Expectation in *Chapter A1: The national level* in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

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

**Expectation (A2): All higher education programmes of study take account of relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A2: The subject and qualification level**

**Findings**

1.6 The College's agreements with UCLan include clearly outlined responsibilities for designing and maintaining validated programmes with learning outcomes that are referenced to subject benchmark statements and which meet relevant professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements. Every course was checked through the Periodic Course Review that was completed in June 2013.

1.7 The College demonstrates understanding of the importance of the relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements by embedding them within the Module Information Packs and the programme specifications. Throughout the Periodic Course Review, the College extensively referenced these statements to ensure they were correctly incorporated. These are continually checked through the annual monitoring process, which also includes any issues arising from external examiners' reports. The College's programme design and monitoring practices include scrutiny by employers to establish and maintain currency of programme content and processes for responding to guidance offered by a broad range of professional bodies and agencies.

1.8 The review team tested this by examining course handbooks, programme specifications and Module Information Packs for the inclusion of subject and qualification benchmark statements. The team then confirmed the findings by questioning senior staff, academic staff and students.

1.9 The team found the College has effectively mapped the relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements within each course. Any new courses must be developed in accordance with the Course Developer's Guide, which ensures the team must take account of the relevant statements. Academic and senior staff understood the importance of the Course Developer's Guide and effectively demonstrated a scrupulous process for the implementation of new courses. The review team also heard how the College ensures the input of PSRBs and employers is successfully captured and responded to through the annual monitoring process and relevant committees.

1.10 Overall, the review team concludes that the College carries out its responsibilities effectively to ensure its programme design processes rigorously take account of relevant professional and subject benchmarks and are fully aligned with *Chapter A2*. The team therefore concludes the College successfully meets the Expectation in *Chapter A2: The subject and qualification level* in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

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

**Expectation (A3): Higher education providers make available definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements for a programme of study.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: The programme level**

**Findings**

1.11 The College is responsible for producing and disseminating definitive information for its audience on aims, intended learning outcomes and expected achievements. This is stipulated within the Institution Agreement with UCLan. The College uses templates, provided by UCLan, for writing their course handbooks, programme specifications and Module Information Packs.

1.12 The College provides the student with course handbooks at the beginning of the year. These include programme specifications, with information regarding course-level activity. Module descriptors are also provided to students within the Module Information Packs. These were recently checked through the Periodic Course Review, which was completed in June 2013, and will henceforth be checked through the annual monitoring process. Course factsheets are appropriately displayed online for the wider audience and potential applicants to view.

1.13 The team reviewed documents that demonstrate how the College makes available definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements for a programme of study. These included module descriptors, programme specifications, Module Information Packs and course handbooks. The team then met senior staff, academic staff and students to confirm these documents are effectively implemented.

1.14 The evidence provided demonstrates an effective understanding of the importance of making available definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements for a programme of study. Students whom the review team met confirmed that the way the College presents programme information, including course handbooks, is helpful.

1.15 The team found the College makes effective use of continual feedback from students to highlight any issues arising around the dissemination of information. Students have the opportunity to raise concerns through an extensive number of mechanisms including the National Student Survey (NSS), module feedback, personal tutorial sessions and an induction survey.

1.16 Overall, the review team concludes that the design and operation of the processes used by the College for preparing, disseminating, monitoring and enhancing information on its programmes of study are sound and fully aligned with *Chapter A3: The programme level*. The team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

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

**Expectation (A4): Higher education providers have in place effective processes to approve and periodically review the validity and relevance of programmes.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A4: Approval and review**

**Findings**

1.17 Overall responsibility for the approval and review of programmes lies with the University's awarding body, UCLan. The College follows these policies and procedures for course approval and Periodic Course Review in line with the University Academic Quality Assurance Manual. The College has separate documentation which outlines its own internal processes for the design and development of new programmes which is aligned to University requirements.

1.18 The processes for approval and review are clearly articulated. All new courses are subject to a course review event and all existing courses are subject to Periodic Course Review every five years. The Periodic Course Review process has a dual function of checking that the delivery of the programmes is in line with University and external expectations and as a mechanism for re-approval of programmes to ensure that the aims, content, learning outcomes and expected learner achievements are current and meet the needs of students and the industries they serve. Both programme approval and Periodic Course Review include external members on the panels. Programme design documentation for both programme specification and module templates is clear and aligns to the Indicators in *Chapter B1: Programme design and approval* and *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review* of the Quality Code. There is a clear process for annual monitoring of programmes for which the College has produced a comprehensive guidance document. The effectiveness of these processes is demonstrated through the University's report on the Periodic Course Review, the College's response to the Periodic Course Review and on the College's audit of the annual monitoring reports.

1.19 The review team investigated the processes of programme approval, annual monitoring and periodic review by examining the University and College procedural documents, annual monitoring documentation and the meeting minutes from the 2013 Periodic Course Review. The review team also examined the College's internal audit of annual monitoring of reports in 2012. The involvement of staff, students and externals in these processes was confirmed through meetings. Meetings with employers confirmed they are aware of the process and had contributed to the design of new and amended programmes to ensure the employability of graduates.

1.20 The review team found that the processes for programme approval, periodic review and annual monitoring work effectively. Processes are being followed and are contributing to the continued relevance and validity of the programmes delivered. The review team found the conditions arising from approval and revalidation events have been met and heard how recommendations and updates are considered through the annual monitoring process. There is also strong evidence of the involvement of employers in curriculum design, development and approval of programmes. The holistic preparation for and high-level engagement with the Periodic Course Review by higher education staff, students and employers is **good practice**. See also Expectation B8 and Enhancement.

1.21 The approval and review processes are well embedded and understood by all staff. They comply with the requirements of the awarding body and no concerns, breaches or omissions were seen to be reported in the Periodic Course Review of all programmes in June 2013. The review team is satisfied that effective processes are in place to ensure that all higher education programmes take into account all relevant external requirements.

Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation in *Chapter A4: Approval and review* is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A5): Higher education providers ensure independent and external participation in the management of threshold academic standards.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A5: Externality**

**Findings**

1.22 There are clear processes for the appointment of external examiners for all higher education programmes as defined by the awarding body. The requirements for dealing with external examiners' reports and the issues arising from them are also outlined in the Academic Quality Assurance Manual. Additionally, the College has internal procedures which ensure that the awarding body's and its own internal requirements are met. There is provision for PSRBs and employers to be involved in programme approval and Periodic Course Review.

1.23 The use of external examiners is embedded throughout the College's quality assurance processes. External examiners are involved in the approval of minor changes to programmes and in the annual monitoring of threshold academic standards through their annual visits, examination of student work and assessment task presence at exam boards. External examiner reports are published on the virtual learning environment (VLE) and external examiner details are in all programme handbooks. For the veterinary nursing programme, the College also makes good use of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons to ensure that the programme content and assessment meets professional body expectations. The majority of higher education programmes delivered by the College have a vocational element embedded within them. The College liaises closely with employers in a variety of ways to ensure that these programmes are current, relevant and develop the skills and knowledge required by the relevant industries.

