



Higher Education Review of Kensington and Chelsea College

March 2015

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Kensington and Chelsea College. The review took place from 24 to 25 March 2015 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Glenn Barr
- Miss Lucy Bannister (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

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

In reviewing Kensington and Chelsea 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 2014-15 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,² and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

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

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

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

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

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

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Kensington and Chelsea College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Kensington and Chelsea College.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Kensington and Chelsea College.

- The comprehensive support for students through the admissions process, with a particular emphasis on equality and diversity (Expectation B2).
- The integral role of employers in learning and assessment activities (Expectations B6 and B3).
- The effective use of the work-based mentoring process to support and enhance student learning opportunities (Expectation B10, Enhancement).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Kensington and Chelsea College.

By September 2015:

- develop and implement the programme approval process for Pearson programmes (Expectation A3.1)
- clarify policy and procedures for admissions appeals (Expectation B2)
- make external examiner reports more easily accessible to students (Expectation B7)
- formalise processes for updating published information on programmes (Expectation C).

By December 2015:

- standardise the operation of Faculty Boards to meet their terms of reference in full (Expectations A2.1 and B8)
- ensure the Higher Education Standards Board discharges more effectively its responsibilities for programme approval, monitoring and review (Expectations B8, A3.3 and B1).

By July 2016:

- make greater use of the quality cycle to identify enhancement initiatives more systematically (Enhancement)
- make more effective use of external examiner reports in the annual monitoring process (Expectation B8).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The introduction of the higher education teaching observation process (Expectation B3).

Theme: Student Employability

Kensington and Chelsea College has a clear commitment to developing student employability initiatives that support students studying for a higher education qualification. The experience of staff and the effective use of the mentor process enable students to develop their employability skills. Of particular note was the role of employers in the learning and assessment activities, which the review team identified as good practice. The engagement of employers, as well as the effective use of the work-based mentoring process, fosters a positive, mutually beneficial relationship between employers, staff and students.

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

About Kensington and Chelsea College

Kensington and Chelsea College (the College) is a major provider of education and training in West London. The College has three centres within the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and delivers training in business and community venues in Central and West London. The College aims to be a first-class, first-choice provider of education for learners and employers in a wide range of skills. A key commitment of the College is to promote equality of opportunity for all members of the College community, which includes access to technology.

In 2013-14 the College had a total of 11,326 enrolments, of which 107 were enrolled on a higher education programme. Of these, 58 were direct HEFCE-funded and 49 were funded within franchise partnerships. In June 2013 the College finalised a formal affiliation and franchise arrangement with Kingston University. A new Foundation Degree in Early Years was validated by Kingston University for delivery in 2013-14. The BA Top-Up Degree in Fine Art was validated by London South Bank University for delivery in 2014-15. The College offers a teacher training diploma through a franchise arrangement with Canterbury Christ Church University, although no students were recruited to the programme in 2014-15. The College also delivers a number of Pearson programmes through its Fashion, Visual and Performing Arts department.

Since the last QAA review, the Integrated Quality Enhancement Review in 2010, the College has undertaken a number of changes. A new College building at the Chelsea site opened in September 2012, providing specialist classrooms and resources. A new Executive Team was established comprising a Chief Executive and Principal; Deputy Principal for Curriculum and Quality; and Vice Principal Resources. The Team has responsibility for high-level strategic planning and resource allocation.

The College identifies its greatest challenge in relation to higher education provision being student recruitment, in light of the rise in tuition fees and the changing perception of the need for higher education. This is most noticeable in the enrolments to the teacher training diploma. The College's strategy to meet this challenge is to continue to offer vocational programmes with direct routes into employment.

In relation to the extent to which recommendations from the last QAA review have been addressed, the review team found that progress has been made to address all of these through the action plan. Significant action has been taken in staff training and the provision of information to students to develop the use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) to support student learning, assessment and information needs. While the library facilities receive some mixed reviews, improvements have been made. Recommendations in relation to the Academic Infrastructure, and subsequently the Quality Code, are considered more fully in this review report. The College has continued to build on the good practice identified in the review, most noticeably with the use of employer engagement in assessment and feedback.

Explanation of the findings about Kensington and Chelsea College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College currently works with three degree-awarding bodies: Canterbury Christ Church University, Kingston University and London South Bank University; and one awarding organisation: Pearson. Different levels of responsibility are devolved by each validating partner. However, all programmes delivered by the College are subject to scrutiny to ensure they are in line with the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.2 The review team analysed relevant university and College documentation, which included validation documents, external examiner reports, programme specifications and assignment briefs, and met degree-awarding body representatives, senior staff and academic staff.

1.3 When designing programmes, the College refers to the FHEQ. Student mentors confirm that programmes are designed with employer input and have aspects of work-based learning and professional development embedded as vocational referencing.

1.4 College staff attend development meetings, and validation and review events of the degree-awarding bodies, as stipulated in partnership agreements. This enables the College to input into the academic validation process of its programmes. On occasions where conditions or recommendations are made for validation, the documentation is amended and returned to the validating partner. A recent example of this process was the validation of the BA Top-Up in Fine Art. There is evidence provided of amendments undertaken by the College to meet the validation criteria outlined by London South Bank University.

1.5 Validation records confirm that College programmes address relevant national benchmarks and are at the appropriate level of the FHEQ. Pearson programmes are to national standards and are QCF-approved. The Foundation Degree in Early Years conforms to the Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark. Programme specifications reference FHEQ levels, Subject Benchmark Statements and sector accreditations.

1.6 The ultimate responsibility for allocating each qualification to the appropriate level of the FHEQ rests with the degree-awarding bodies. The College is effectively fulfilling its responsibilities in meeting the Expectation through close adherence to the degree-awarding bodies' policies and programme specifications. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.7 The College adheres to the academic governance arrangements and regulations of its degree-awarding bodies and organisation as set out in partnership agreements, validation documents and quality handbooks. The College is empowered to undertake assessment activities leading to the award of academic credit and qualifications. College policies supplement partner regulations where delegated, although overall responsibility for academic standards remains with the degree-awarding bodies. The degree-awarding bodies also provide staff development activities to familiarise staff with relevant academic frameworks and regulations.

1.8 The review team reviewed the effectiveness of governance arrangements, academic frameworks and regulations by scrutinising documentation submitted as evidence and by meeting with degree-awarding body representatives, senior staff and academic staff.

1.9 The College's Higher Education Standards Board (HESB) meets on an as-required basis and is Chaired by the Deputy Principal for Curriculum and Quality. The membership of the HESB includes the Quality Manager; the HESB reports to the College Executive. The terms of reference for the HESB outline that it is responsible for the quality and standards of the College's higher education provision, enhancement of academic practice, the dissemination of good practice, and overseeing higher education development. Upon review of HESB minutes, the review team found disparities in terms of the committee's performance in relation to its terms of reference, and a recommendation is made under Expectation B8.

1.10 The Faculty Board, which reports to the HESB and has specific responsibility for higher education quality management at faculty level, has clear terms of reference. However, the Faculty Board does not produce minutes in a standardised format, and membership, particularly with regard to the attendance of student members, is inconsistent. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College standardise the operation of the Faculty Boards to meet their terms of reference in full.

1.11 However, while the College needs to ensure that the HESB and Faculty Board better meet their terms of reference, the external examiners confirm that the College maintains the academic regulations of the degree-awarding bodies and organisation.

1.12 The review team found that the College currently has structures and processes in place to ensure they govern the awarding of academic credit and qualifications effectively, but requires further strengthening by ensuring close adherence to the terms of references laid out for College committees. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

1.13 Degree-awarding bodies retain responsibility for maintaining a definitive record of each award, which is reviewed and amended according to their regulations. Pearson maintains a standard national record of programme structures and options from which the College derives its curriculum offer expressed in the programme specifications. Programme specifications describe the aims, intended learning outcomes and assessment methods linked to the FHEQ and relevant Qualification and Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.14 The review team met degree-awarding body representatives, senior staff and academic staff, and examined documentation provided by the College, which included Memoranda of Agreement with the degree-awarding bodies and programme specifications.

1.15 For Pearson provision, the College specification sets out how the programme meets award requirements. This includes the coverage of core units and the number of level 4 and 5 units that will be covered in total. The programme specification also sets out specific aims and programme outcomes that are written with reference to the Pearson programme specification documents, unit specifications, and the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements as appropriate.