1.24 The review team examined the awarding body's and the College's documentation associated with the use of external examiners including Periodic Course Review documentation, awarding body and College quality assurance documentation, annual course reviews, course team meeting minutes and external examiner reports. The team also reviewed documentation from Technical Advisory Boards. The team met with staff, students and employers and examined the VLE to confirm how these processes worked in practice.

1.25 The team found external examiners and their reports are used scrupulously by the College throughout their quality assurance processes. All programmes have had appropriate external input into their design. Issues raised by externals during the operation of the programmes are included in action plans and their progress towards completion monitored. Senior leaders at the College read external examiner reports and are aware of the issues raised. Students know who their external examiners are and how to access reports. There is appropriate involvement from the Royal Society of Veterinary Nurses. Employers, staff and students demonstrate high-level knowledge of the programmes offered. The practice of engaging employers as partners in the design, delivery and assessment of programmes is **good practice**. See also Expectations B4 and B10.

1.26 There is clear independent and external participation in the management of academic standards at the College. The procedures are rigorous and robustly applied and comply with external requirements. The review team is satisfied that effective processes are in place to meet the requirement of the Quality Code. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation in *Chapter A5: Externality* is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

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

**Expectation (A6): Higher education providers ensure the assessment of students is robust, valid and reliable and that the award of qualifications and credit are based on the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A6: Assessment of achievement of learning outcomes**

**Findings**

1.27 Programme assessment strategies are approved by the awarding body at programme approval or at Periodic Course Review. Module assessment and examination information is produced using standard templates with assessment information being included in Module Information Packs provided to the students. There are clear processes for the verification of assessment tasks and for the moderation of student work to ensure that both reflect the appropriate level within the regulatory framework.

1.28 The awarding body requires assessment strategies to be approved at the point of programme approval. They are embedded into the programme specification and guidance on their production is clearly outlined in the Course Developer's Guide. The College interprets these requirements through its own guidance which is provided to staff. Staff are also supported through the process of assessment design through discussions with link/host schools from the awarding body and through internal discussion with subject teams and other higher education staff at the College. Module Information Packs providing details of individual assessments are available to students online in advance of their studies. The assessments are internally verified either by the College staff to the awarding body's requirements, or by the awarding body in the case of networked programmes, before they are published. Any changes required to module assessment strategies can be submitted with external examiner support to the awarding body's minor change process which is clearly outlined in the awarding body's documentation.

1.29 The review team tested the robustness of the assessment arrangements through examination of the awarding body's documentation and the College's guide to assessments. The team met with teaching and management staff at the College, staff from the awarding body and students.

1.30 The team found assessment at the College is robust and effective and is underpinned by the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and governed by the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy Group. Procedures and guidance to support them are clear and easily accessible and supplemented by staff development opportunities. The staff involved in programme delivery and assessment are confident about their various roles in the process and understand the requirements of both the College and the awarding body.

1.31 The review team found the College's Higher Education Guide to Assessment Practice to be particularly clear and supportive. Tutors have a good relationship with staff in the UCLan host schools and are able to seek advice on assessment practice as required. They are also able to attend UCLan staff development sessions on assessment. An overview of the quality and standards of the assessment processes is provided by the academic leads from UCLan Schools through their interaction with programme delivery staff. External examiners provide external overview through their annual visits and attendance at assessment boards. Students confirmed they are clear about what they have to do for their assessments, how they can improve and the difference between assessment levels.

1.32 There are clear procedures in place to ensure that assessment is robust, valid and reliable. These processes and their application by College staff meet the requirements of the Quality Code in ensuring that the award of qualifications and credit is based on the

achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation in *Chapter A6: Assessment of achievement of learning outcomes* is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

## Maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards: Summary of findings

1.33 In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. In the maintenance of threshold academic standards, all Expectations have been met. There are two features of good practice and no affirmations or recommendations. There is evidence that the College is fully aware of its responsibilities for maintaining academic standards. Previous responses to external review activities provide confidence that areas of weakness will be addressed promptly and professionally. Therefore, the team concludes that the maintenance of the threshold academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of its awarding body at the College **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: Quality of student learning opportunities

**Expectation (B1): Higher education providers have effective processes for the design and approval of programmes.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter B1: Programme design and approval***

### Findings

2.1 The College has its own policy for course design and development, which is aligned to the University's Academic Quality Assurance Manual. The suitability of new proposals is assessed internally before initial approval is sought from the University. There is a structured development process that is supported by a range of guidelines and standard templates that ensure alignment to external reference points and internal consistency. At subject level, course development meetings enable the input of staff, students and employers. Following an internal approval event, documentation is submitted to the University for validation. Validation panels are configured to ensure externality and any conditions arising from validation are required to be met before a course can commence. The University provides opportunities for the College to reflect and feed back on the effectiveness of the process.

2.2 There are effective formal opportunities for strategic oversight of new developments at both College and University level. The College Strategic Plan states a commitment to providing courses in niche subjects and developing the relationship between research/scholarly activity and curriculum development and this provides a framework against which proposals can be assessed. College staff are supported to become University Review Panel members, which provides good opportunities for individual development as well as the dissemination of sound practice internally.

2.3 The review team examined the process in operation with reference to documentation from the 2013 periodic review, which incorporated a number of significant changes to the course portfolio, and through talking to staff, students and employers. Additionally, policy documents, the University Course Developer's Guide and the minutes of meetings with industry and employers were considered.

2.4 The evidence shows a strategic and robust approach to course development with a strong alignment to industry. The 2010 Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review report identified the high level of employer engagement in the development of the provision as good practice and it was clear that this has continued to be developed. Technical Advisory Boards have been established across all subject areas and together with a range of employer events and workshops are effective in providing input into course and curriculum design.

2.5 Overall, the review team concludes that the College's approach to the design and approval of programmes is comprehensive and effective. The use of external reference points and expertise from relevant industries and employers is particularly strong. Therefore, the Expectation in *Chapter B1: Programme design and approval* is met in both design and operation and the associated risk in this area is low.

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

**Expectation (B2): Policies and procedures used to admit students are clear, fair, explicit and consistently applied.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B2: Admissions**

**Findings**

2.6 The College is responsible for the recruitment, selection, admission and induction of students. UCLan provides advice and support through its Admissions Office, the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning Coordinator and the UCLan Schools which host the College courses. Most students are admitted through UCAS.

2.7 The College has a written admissions policy and a range of connected policies relating, for example, to international students, those with complex disabilities, exceptional entry circumstances and recognition of prior learning. Together these policies aim to ensure that the process of admitting students is fair and in line with UCLan requirements.

2.8 Admissions criteria are agreed during course approval and reviewed through annual monitoring and periodic review. The details of admissions requirements are set out in programme specifications, the Higher Education prospectus, student handbooks and course fact sheets. Information is available in paper form and on the College website. The Information and Guidance (IAG) Strategy Group is responsible for the accuracy and effectiveness of published admissions information.

2.9 Admissions processes and procedures are coordinated by the College Admissions team which sits within the College's Corporate Services. Candidates are interviewed by tutors in relevant subject areas using agreed procedures. The Admissions and Support Advisory Panel is responsible for the oversight of admissions of students with additional needs.