1.16 Annual monitoring reports requested by the College's validating partners are submitted at the end of the academic year, allowing for finalisation of data following re-sit boards. In the case of Canterbury Christ Church University, the College works with University Link Tutors to populate annual reviews; an example supporting this process is the Annual Review meeting, in which aspects of the partnership and programme are discussed with the Link Tutor in attendance. Agenda items include: recruitment and registration; teaching, learning and assessment; mentoring arrangements; external examiners and examination boards; programme handbooks; staff development; and a facilities update, which is followed by an agreed action plan. The management of these processes across each degree-awarding body is set out in the Memoranda of Agreement.

1.17 The College prepares clear and accurate programme specifications. Programme specifications for Pearson awards are contextualised to provide information on the specific modules, which forms a coherent programme of study.

1.18 The College clearly articulates its responsibilities and demonstrates that it follows degree-awarding body and Pearson procedures. The review team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.19 The College's degree-awarding bodies and Pearson have procedures in place for programme approval and monitoring, and are responsible for confirming that programmes meet the qualification descriptors and threshold standards specified in the FHEQ and in Subject Benchmark Statements. The College follows the required procedures and is subject to external monitoring by the degree-awarding bodies and Pearson. Programme design includes setting assessment activities at the appropriate level for the qualification, and checking through internal verification and external examining processes. External expertise informs programme development through the degree-awarding body validation processes.

1.20 The College is responsible for preparing the definitive documents for approval and validation of programmes. This includes designing and producing the programme specification when the College seeks approval for a new programme. When a Pearson programme is proposed, relevant units are selected by the programme team, and submitted electronically to Pearson for approval.

1.21 The review team met the Principal, and senior, teaching and support staff, to confirm the processes of validating new programmes. Documentary evidence from degree-awarding bodies, Pearson and the College was examined to test the Expectation, in particular, programme validation documents and programme specifications.

1.22 The review team found that the College conforms to the requirements of its degree-awarding partners to validate new programmes. Validation documentation confirms consideration of Subject Benchmark Statements, national occupational standards and Sector Skills Council views prior to validation. The College relies on awarding body guidance for staff developing programmes. Although awarding body programmes are not subject to internal scrutiny prior to validation, their development is collaborative and final validation uses appropriate external expertise. For Pearson programmes, senior managers agree to the validation, which is submitted electronically. However, the College does not publish its own guidance or principles for programme development or undertake formal scrutiny of the programme prior to validation. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College develop and implement the programme approval process for Pearson programmes.

1.23 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met, but with moderate risk. Although degree-awarding body programmes are not subject to internal scrutiny, their development is collaborative, with appropriate awarding body scrutiny. However, Pearson programmes do not undergo thorough internal scrutiny before validation, leading to insufficient emphasis on assuring academic standards.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

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

Findings

1.24 Degree-awarding bodies and Pearson are responsible for establishing and maintaining academic standards. The College delivers programmes according to its agreements, following agreed procedures and regulations. Responsibility for writing assessments varies according to the agreement with the awarding body or Pearson. The College has responsibility for creating assessment instruments for all programmes except those validated by Kingston University. The College's Assessment Policy guides staff in the operation of the assessment processes. Moderation processes, external examiners and boards of examiners ensure that student achievement of learning outcomes receives academic credit.

1.25 The design meets the Expectation in theory, as the College delivers programmes following degree-awarding body and Pearson procedures and regulations. Internal and external processes of examination, moderation and tracking ensure alignment with national and awarding body standards. The review team examined assignment briefs, moderation and verification records, and external examiner reports. Meetings with teaching staff and students confirmed the operation of the process to secure academic standards.

1.26 The review team confirmed that College, degree-awarding body and organisation processes ensure that the award of qualifications is only as a result of the achievement of learning outcomes. Documentation confirms that assessment design, internal verification and moderation of assessment activities ensures that students have the opportunity to achieve outcomes at the appropriate levels. External examiners confirm the maintenance of academic standards for national and awarding body standards. Students state that assessments have clear learning outcomes effectively communicated and discussed. Assessors and internal verifiers for Pearson programmes consider merit and distinction levels as defined in the Pearson award framework. The Pearson external examiner records highlight contextualisation and consistent application of grade criteria. Boards of examiners operate effectively to confirm achievement.

1.27 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low. The College, working with its degree-awarding partners, ensures that the achievement of learning outcomes is demonstrated through assessment. Internal and external processes of checking maintain standards at national and degree-awarding body level.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.28 Degree-awarding bodies processes for monitoring and review complement those of the College. The College produces annual monitoring reports for its awarding bodies and for its own Pearson programmes. External examiner reports indicate that programmes meet required academic standards. For Pearson programmes, verification by the external examiner and subsequent review of quality procedures by Pearson confirm the maintenance of academic standards.

1.29 College-wide processes of monitoring and review apply to all programmes at the College, including those for higher education. These include self-assessment reports (SARs), validation panels, termly Performance Review Boards and the rolling Quality Improvement Action Plan. SARs contain considerable data on student recruitment, retention, achievement, success, age, gender and ethnicity, supplemented by contextual commentary. For higher education programmes specifically, Faculty Boards and the HESB have monitoring and review responsibilities.

1.30 The design meets the Expectation in theory, because of the wide range of internal and external opportunities for monitoring and review to secure academic standards. The review team examined annual monitoring reports, and minutes of Faculty Boards and the HESB, plus the range of College-wide review documentation. The team also met senior, teaching and support staff.

1.31 Degree-awarding body and Pearson monitoring processes and annual reports check and confirm that the College meets national standards. The College has not yet been subject to periodic review by awarding bodies or its own processes. College review processes include analysis of recruitment, retention and achievement data, external examiner reports and student views. Action plans and regular monitoring ensure the maintenance of standards. External examiners and the Pearson Quality Review and Development Report confirm that responses to issues raised in external examiner reports are appropriate.

1.32 However, as identified under Expectation B7, processes for responding to external examiner reports lack focus across the range of further and higher education review processes. Faculty Boards and the HESB are specific to higher education quality management in the College. These committees have clear terms of reference with responsibility for monitoring academic standards and quality of learning opportunities. Examination of the minutes of these committees shows that the Faculty Boards have yet to meet their terms of reference in full, and this is addressed under Expectation A2.1. As the main body charged with monitoring academic standards for higher education programmes, a recommendation is made under Expectation B8 that the HESB discharge more effectively its responsibilities for programme approval, monitoring and review.

1.33 The review team concludes that the Expectation to be met, but with moderate risk. Although monitoring and review take place to the satisfaction of the degree-awarding bodies and Pearson, who are ultimately responsible for academic standards, there is a lack of

clarity regarding how the processes of monitoring and reviewing higher education programmes are put into practice within the College.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

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

Findings

1.34 The responsibility for engaging external and independent expertise primarily lies with degree-awarding bodies. External members contribute to validation processes, and external examiners appointed by the awarding bodies and organisation oversee the maintenance of academic standards. College processes use external examiner reports for annual review and action planning.

1.35 The design meets the Expectation in theory. External and independent expertise is obtained through the degree-awarding bodies' processes for the validation of programmes. External examiner processes confirm academic standards through programme delivery and assessment.

1.36 The review team evaluated the College's use of external expertise in the assurance of academic standards by scrutinising the validation documents of the degree-awarding bodies, external examiners' reports, annual monitoring reports, and processes for responding to external examiners' reports. The team met senior, teaching and support staff. Meetings with employers enabled the team to check the use of external employer expertise in assessment design and review.

1.37 External examiners' reports confirm that programmes meet academic standards at the appropriate qualification levels. Annual review documentation for degree-awarding body programmes considers external examiner reports. External examiner reports for Pearson programmes generate monitoring documents, updated half-yearly, which identify required actions, dates and level of risk. Programme design documents show consultation with external advisers, industry representatives, and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. Documentation also demonstrates the use of Qualification and Subject Benchmark Statements in curriculum development.

1.38 The College has strong relationships with local employers, who are involved in assessment design, presentations and student mentoring. College staff engage effectively with external colleagues in local groupings and at degree-awarding body events, although there is no formal representation from employer organisations on College committees relating to higher education. The Enhancement Action Plan sets targets for further engaging with employers, which include an employer engagement strategy.

1.39 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low. By completing the actions already underway to formally engage with employers through its committee structures, the College will continue to develop its strong relationships with employers.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.40 In reaching its judgement about the maintenance of academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.41 All Expectations in this area have been met. A moderate risk was identified in three of the seven Expectations, with the remainder identified as low risk. The College has suitable processes in place to meet the Expectations in relation to the maintenance of academic standards. The recommendations highlight, in particular, that more needs to be done to formalise these processes in practice, most significantly through ensuring the Faculty Boards and Higher Education Standards Board fulfil their requirements as set out in their terms of reference. There is a further specific recommendation to develop and implement a programme approval process for Pearson programmes.