2.10 The College organises recruitment events for prospective students. Applicants have access to a dedicated area of the VLE to track their progress. The College has an IAG assistant who acts as a direct point of contact for all applicants. All students are interviewed before being offered a place. Unsuccessful students can obtain feedback. Dissatisfied applicants can make complaints and may use the appeals process. The College has processes in place to obtain feedback during the recruitment cycle from those seeking admission. The effectiveness of recruitment and admissions policies is reviewed through the institution's annual monitoring process.

2.11 The College has systems, processes, policies and procedures in place which should result in fair admissions. The admissions system includes processes aimed at ensuring a level playing field for all applicants. The College provides comprehensive information about the institution, its programmes and its admissions policies in a variety of formats to facilitate applicants' decision-making, and to ensure that students understand the programme of study that they plan to enter.

2.12 The review team examined documents which set out the College's policies and processes for the admission of students including strategy papers, committee minutes, and staff guidance. The review team looked at examples of promotional and recruitment material and at the College website. The review team talked to students about their experience of the admissions process and also heard from staff involved in recruitment and admissions about the way the College implemented its policies and procedures.

2.13 The review team found the systems, policies, processes and procedures described above are followed and implemented consistently and fairly. To ensure that admissions are undertaken professionally, the College supports a range of internal and external training and

provides guidance on key processes such as interviews. Admissions requirements have been recently reviewed and updated.

2.14 The review team noted the attention paid by the College to ensuring that the needs of every individual student are met to allow the student to achieve their potential. The College Admissions and Support Advisory Panel considers all applicants with a declared disability or criminal record prior to being offered a place to ensure that their needs can be catered for. A member of the Inclusive Learning Team may attend interviews with students who have additional learning needs. This approach to admissions supports the **good practice** of the wide-ranging support mechanisms targeted to meet individual needs that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. See also Expectations B3 and B4.

2.15 The team found extensive information and advice is available to applicants and those receiving offers of places about courses, life as a college student, and the demands of degree-level studies. The efforts made to ensure that students understand what is involved in their chosen course assist learners in making the transition to higher education. The College has invested in IT and dedicated staff resources to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its admissions processes. Further steps are being taken to enhance its admissions processes in relation to the use of technology, information and communications in response to annual monitoring and student feedback. This comprehensive support for learners in their transition to higher education is **good practice**. See also Expectations B3 and B4.

2.16 The College, with the support of its awarding body, has effective admissions processes and procedures in place. Recruitment and admissions policies are embedded in the College strategy, reviewed regularly, and are the subject of continuous improvement. Students confirm the admissions process is clear and seen as fair. Staff demonstrated the ways in which the admission process is conducted to be sensitive to individual needs and also to support a smooth transition for students to higher education. The review team concludes that the Expectation in *Chapter B2: Admissions* is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk 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**

2.17 Teaching and learning are at the heart of the College's mission, strategy and values. Thus there is a teaching and learning dimension to almost all College systems, processes, policies and procedures. The College's approach to teaching and learning is summarised in its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and the document entitled Teaching and Learning - Policy and Procedure. The development and implementation of policy in this area is overseen by the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy Group and leadership is provided by the Head of Teaching and Learning.

2.18 The teaching and learning dimension of higher education provision is considered at programme approval and monitored through annual monitoring, periodic review and external examiners' reports. Extensive data related to staff and student performance is collected, analysed and reviewed by various committees and groups, and used to set and monitor targets related to learning and teaching. There is direct and indirect student input into decision-making relating to teaching and learning at all levels of the College. Intensive use is made of NSS scores in developing teaching and learning.

2.19 The College is committed to the aim of providing opportunities for all to succeed and has a set of equality and diversity policies and procedures in place which inform teaching and learning. All staff receive equality and diversity training, and teaching observation evaluates inclusivity and the promotion of equality and diversity. Development, oversight and leadership is provided in this area through the Equality and Diversity Strategy Group and the Equality and Diversity Good Practice Group. Support for the individual learner in need of additional learning support is provided throughout a student's journey by the Inclusive Learning Team in line with the College's Inclusive Learning Policy and Procedure.

2.20 There are policies and procedures in place to ensure that teaching and learning are informed by reflection, research and professional practice. These include targets for Higher Education Academy fellowships, teaching observations, the designation of Advanced Teaching Practitioners, teaching and learning events, and teacher development programmes. There is a College Research Strategy and internal funding for research projects. The staff recruitment policy requires applicants for teaching posts to demonstrate their teaching skills at interview. The College has an extended staff induction process and extensive continuing professional development opportunities for all staff. A new role of Senior Lecturer has been designated to improve career opportunities for those dedicated to teaching.

2.21 Students have access to the College library, IT facilities and a dedicated Higher Education Resource Centre. They also have access to UCLan library and IT facilities. There is a suite of policies in place which define values, expectations, responsibilities and acceptable behaviour on the part of the users of learning resources. Mutual expectations of the College and students are summarised in a student charter. There are policies and procedures in place designed to ensure the safety of work placements.

2.22 Information about learning opportunities, and guidance on their use, is available to students through handbooks, Module Information Packs, and both the College and the UCLan student portals. At the commencement of their course, students receive a targeted induction followed by a weekly personal tutorial system following a common scheme of work which is designed to ensure that students are fully aware of the learning opportunities available to them.

2.23 The College provides a variety of mechanisms whereby students are able to monitor their progress and engage in a dialogue with staff. These include formative and summative assessment, weekly tutorials and advice services available from The Core, which is a central service point. Means such as personal development planning are also available for students to be reflective and to take charge of their own learning and development.

2.24 The College has multiple systems, processes, policies and procedures in place designed to ensure that the Expectation is met. The College's mission, values and strategies focus on learning and teaching. They are designed to work with internal and external stakeholders to enhance learning opportunities and teaching practice to ensure that every learner has the opportunity to develop and progress. In the design of systems, processes, policies and procedures, care is taken to ensure that the ethos and requirements of higher education are distinguished from other levels. Achievement of learning and teaching is the subject of extensive monitoring and review which feed into decision-making and enhancement initiatives.

2.25 The review team examined documentation that described the College's strategies and policies related to teaching and learning and documentation related to the provision of specific services and initiatives. The team also examined committee minutes, feedback data, and information and guidance available to staff, students and external stakeholders involved in the provision of learning opportunities. The review team discussed aspects of teaching and learning with senior management, academic and support staff, placement providers and students.

2.26 The review team found that the systems, policies, processes and procedures described above are followed and implemented effectively. In addition, the College has taken steps to invest in and enhance its staffing and higher education resources and places learning and teaching at the heart of its mission and strategy.

2.27 Staff are able to access relevant professional development courses at the College and at UCLan through its Associate School status. Academic staff have access to a postgraduate certificate in education programme, are encouraged to become Higher Education Academy fellows, and can be supported to obtain professional or higher-level academic qualifications. As well as providing general continuing professional development opportunities, the College targets courses and training towards areas that have been identified for enhancement such as assessment and the use of technology. Courses and training are also available to support specific roles such as line management, and key processes such as interviewing and handling complaints.

2.28 As well as formal courses, training and events, the College organises teaching observation, mentoring, and support groups such as the Improving Teacher Programme. Management attention to staff performance through line management, appraisal, monitoring and review drives collective and individual efforts to improve. A member of staff in each subject area has been designated an Advanced Teaching Practitioner with a remit to provide support, coaching and guidance. Academic and other staff who met the review team spoke positively about the support and development opportunities available to them. The broad range of staff development opportunities available to support a distinctive College higher educational experience is **good practice**.

2.29 The College's support for research has a direct impact on higher education teaching and helps to develop a higher education ethos among staff and students. Research activity is generally applied. Learning and teaching benefit directly from staff engagement in research. Students also have the opportunity to participate in events such as the annual research conference. Both staff and students spoke positively about the College's research activity. The Research Strategy that underpins higher education learning and teaching is **good practice**.

2.30 As a result of reviewing its VLE with users, the College has developed a set of standards for virtual teaching materials to be delivered to students on face-to-face and distance learning courses. Staff, students and external experts were involved in defining bronze, silver and gold standards for course information, supporting materials and activities, discussions, and assessment processes on the VLE. To ensure effective implementation, the College has incorporated targets for the achievement of different levels by key dates and provides training and technical assistance. The strategy for developing and embedding the VLE as an effective and consistent learning tool is **good practice**. See also the section on Enhancement.

2.31 The College's approach to learning and teaching is student-centred and sensitive to the needs of individual students in its design, delivery and supporting services. It is also mindful of the need to provide a smooth transition to higher education learning. The systems, processes, policies and procedures described above contribute to the good practice of the wide-ranging support mechanisms targeted to meet individual needs that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential, and the good practice of the comprehensive support for learners in their transition to higher education. See also Expectation B4.

2.32 The College, in conjunction with its awarding body, has effective strategies and policies in place to ensure the provision of high-quality learning opportunities with respect to teaching and learning at higher levels. Students confirmed that the teaching they receive is appropriate and effective; that the learning resources provided are appropriate to their needs; that support is available for students with a wide range of additional needs; that they are well informed about teaching and learning matters; and that they are able to engage in learning and understand their progress. Students also confirmed that they are consulted and involved in a broad range of decisions regarding teaching and learning. Staff confirmed that they are able to access extensive guidance and development opportunities to ensure that their teaching is high quality, current and underpinned by scholarship and research. Employers confirmed the effectiveness of arrangements for students undertaking placements. The review team concludes that the Expectation in *Part B3: Learning and teaching* is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling student development and achievement**

**Findings**

2.33 The creation of opportunities for all to succeed is a core aim of the College's strategy. This is supported by strategies for higher education, quality, teaching, learning and assessment, equality and diversity, inclusive learning, information, advice and guidance, student support and welfare, information and learning technology, and learner involvement. Each of these strategies has supporting plans and articulated policies, processes and procedures. Furthermore, the centrality of the mission to enable all students to achieve their potential implies that all of the College's academic and support systems and policies are relevant to this aim.

2.34 The College sets targets for student achievement and retention which are monitored through the Associated School system, annual monitoring for the College and higher education, and the committees responsible for the strategies noted above, in particular the Governors' Quality and Standards Committee. Specific resources for learning, curricula and career relevance of programmes are checked at programme approval, monitoring and review.

2.35 Key student support services are delivered through a central service point called The Core which includes welfare, careers, equality and diversity, chaplaincy, counselling health, recreational sport, and the Students' Union. Students also have access to UCLan support services where appropriate. The Inclusive Learning Team aims to identify students with additional needs at an early stage, and to provide support and assistance at key points during the student's journey. A Student Support Register identifies, monitors and targets support for students at risk. Those delivering support services include specialist professionals. Specialist training is available to members of groups such as the Inclusive Learning Team. Extensive related training opportunities are available to all staff.

2.36 Employers and professional bodies are involved in aspects of course development and delivery. Subject areas have Technical Advisory Boards and the College holds events which bring together staff, students and industry. The College has formal policies and procedures relating to placement and work experience.

2.37 The College has multiple systems, processes, policies and procedures in place designed to ensure that the students develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The College's mission, values and strategies focus on enabling student development and achievement. Strategies and policies are designed to work with internal and external stakeholders to ensure that every student is enabled to develop his or her academic, personal and professional potential. The College's approach involves a mixture of general and targeted support. Extensive monitoring and review of targets feed into decision-making and enhancement initiatives.

2.38 The review team examined documents which set out the College's policies and procedures for providing support for students to enable them to achieve their potential. These included strategies, plans, reports, committee minutes, and information about services provided. Review team members met with academic and support staff, students and employers and asked about the effectiveness of the College's approach to enabling student achievement.

2.39 The review team found that the systems, policies, processes and procedures described above are followed and implemented effectively. In addition, the College has taken steps to enhance its practice and to develop new initiatives to better enable students to develop and achieve their potential. The College has Matrix accreditation and the re-accreditation report confirms the quality of services provided to students with respect to information, advice and guidance.

2.40 The College systems and processes are designed to assist students to make an effective transition from previous study to higher education and to subsequent careers or further study. Many students progress to higher education from lower-level courses within the College. An eight-week course has been developed to acclimatise such students to higher education study and assessment. Applicants from outside the College are able to access information about the demands of their future courses through the website, leaflets and discussion with staff. All new students complete a College induction which includes information on how to use the College's learning resources effectively. Students also follow an induction programme specific to their chosen course which includes key skills for their subject and a safeguarding course. Students who met the review team commented very positively on the induction programme. Following induction, students commence a weekly tutorial programme. The tutorials for the first six weeks for all programmes are designed to clarify expectations, identify at-risk students, and put appropriate measures in place. Study skills are available to all students through the VLE.

2.41 The College has developed programmes which aim to boost students' employability skills. Students can take part in a programme called Learn2Work which provides modules related to career planning and preparation. A review of employability skills within programmes undertaken as part of the recent periodic review, MyEnterprise Education, highlighted the potential for increasing business and entrepreneurship skills within the higher education course provision. This has led to the development of a new Business and Entrepreneurship module to be embedded within courses. By taking part in the MyMentor scheme, students have the opportunity to support other students and also to acquire key skills and formal recognition. Personal development planning is embedded in the higher education programmes and students also have access to personal development planning guidance and support via the UCLan website and support services.

2.42 To reinforce the transition to higher education, the College has provided a Higher Education Centre which has teaching and study spaces, IT facilities, and houses the research office. Students are able to use industry-standard equipment for their respective field of study, thus preparing them for the transition from College to employment. The College provides careers guidance through The Core. The comprehensive support for learners in their transition to higher education is **good practice**. See also Expectations B2 and B3.

2.43 The review team found that the close links which the College maintains with industry, employers and professional bodies result in opportunities for students to acquire practical skills and compete effectively in the labour market. One programme requires a formal clinical placement. For others, the College has developed generic work-based learning modules that can be customised for different programmes. There are also detailed policies and processes set out for the management of work-based and placement learning. Students who met the review team commented very positively on the links between the College and relevant industries as well as the opportunities they had to do work experience and the support they received while undertaking such work. The practice of engaging employers as partners in the design, delivery and assessment of programmes is **good practice**. See also Expectations A5 and B10.

2.44 The student submission noted that students were generally happy, that their courses enabled them to progress and excel, and that support for students both academically and pastorally was a focus. Students who met the review team spoke very positively about the supportive ethos of the College and the services available through The Core. They also indicated that the experience of studying at the College has given them confidence in themselves as learners and future employees. The students' positive views of these aspects of support are reflected in its NSS scores which in relation to personal development and academic advice and support are above sector averages.