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

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 Degree-awarding body processes of design and approval apply to programmes delivered at the College. Franchised programmes require approval from the awarding bodies, who control programme design, curriculum content and assessment design with delivery by the College. The College prepares appropriate documentation based on consultation and an assessment of the market prior to submission to the awarding body for validation. External representation is present at these events. Although the awarding body has responsibility for the overall structure, the College designed the modules for the validated BA Top-Up Degree in Fine Art programme. For Pearson programmes the College chooses a particular set of options from nationally available specifications.

2.2 In meeting the requirements of the degree-awarding bodies, the College operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes. Relevant reference points, and internal and external expertise, are used in the processes of programme creation and validation.

2.3 The review team examined validation documents, and met senior, teaching and support staff. Degree-awarding body representatives were also present to confirm the processes.

2.4 The College follows degree-awarding body validation procedures and programme specification templates. Internal processes for developing new programmes comprise an internal proposal presented to the College Executive body to consider resources, staff expertise, finance and likely demand, followed by the development of validation documents by the subject team. Subject teams consult with the awarding body Link Tutors and others in developing the programme. When developing the Foundation Degree in Early Years the team considered *The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies* and consulted with employer groups and local practitioners. The Higher National Certificate in Theatrical Costume developed from a lower-level programme using increased work placement and workshop practice. Student demand was a factor in the introduction of the BA Top-Up Degree in Fine Art, and the subject team consulted other colleges and the University when developing the programme.

2.5 The input of students and employers to the process focuses on assessment and module review rather than being a systematic consultation of student and employers in the process of creating a programme. Scrutiny of programme development for Pearson programmes relies on College processes. The College does not publish its own guidance or principles for programme development, or provide other guidance or training for staff in the validation process; nor does the College undertake formal internal scrutiny of the programme prior to validation with employer and student representation. The terms of reference of the HESB show it to have responsibility for new curriculum, and the quality and standards of College programmes. A recommendation is made under Expectation B8 that the HESB effectively discharges its responsibilities for programme approval, monitoring and review.

2.6 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The College's processes of programme design and development meet the requirements of its degree-awarding bodies and organisation. However, shortcomings in the College's processes of programme approval, including participation by students and employers in a systematic process, lead to a moderate level of associated risk.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.7 The process for applying to the College is laid out in the Admissions and Enrolment Policy. The Policy is made available for applicants via the College website, and to current students via the College VLE and handbooks. Admissions procedures are established and agreed within programme validation documents and specifications.

2.8 Admission to the College's higher education provision is through UCAS and direct application via the College website. Details of the application procedure are outlined within the prospectus and website fact sheets. The admissions team are responsible for tracking applications to the College and ensuring applicants receive interviews and offers, or are declined, within given deadlines set out within the Admissions Enrolment Policy. Applications and offers are tracked and monitored by College managers as part of the performance review process.

2.9 The review team analysed key documents in relation to recruitment, selection and admissions, and met with students, senior staff and support staff during the review visit.

2.10 Applicants are sufficiently informed of course requirements and opportunities designed to enable their development and achievement initially at interview stage, as well as the structure of the programme, assessment and expected hours of study. Staff explore the student's background, motivation for study and prior learning. During the interview process applicants are able to discuss any support required and are advised on how to apply for Disabled Students' Allowances and to Student Finance England. Students report that the information they receive upon application is accurate and the College's application process runs smoothly.

2.11 Although the College has a comprehensive Admissions and Enrolment Policy, which outlines the application process, it is not clear how an applicant would appeal an admissions decision within the Policy. There is no reference made to this issue in the College's Complaints and Appeals Procedure. Staff indicate that the College currently handles concerns effectively but on an informal basis. However, the review team **recommends** that the College clarify policy and procedures for admissions appeals.

2.12 Upon application, the College seeks to identify any additional learning support an applicant requires as early as possible in the application process, typically at the interview stage, or upon enrolment, to ensure appropriate support is provided in a timely manner. This procedure is outlined in the Admissions and Enrolment Policy, and was confirmed as effective following meetings with staff and students. Therefore, the review team identifies the comprehensive support for students through the admissions process, with a particular emphasis on equality and diversity, as **good practice**.