2.45 The College has policies and systems in place to ensure that all students with learning difficulties or disabilities are identified at an early stage and appropriate support is provided for them. The Inclusive Learning Team works with individual students and coordinates their support package. This includes using a confidential database, the Student Support Register, overseen by the Curriculum and Social Care Group, which allows all those teaching a student to be aware of the support they require. The register is central to ensuring students at risk are identified, monitored and supported effectively. An annual report on the Student Support Register identifies trends and provides a basis for developing enhancements. Among recent new initiatives has been the development of links between academic and residential services; an example of the cooperation is provision of targeted evening study skills sessions by residential wardens. The wide-ranging support mechanisms targeted to meet individual needs that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential is **good practice**. See also Expectations B2 and B3.

2.46 The College, with the support of its awarding body, has effective systems, policies, processes and procedures in place to enable students to achieve their academic, personal and professional potential. Maximising student achievement is a core value of the College. Policies and processes to achieve this aim are embedded in strategies and subject to regular review and continuous improvement. Students confirmed extensive, targeted and effective support available to them and their role as partners in learning and development. Staff confirmed their commitment to supporting students throughout their learning journey. The review team concludes that the Expectation in *Chapter B4: Enabling student development and achievement* is met in both design and operation 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**

2.47 The College's approach to student engagement is set out in the Learner Involvement Strategy which is reviewed annually. The College has a formally organised students' union, Myerscough Students' Union, which has links to the UCLan Students' Union. There is a system of elected student representatives who meet with staff at local Staff-Student Liaison Committees and Cross-College Course Representative Meetings. Two student governors sit on the College's governing body and are members of the Quality and Standards Committee and the Resources Committee. Course representatives are chosen by election. The College has a Quality Coordinator (student liaison) whose role involves coordinating learner voice activities, supporting course representatives, and providing guidance notes for tutors. In addition to formal meetings with the Students' Union, the College Principal meets informally with the Union President.

2.48 The College uses feedback forms after events such as open days, induction and modules to collect student views. Surveys are used to gather student opinion about courses to feed into the periodic review. The College also uses the data from external surveys of its students such as the NSS and UCLan's Survey of Myerscough to inform decision-making.

2.49 Students are able to nominate staff for awards for their contributions to the student experience. Student representatives are involved in the short-listing and awarding. The College uses a variety of systems to inform students of the impact of their feedback. Module Information Packs include a commentary on response to the previous year's student evaluations and posters are placed around the College showing the outcome of the consideration of feedback. Student feedback is analysed in the College's annual monitoring report.

2.50 The College has systems, processes, policies and procedures in place which should result in students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. The aims of the Expectation are reflected in the College's high-level strategies, policies and values. Its operational approach is designed to maximise the opportunities that students have to participate in quality assurance and quality enhancement processes as valued partners, and to do so in an open and supportive environment. Student views are sought regularly and systematically and are used to monitor and enhance the quality and effectiveness of the College's higher education provision. The College regularly reviews the appropriateness and effectiveness of its approach to student engagement.

2.51 The review team examined documentation that described the College's policies and approach to student engagement. The team asked members of the Students' Union, course representatives and other students about ways in which their views and opinions were heard and the effectiveness of their involvement. The review team also heard from staff at all levels about the ways in which they received and used feedback from students.

2.52 The review team found that the systems, policies, processes and procedures described above are followed and implemented effectively. Students' views are sought routinely on a broad range of matters by whatever mechanism is most appropriate. Efforts are made to ensure that all students are aware of the outcome of their feedback to encourage further engagement.

2.53 Student governors indicated that the role is valued and respected and also effective in achieving decisions that reflect students' preferences. Student governors receive training for their role and participate fully in governing body meetings. Their views are actively sought; they cited an example where their input into a meeting had shaped the decisions made. The Students' Union provides a written report to each meeting of the Board of Governors.

2.54 The review team noted the importance of student feedback in quality assurance processes such as annual monitoring and periodic review. The review team also noted instances where student feedback has resulted in significant change aimed at enhancing the student experience. For example, the College made substantial investment in the IT infrastructure following student feedback about wireless access. Improved facilities in the Higher Education Centre have also been provided in response to student comment. The extensive and effective engagement of students at all levels is **good practice**.

2.55 The College has systems and processes in place to ensure effective engagement by higher education students in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. Students confirm that there are multiple channels through which they can make their views known; that their voices are heard at all levels of the institution; and that, as a result of their involvement, changes occur that enhance their experience as learners. Both staff and students indicated that they see each other as partners. The review team concludes that the Expectation in *Chapter B5: Student engagement* is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk low.

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

**Expectation (B6): Higher education providers ensure that students have appropriate opportunities to show they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the award of a qualification or credit.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning**

**Findings**

2.56 The College's strategic objectives include a specific commitment to developing opportunities for students to succeed. A wide range of approaches to formative and summative assessment are offered and the College promotes the use of assessments that reflect real work situations and enhance the development of employability skills. This is set out in an overarching Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy.

2.57 The strategy is supported by an extensive range of policies including Internal Verification of Higher Education Assessments, Unfair Means to Enhance Performance, Appealing against Assessment Decisions, Recognition of Prior Learning, Extenuating Circumstances, Exam Access Arrangements, Receipt of Higher Education Assessed Student Work and Retention of Assessed Student Work.

2.58 Assessment tasks and requirements are set out for students in Module Information Packs. There is a template document for these that describes the size and equivalencies of assessment tasks to ensure a consistent approach across the provision.

2.59 The College follows University academic regulations in respect of the formation of assessment boards and panels. External examiners provide external assurance that assessment practices are set and maintained at the appropriate level and that student performance is properly judged against this.

2.60 The College's processes are aligned to the Expectation of *Chapter B6*. Procedures are consistently applied in line with the Expectation. There is some operational variation arising from the alignment of programmes to different Schools within the University.

2.61 The review team examined documentation including the policies, minutes of assessment boards, Module Information Packs and guidance materials for staff, and met staff and students. The team also considered periodic review documentation that demonstrates how external feedback from examiners and panel members is used to review the appropriateness of assessment.

2.62 The team found that the College's oversight of assessment is comprehensive. Targets are set for assessment outcomes and student satisfaction in the Strategic Plans and Associate School Scorecard and these are reviewed annually through the annual monitoring process.

2.63 There is evidence of periodic review being used to ensure appropriateness of assessment and Module Information Packs include a section on how assessment tasks have been reviewed in light of student feedback from previous years. This indicates a robust approach to critically reviewing the opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning. The review team also found evidence of the College actively developing student understanding of assessment. Students are supported to undertake practice assignments in the initial stages of their course to develop their understanding of assessment requirements while standardised feedback forms provide the opportunity for students to reflect on their own performance.

2.64 The timeliness and effectiveness of assessment feedback have been identified by the College as an area requiring improvement. Timescales for feedback are aligned to University requirements and there is a policy to return feedback within 15 days. In practice, this is often generic feedback to the group.

2.65 The College has taken action to address assessment feedback including reviewing scheduling to reduce the bunching of assessment and revising and improving the guidance given to staff about assessment practice and assessment documentation. There has been training for staff on the use of electronic feedback and a programme to use Advanced Teaching Practitioners to support colleagues in developing teaching, learning and assessment.