2.13 Overall, the College has a clear applications process. Furthermore, the College uses the interview process to ensure effective support for all applicants transitioning to higher education. While it is recommended that the College clarify the policy for admissions

appeals, staff currently handle these concerns effectively. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.14 The College has a number of relevant policies and strategies in place that are applicable to all College courses, including higher education provision. The College Teaching and Learning Policy links the College mission and values to a set of goals for achieving effective learning. The E-Learning Strategy also has an action plan for improving teaching through increased use of technology. Student surveys rate teaching and learning highly.

2.15 The review team tested the evidence through meetings with senior staff, academic staff and students, and by scrutinising relevant policies and procedures provided by the College. During the review visit, the students responded positively regarding their learning and teaching experience at the College. This is also reflected in the student submission.

2.16 The VLE and the use of other types of media enable the College to deliver specific content to students. Although usage of the VLE varies across programmes, it is generally used in an effective and appropriate manner. An example of content provided on the Foundation Degree in Early Years provision is the scanning of excerpts from specific books on the reading list to effectively underpin learning.

2.17 The College provides comprehensive and effective induction and course handbooks for students, with the purpose of providing information in relation to learning opportunities and the support made available to them. All programme handbooks include details of the qualification, course structure and submission details for assessment. Handbooks also detail the support available, academic regulations and module specifications. While the format of these handbooks varies depending on the requirement of the degree-awarding bodies, students report high satisfaction with the handbooks the College provides for them.

2.18 The College has strong industry and employer links that contribute effectively to the continuous development, delivery and enhancement of the curricula, which is acknowledged as good practice under Expectation B6. This is implemented in a number of ways, including the use of continuous feedback through the mentor programme for students on placement, alumni links and academic staff as current practitioners in their field of study.

2.19 The College has a process for observing teaching and learning at all levels of the College based on Ofsted criteria. The staff appraisal process considers the outcomes of the observation, which informs the continuous professional development needs of the academic staff and ensures they align with College priorities. However, this observation process does not adequately reflect the requirements for higher education teaching. The College is currently piloting a higher education specific observation process, with a view to rolling it out across the College's higher education provision from September 2015. The process aims to improve teaching practice through observation by identifying good practice to be disseminated across the College's higher education provision. The review team **affirms** the introduction of the higher education teaching observation process.

2.20 The continuous professional development of academic staff is supported by the College's Staff Development Policy. This is supported by a number of initiatives, including a staff training plan, the staff conference, the higher education conference, and a 'welcome back' session at the start of the academic year. Academic staff outline a particular strength of the College being the recognition from senior management in regards to the professional standards of staff, which leads to professional autonomy.

2.21 A network of learning coaches to support staff is in the early stages of development. Currently, learning coaches observe teachers, and identify strengths and weaknesses. Progress is discussed based on targets and tested through observations. The process is underpinned by the learning coaches. At the time of the review it was too early in the development of this process to be able to comment on its impact and effectiveness.

2.22 The College has a clear strategic approach to learning and teaching, which is positively impacting the student learning experience. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.23 The College's Higher Education Strategy identifies as its aims: widening participation, a vocational mission and a commitment to enabling progression. These commitments are further developed in the Teaching and Learning Policy. The College mission and values establish the commitment to equality of opportunity. As a result of this, the College monitors a wide range of variables to underpin the Equality and Diversity Policy.

2.24 The review team analysed documentation made available by the College relating to the support for student development and achievement. During the review visit, the team met academic staff and students.

2.25 Students reported a largely positive response around support for students. Students identified that the College has made improvements to its higher education teaching facilities, the library and VLE to support student development effectively. Students identify improvements to the library in particular, with the addition of a quiet room and increased electronic sources, as well as providing access to services such as printing, copying, free scanning and wireless facilities. Some inconsistencies arise regarding the College's delivery of dyslexia support for higher education students. These focus in particular on access to regular meetings for students requiring dyslexia support.

2.26 The degree-awarding bodies check that academic staff are appropriately qualified to deliver programmes. These staff provide study skills sessions that support the academic development of students. Academic staff can also refer individual students to the Additional Learning Support Team for screening if they have noticed particular challenges the student is facing. If it becomes evident that a student has an undiagnosed specific learning difficulty, the Additional Learning Support Team will arrange to meet with them and explain the Disabled Students' Allowance process. The College also provides similar support throughout the UCAS and Disabled Students' Allowance application process for applicants transitioning to higher education.

2.27 The College delivers a comprehensive and effective induction for students upon commencement of their programmes. During induction, students are given an outline of the College structure and in-depth programme information, and are informed of opportunities designed to underpin their studies. Students confirm that the induction process is effective. In particular, they identify the information regarding plagiarism and academic misconduct as useful and accessible.

2.28 To aid a successful transition to higher education, the College provides students with information in programme handbooks. The overall design and some areas of content within these handbooks vary with the provision of each degree-awarding body, but they all include guidance on the academic skills required for successful completion of a higher education programme. Students express knowledge of these, and access the handbooks via the College VLE.

2.29 The College supports students in progression after education. All higher education students are able to make use of the College's careers advice service. Programmes also incorporate careers talks into tutorials. Students receive specialist career progression advice from academic staff delivering their programme and broader support is delivered by the

College's careers advice team. The College enables the successful transition of students into higher levels of study, including postgraduate, through initial tutorials and the setting of professional, personal and academic targets. Students rate tutorial support highly, noting regular tutorials, good support, small classes and easy-to-access tutors.

2.30 The review team found that the College has a strategic commitment to enable student development, and provides appropriate resources and support to enable the development of learners both academically and in preparation for employment. On this basis, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.31 The election of student representatives from each group is the foundation of the College's approach to student participation. Representatives attend student representative meetings, focus groups and Faculty Boards. The Learner Engagement Strategy, introduced in 2014, sets out the processes of representation that apply to all students at the College. Its purpose is to strengthen processes of capturing student opinion. Faculty Boards and the HESB consider student views gathered through questionnaires and meetings. The College has engaged with an external organisation to further improve student participation and feedback and is proposing the appointment of a higher education student Governor.

2.32 For students on degree-awarding body programmes, the College adopts the awarding body process for student consultation. Kingston University students have staff-student consultative committees. Canterbury Christ Church University students complete online end-of-module questionnaires, analysed by the University.

2.33 The Expectation is met in theory, as the College, in partnership with its degree-awarding bodies, takes deliberate steps to engage all students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. The review team read the student submission and met students to determine the extent to which they were involved as partners in their educational experience. The team examined documentary evidence from surveys and meetings to determine the effectiveness of student engagement.

2.34 The effectiveness of the Learner Engagement Strategy will be reviewed by the College in 2016. The College identifies that appropriate mechanisms are in place to capture the student voice but participation is low. The College monitors levels of student engagement, and improved engagement is a strand of the College Enhancement Action Plan. Students met by the review team praised the level of communication with College staff and their opportunities for participation.

2.35 The review team found that the College has taken significant steps to improve student engagement, but had further to go to secure student involvement in the formal structures of the College. According to their terms of reference, Faculty Boards and the HESB have student membership. However, minutes of meetings of both Boards demonstrated inconsistent practice. Minutes show that the HESB does not have student membership. Minutes of Faculty Board meetings lack consistency of agenda and actions, although most show differing degrees of student representation. As discussed in relation to Expectation A2.1, the Faculty Boards lack consistency in meeting their terms of reference.

2.36 Student representatives are selected by varying methods by different student groups. Students confirm that they have not received training in the role, even though this is a feature of the Learner Engagement Strategy. However, representatives find the process fair and are happy with their roles. Students are able to provide examples of how they have been able to raise issues, and the College responds and communicates the response effectively. Examples of improvements provided by students included extended access to studios, and improvements to the VLE and canteen. Students recognise that they have a role in securing improvements for future students but not a formal role in programme review. Student representative meetings allow sharing views across programmes in further and higher education, although there is not a focus on higher education issues.

Students recognise the utility of surveys, and report receiving feedback on the results. Students note strong support for access to tutors, with over 70 per cent rating opportunities to give feedback as excellent or good. A new method of encouraging student feedback planned by the College is yet to be implemented and students had no knowledge of the proposals.