2.66 Students recognise the work done this academic year and reported positively on changes in the quality of assessment feedback, particularly in courses where electronic submission and voice clip feedback are being used. Staff demonstrate a critical understanding of the role of generic feedback and its relationship to individual feedback. The team **affirms** the actions taken to address the timeliness and effectiveness of assessment feedback.

2.67 Overall, the review team concludes that the College provides appropriate opportunities for students to demonstrate that they meet the learning outcomes for their award and that therefore the Expectation in *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning* is met both in design and operation and the associated risk in this area 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**

2.68 External examiners are appointed by the University for each of the College's higher education programmes, using criteria and procedures set out by the University Academic Board. There is comprehensive induction information provided by both the University and College that sets out the expectations of the role. External examiners complete an annual report using a standard University template, which is submitted directly to the University before dissemination back to the College. The College is responsible for responding to required actions and completion of actions is confirmed at subsequent assessment boards.

2.69 Internal mechanisms for managing visits and reports are comprehensive and set out in a specific policy - Managing Visits and Reports from External Verifiers and External Examiners. This sets out responsibilities for organising visits, sending out documentation in advance and managing reports. It is benchmarked against the University regulations and the Expectation in *Chapter B7: External examining* of the Quality Code.

2.70 The review team looked at documentary evidence including the policy documents, external examiner reports, Minutes of assessment boards and the Student Handbook and met with staff and students.

2.71 The evidence show that the processes are operating effectively. Assessment Board minutes confirm the attendance of external examiners and their endorsement of assessment outcomes. Sample reports indicate that the reporting is thorough and clearly identifies areas for enhancement as well as robust discussion of standards and levels. Where serious issues have been raised, there is clear evidence of prompt action by the College and University. Comments arising from external examiner reports are discussed in course-level annual monitoring reports and actions are included in course-level action plans. Documentation from the 2013 periodic review indicates how external examiner recommendations for enhancement have been addressed and have informed course development.

2.72 The team found that senior staff read all reports and that there is a high level of internal transparency and awareness of issues raised. Actions arising from external examiners' comments are systematically captured and monitored through action planning software, which regularly prompts course staff and managers to respond.

2.73 The name and institution of each external examiner is included in the student handbooks along with summary comments. Since 2013, students have been able to access the full external examiner reports through the VLE. The team found that students are aware of the availability of reports but did not access them in practice.

2.74 There is evidence that the College recognises the importance and mutual benefit of the work undertaken by external examiners. It supports staff to act as external examiners at other institutions and is additionally taking action to improve the networking opportunities for its own external examiners as a direct response to requests from examiners themselves.

2.75 Overall, the review team concludes that the College has appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure the scrupulous use of external examiners and that the Expectation in *Chapter B7: External examining* is therefore met in both design and operation and the risk in this area is low.

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

**Expectation (B8): Higher education providers have effective procedures in place to routinely monitor and periodically review programmes.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review**

**Findings**

2.76 The College monitors its provision by setting a range of performance targets aligned to the strategic plan. Additionally, the University monitoring process for Associate Schools requires the College to maintain an Associate School Scorecard, Delivery Plan and Risk Register, which provides further oversight of performance at an institutional level.

2.77 Individual programmes are monitored through annual and periodic review. The annual monitoring process is designed to monitor the ongoing effectiveness of programmes against external examiner, student and employer feedback and identify programmes with low progression or success rates. The outcomes of annual monitoring are drawn together in an overarching report for the higher education provision, which informs target setting by the College Principalship and to the College Governors' Quality and Standards Committee. Periodic review, which takes place every five years across the whole higher education provision, is designed as a broader review of the continuing success, validity and relevance of the programmes in relation to the overall portfolio, University and industry requirements.

2.78 The College provides a range of policies and procedures that allow it to maintain strategic oversight as well as monitor individual programme performance down to the level of individual modules. Processes monitor statistical data and the qualitative evaluations of students and examiners. Actions are identified and carried forward either as part of the annual cycle or periodic review, as appropriate. Module documentation issued to students makes clear changes made in response to feedback.

2.79 The review team considered documentary evidence including the strategic plans, Associate School Scorecard, the 2013 periodic review report, annual monitoring reports, and feedback to UCLan, and met staff from the College, University and employers.

2.80 The evidence demonstrates that the monitoring processes are comprehensive at institutional, programme and module level. The team found actions arising from monitoring are systematically addressed and support the development and enhancement of the programmes. Actions are monitored through inclusion in electronic action planning software, staff are sent regular prompts to ensure that actions are progressed and action plans are routinely updated following programme team meetings. The comprehensive management and oversight of actions arising from quality assurance and enhancement processes is **good practice**. See also the Enhancement section.

2.81 The higher education provision was subject to periodic review in 2013 and the evidence demonstrates the process to be highly effective in ensuring the currency of programmes. The process of preparing for review provided the opportunity for close working between staff, students, the University and industry, and there is evidence of a high level of engagement. All courses were extensively revised and a number of new courses introduced. All conditions have been met and recommendations arising from the review have been considered through subsequent annual monitoring. The holistic preparation for and high-level engagement with the Periodic Course Review by higher education staff, students and employers is **good practice**.

2.82 Overall, the review team concludes that the College in collaboration with the University has effective procedures in place to routinely monitor and review its programmes.

Processes are timely, operate appropriately at all levels of the provision and align with *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review* of the Quality Code. There is good practice in the level of engagement with review processes and also in the oversight of actions arising from monitoring. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met both in design and operation and the associated risk level is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have fair, effective and timely procedures for handling students' complaints and academic appeals.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic complaints and student appeals**

**Findings**

2.83 The College has policies for complaints and appeals that set out the processes and specify timescales. There are separate lines of responsibility with complaints being overseen by the Director of Corporate services and appeals by the Chair of Assessment Board. Annual reports on complaints and appeals are collated and considered as part of the annual monitoring process.

2.84 Information on complaints and appeals is made available via the staff and student intranet, a student Essential Guide and via both the College and University websites. Additionally, the opportunity for appeal is highlighted on assessment documentation and the grounds for appeal are set out in the assessment handbook.

2.85 The complaints policy is explicit in stating its aims in terms of enhancement and improvement and also in retaining appropriate levels of confidentiality such that students do not fear disadvantage. There is provision for students to be accompanied at formal meetings by a Students' Union representative.

2.86 The review team looked at documentary evidence including the policy documents and annual reports. These were considered in relation to the student submission that confirmed that students are made aware of complaints and appeals processes during the induction period and that they know where to find information and advice both online and face to face through The Core student support service.

2.87 The evidence demonstrates that the procedures are operating effectively. The annual reports indicate low numbers of complaints and appeals in proportion to overall student numbers. They also confirm that these are addressed within the specified timescales. A total of seven appeals were made against assessment decisions in the academic year 2012-13, the majority of which were concerned with retrospective extenuating circumstances. In the same period, six complaints were made concerning residential and transport issues, one of which was fully upheld and three partially upheld. In support of the policies, staff are given training and guidance on how to handle complaints including how to make initial assessments regarding the seriousness of complaints and how to deal with difficult people.

2.88 Overall, the review team concludes that the College has fair, effective and timely procedures for handling students' complaints and academic appeals. The current level of complaints and appeals is low but the reporting and monitoring mechanisms are sufficient to identify any increases or emerging trends. As such, the review team concludes the Expectation in *Chapter B9: Academic complaints and student appeals* is met in both design and operation and the associated risk level is low.

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

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others**

## Findings

2.89 The College's responsibilities in respect of *Chapter B10* are confined to the arrangements for delivering work placements. There is a specific policy for the Organisation and Delivery of Work Experience, which is aligned to University Regulations and the Academic Quality Assurance Manual. Currently, only one programme, the FdSc Veterinary Nursing, has a mandatory work placement requirement. Specific arrangements for placement providers and students are detailed in the Practice Placement Handbook and the Student Placement Handbook. Other courses provide opportunities for work experience. For foundation degrees, this equates to 120 hours of experience assessed as part of a level 4 work skills module. Through tutorial support, a preparatory lecture programme and skills audit, the College assures the students' preparedness, but the provider does not undertake any direct assessment.

2.90 There is a dedicated placement officer for veterinary nursing who oversees the planning and operation of the scheme. Overall, arrangements for work placements and work-related activity are checked and approved through the University course approval and Periodic Course Review processes and PSRB representatives contribute to this process. The College's accreditation by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons is reviewed in this way every five years and this oversight is supported by an annual monitoring visit each year. The College's policy and procedure requires that arrangements are reviewed prior to the renewal of contracts with placement providers.

2.91 The review team looked at documentary evidence including policies, placement handbooks and PSRB reports and met with staff, students and placement providers.

2.92 The team found there is effective and regular communication between the College and placement providers. Clinical coaches and practice principals are invited to regular workshops and meetings and there is additional support available via the Bloom VLE site. The review team heard how new providers are inducted and specific examples of how student support services are extended to students on placement.

2.93 For work experience providers, the relative responsibilities of the College and students are clearly stated in the policy for the Organisation and Delivery of Work Experience. The College reports that it currently has 200 industry contacts available to students to access work experience and that accessing vocational skills and appropriate experience, though not mandatory, is a well established part of its programmes. The team learned that the College is committed to ensuring students are well prepared and uses its own facilities to provide pre-work experience when necessary.

2.94 The practice of engaging employers as partners in the design, delivery and assessment opportunities within programmes is **good practice**. In addition to comprehensive formal mechanisms including Technical Advisory Boards, employer events and workshops, the team heard from employers that the College is receptive to informal feedback and that suggestions are acted on. In Golf Management, employers described how specific additions to curriculum coverage had been made in response to their input.

2.95 Overall, the review team concludes that the College has secure and effective arrangements in place to oversee the delivery of provision in placement situations and that as such its responsibilities under the Expectation in *Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others* are met both in design and operation and the associated risk level 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**

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

## Quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.97 In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All applicable Expectations in the area of the quality of student learning opportunities have been met and the associated levels of risk are low. There are nine examples of good practice in this area, one affirmation and no recommendations for improvement. The College has plans to enhance this area further. Student engagement management of this area is widespread and well supported. Managing the needs of students is a clear focus of the College's strategies and policies in this area. Therefore, the review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College is **commended**.

### **3 Judgement: Quality of the information produced about its provision**

**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 the College, its courses and policies and procedures is made widely available to applicants, students, staff, and external stakeholders through the College website, the VLE and printed materials including prospectuses, handbooks and leaflets. The College has a public information policy. Systems are in place to ensure that published information is fit-for-purpose, accessible and trustworthy; these systems are set out in the College's Information Advice and Guidance Policy. Responsibility for the development and implementation of the Information Advice and Guidance policy lies with the Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy Group.

3.2 Senior staff at the College are responsible for checking the accuracy of programme information. UCLan regularly checks the accuracy of all marketing materials and course descriptions that refer to its higher education provision. UCLan is responsible for issuing student transcripts.

3.3 The College's Information and Learning Technology strategy sets out policies and targets for, among other areas, access to College data and communications. Systems for data collection and analysis feed into strategic planning and monitoring of performance.

3.4 The College has held Matrix accreditation since 2008. The College has also recently participated in a JISC project to improve the effectiveness of course information.

3.5 The College has systems, processes, policies and procedures in place which enable the information to be fit-for-purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The aims of the Expectation are reflected in the College strategy and robust procedures. The College has taken steps to benchmark its performance in this area externally and to undertake initiatives to enhance its information provision. The College has invested in information technology to improve access to information.

3.6 The review team examined documentation that describes the College's policies and processes for the production of information for internal and external stakeholders, and asked staff about the operation of these policies. The review team examined examples of information produced for applicants, students, staff and external stakeholders, including the general public, that were provided both electronically and on paper. The review team asked students about the quality and utility of the information they received, and heard from academic and professional staff about the information available to them to manage quality and standards effectively.

3.7 The review team found that the systems, policies, processes and procedures described above are followed and implemented effectively. The provision of useful, targeted information to students, starting at the point of application, underpins the College's approach to managing its higher education provision. The College website includes information about the institution and its higher education provision that meets the requirements of HEFCE's wider information set. Extensive information is published to assist different groups of applicants to make informed choices about courses and to guide them through the

application process. College information sheets provide links to UNISTATS and Key Information Set information. Students who met the review team confirmed that this information is accurate and helpful.

3.8 Students access information about their courses, support services, and current events through the student portal and the VLE, as well as receiving hard copies of handbooks and course information.

3.9 The development and implementation of the College strategy are underpinned by information systems which facilitate the identification of priorities for action and the monitoring of plans. In this respect, the development and use of the action plan tracking software has been particularly beneficial. Staff at the College confirmed the use and value of these systems. The use of management information systems to determine areas of priority for continuous improvement and to ensure those areas are addressed and monitored is **good practice**. See also the Enhancement section.

3.10 The College has invested resources into making information more accessible and beneficial to learning. In response to student comments, the wireless access system has been upgraded and an app is under development to further increase accessibility. Resources have also been put into developing the VLE and supporting staff use of the platform to enhance teaching and learning.

3.11 The College, in conjunction with its awarding body, has effective quality assurance policies in place to ensure the accuracy of information about its higher education provision. Students confirm they are able to access information about their programmes and the resources available to them at every stage of their student journey and that the information provided is accurate, consistent and helpful to them. Staff confirm that they are able to access accurate and reliable information that assists them in safeguarding the academic standards and quality of the College's higher education provision. The review team concludes that the Expectation in *Part C: Information about higher education provision* of the Quality Code is met both in design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

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

## Quality of the information produced about its provision: Summary of findings

3.12 In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation in the area of quality of the information produced about higher education provision has been met. There is one example of good practice and no affirmations or recommendations in this area. The College is aware of its responsibilities for assuring information is fit-for-purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Previous responses to external review activities provide confidence that areas of weakness will be addressed promptly and professionally. Therefore, the team concludes that the quality of the information produced about higher education provision at the College **meets** UK expectations.

## 4 Judgement: Enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

### Findings

4.1 The College has a strategic drive for continuous improvement, as evidenced through its strategies and procedures, with an aim to systematically identify areas which require improvement, to implement measures to bring about these improvements and to measure and monitor progress against set targets.

4.2 Through its strategic plan, the College sets itself ongoing targets for improvement. The College is supported in this approach by the awarding body through its Associate School status via the Associate School Delivery Plan and the Associate School Scorecard. With these targets in mind, and through the oversight of the Strategic Planning Group, the College systematically identifies areas for improvement through its normal quality assurance processes. One of the key determinants in identifying these areas is the student voice and consequently multiple mechanisms are available to capture this feedback and to develop strategies for implementing and measuring improvements. All staff are aware of their role in the implementation of these initiatives through course team meetings, staff development sessions and the College's appraisal process. Students are also aware of how the College is working towards improving their learning experience through their course team meetings, staff-student meetings and cross-college meetings between students and staff.

4.3 The review team met senior members of the College leadership team and heard about the various groups responsible for determining and monitoring strategic areas of improvement. The review team also examined evidence trails demonstrating how strategies are identified and operationalised and what outcomes result from the process. The review team spoke to staff who were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the key enhancement priorities and to students who were able to provide evidence of initiatives which have produced demonstrable improvements to their learning experience.

4.4 Senior staff met by the review team were clearly and articulately able to demonstrate the College's vision to continually enhance the student experience and gave examples of how this was embedded through College strategies and initiatives.

4.5 The review team found that the College's Research Strategy provides a framework to support staff involvement in applied research which in turn has a direct impact on higher education teaching and helps to develop a higher education ethos among staff and students. Learning and teaching benefit directly from staff engagement in research through the articulation of relevant techniques and the inclusion of current disciplinary thinking and applications. Students also have the opportunity to participate in events such as the annual research conference. Both staff and students spoke positively about the College's research activity. The Research Strategy that underpins higher education learning and teaching is **good practice**. See also Expectation B3.

4.6 The review team heard from staff and students that as a result of reviewing its VLE with users, the College has developed a set of standards for virtual teaching materials to be delivered to students on face-to-face and distance learning courses. Staff, students and external experts were involved in defining bronze, silver and gold standards for course information, supporting materials and activities, discussions, and assessment processes on the VLE. To ensure effective implementation, the College has incorporated targets for the achievement of different levels by key dates and provides training and technical assistance.

The strategy for developing and embedding the VLE as an effective and consistent learning tool is **good practice**. See also Expectation B3.

4.7 The College's quality assurance processes associated with annual monitoring, external examiners' reports and student feedback through both questionnaires and the course representative systems were identified by the review team as key mechanisms for the identification, implementation and monitoring of improvements. The evidence demonstrates that the monitoring processes are comprehensive at institutional, programme and module level. The team found actions arising from monitoring are systematically addressed and support the development and enhancement of the programmes. Actions are monitored through inclusion in electronic action planning software, staff are sent regular prompts to ensure that actions are progressed and action plans are routinely updated following programme team meetings. The comprehensive management and oversight of actions arising from quality assurance and enhancement processes is **good practice**. See also Expectation B8.

4.8 Students gave several examples of initiatives they feel have led to improvements in their learning experience such as the improved opening hours for the Higher Education Centre and the approval of new sports facilities. Students told the review team that they have confidence staff are continually looking to improve the programmes and were able to describe how the student voice is a key part of this process.

4.9 The review team found the College had engaged with the recent Periodic Course Review extremely well and staff had used the process to ensure that improvements were made to all programmes. The process of preparing for review provided the opportunity for close working between staff, students, the University and industry and there is evidence of a high level of engagement. All courses were extensively revised and a number of new courses introduced. All conditions have been met and recommendations arising from the review have been considered through subsequent annual monitoring. The holistic preparation for and high-level engagement with the Periodic Course Review by higher education staff, students and employers is **good practice**. See also Expectations A4 and B8.

4.10 Staff across the College are able to demonstrate the systematic use of data and management information to monitor the impact of initiatives on improving progress towards key performance indicator targets. Through these mechanisms, the review team are confident that enhancement is fully embedded in every aspect of the College's work. The use of management information systems to determine areas of priority for continuous improvement and to ensure those areas are addressed and monitored is **good practice**. See also Expectation C.

4.11 The College is clearly able to demonstrate that it has a deliberate and strategic approach to enhancement. This is evident through its strategies and its management approach to continually improving the student experience; in doing so, it fully meets the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

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

## Enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.12 In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation for enhancement of student learning opportunities has been met. There are five examples of good practice, and no affirmations or recommendations in this area. The College has a provider-level strategy for enhancement. Student engagement in this area is widespread and well supported. Managing the needs of students is a clear focus of the College's strategies and policies in enhancement. Therefore, the team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College is **commended**.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Findings

5.1 The College has an embedded ethos of student employability, which is stated throughout its Higher Education Strategic Plan. It also has a policy in place for the delivery and organisation of work experience that covers placement arrangements and is aligned to University regulations.

5.2 The review team heard numerous positive examples of student experience regarding their work placements. This is fundamentally embedded throughout each course within the work skills module. Each student has the freedom of selecting which employer they wish to work with. However, the College provides any assistance where necessary. If the student does not have the necessary experience for their specific placement, the College will ensure the student makes use of the Colleges resources to develop confidence and up-skill prior to the placement commencing.

5.3 The College carried out the MyEnterprise scheme to aid in developing courses to equip students with an enhanced capacity to generate ideas and the skills to make them happen. This was directly influenced by the need to constantly improve student employability. As a result, the Business and Entrepreneurism Module was created. This is due to be run from September 2014 onwards.

5.4 The College has implemented several programmes that improve the quality of student employability, run through The Core. MyMentor is an accredited volunteering scheme that involves recruiting students to assist as mentors for first-year students. The Safeguarding in a Learning Environment course is optional; however, the students who have taken this spoke extremely highly of it and the benefit it has had on their personal development. Higher education students can also make use of the optional Learn2Work scheme. This assists students in developing their curriculum vitae and interview skills, and helping them better understand potential career prospects.

5.5 The students informed the review team of the professional benefit of attending internal conferences. This usually gives them a chance to see their tutors' research, and also view them as a practitioner. The students also attend a number of external conferences and are invited on an optional basis.

5.6 The College tracks employability statistics using the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey and through internal data collection.

5.7 Employers' feedback is extensively considered throughout each course. This can be seen through the Periodic Course Review in which many courses consulted with their respective sector employers. Feedback is also obtained through employer events and annual Technical Advisory Boards. The team heard from employers that they value their relationship with the College, as they produce highly experienced students. The team also heard from the students that they highly value the input the employers have within their respective courses.

5.8 In the NSS 2013, the College scored 90 per cent in the optional question, 'As a result of my course, I believe that I have improved my career prospects', which was four per cent above sector average. This is a direct result of the College providing great flexible exposure to industry and teaching appropriate employment skills.

## 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 27 to 29 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/assuringstandardsandquality](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality).

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

### Academic standards

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

### Award

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

### Blended learning

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

### Credit(s)

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

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

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

### Dual award or double award

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

### e-learning

See **technology enhanced or enabled learning**.

### **Enhancement**

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

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

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

### **Framework**

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

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

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

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

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

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

### **Programme specifications**

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

### **Public information**

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

### **Quality Code**

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

### **Reference points**

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

### **Subject benchmark statement**

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

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

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

### **Threshold academic standard**

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

### **Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

### **Widening participation**

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

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