2.37 The review team concludes that the Expectation met and the associated level of risk is low. Although there are improvements to be made for student participation in the formal structures of the College, the Learner Engagement Strategy and Enhancement Action Plan address this. Students rate student participation highly.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.38 The College creates the assessments for Pearson and the BA Top-Up Degree programmes; the degree-awarding bodies design assessments for franchised programmes. The College Assessment Policy establishes principles for assessment practice. Assessment regulations of the awarding bodies apply, with information provided in handbooks and on the VLE. College procedures for induction, tutorial and academic support facilitate effective student assessment practice. Processes of internal and external verification and moderation ensure that assessments are fair and reliable.

2.39 Assessment calendars allow the spacing of assessment activities. A variety of assessment methods are used, including live briefs, case studies and work-based activities, reflecting the vocational focus of the curriculum. Prior learning can be accredited for teacher education programmes subject to the procedures and agreement of Canterbury Christ Church University. Degree-awarding bodies check the level and relevance of staff qualifications.

2.40 The design meets the Expectation in theory, as there are College and degree-awarding body processes to secure equitable, valid and reliable assessments to demonstrate achievement of intended learning outcomes.

2.41 The review team met students to confirm the clarity of the assessment briefs, the processes of assessment and achievement of learning outcomes. The team met senior staff to check understanding and effectiveness of applying different regulatory regimes to assessment practice within the College. External examiner reports and boards of examiners were scrutinised to confirm the validity and reliability of assessments. Employer representatives provided evidence of involvement in supporting and refining the vocational focus of assessments.

2.42 Students who met the review team were clear that they knew how to meet learning outcomes for assessments and how to achieve higher grades. Students praised the detailed learning outcomes supported by further discussion with tutors. Feedback on written work was within two weeks, and feedback on practical tasks was frequent, including peer feedback. A recurrent theme in meetings with staff was the College's commitment to provide innovative, realistic and challenging assessments. Students praised the vocational nature of their assessments and the challenges they provide. Employers, external examiners and documentary evidence of assessment tasks confirm the strength of the vocational focus of assessments. Employers are involved in designing and refining assessment activities. On Early Years programmes, student mentors provide regular input into the assessment process. On Design programmes, live briefs developed in collaboration with leading employers provide assessment opportunities showcased on a national stage. Fine Art students work with practitioners to develop exhibitions to professional standards. The review team identifies as **good practice** the integral role of employers in learning and assessment activities.

2.43 Programme specifications and handbooks contain detail on module assessment, although they vary in the level of detail provided. The College Assessment Policy focuses on definitions rather than useful guidance on good assessment design and practice. External examiners confirmed the clarity and appropriateness of assessment activities, although the report for Pearson Art and Design programmes noted variable practice. Records for internal verification show thorough application of the processes. Marked work is sampled and appropriately moderated, and assignments verified before issue. Mark differences are resolved and recorded. Boards of examiners perform their duties appropriately, confirmed by external examiners.

2.44 Feedback on written work is detailed and developmental, with students and external examiners confirming the effectiveness of feedback. College processes include giving interim feedback to avoid undue delays resulting from degree-awarding body moderation processes. Although some students on Interior Architecture and Early Years programmes reported that there were delays in receiving feedback, in general, students report no delays and quick feedback.

2.45 Induction and sessions provided by the learning resource staff provide students with information on avoiding plagiarism and good academic conduct. Programme handbooks also contain information on academic misconduct. A new Plagiarism Policy replaces the previous process of dealing with academic misconduct under the student disciplinary process. The new Policy is detailed and comprehensive, containing guidance on a wide range of examples and providing clear procedures for investigation and resolution. The College relies upon degree-awarding body originality checking software, although it does not use it as a tool to improve academic practice. Assessments for Pearson programmes are not subject to electronic checking. The College has not identified any cases of academic misconduct and external examiners confirm sound academic practice.

2.46 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low. The College has secure procedures for equitable, valid and reliable assessment practice at degree-awarding body and College-level, confirmed by external examiners. Support for assessment is strong, with regular and supportive feedback supporting a shared understanding with students on the judgements made. A high standard of assessment is achieved with strong links to employers.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.47 Degree-awarding bodies and Pearson appoint and train external examiners for the programmes. External examiner reports from programmes delivered on a consortium basis reflect the performance of all centres. The College considers examiner reports at Faculty Boards and the HESB; and Boards for SARs, Quality Improvement Action Plans and Performance Review. Summary monitoring sheets track actions arising from external examiner reports.

2.48 The review team found the Expectation to be met in theory, as the degree-awarding body procedures apply to nomination, appointment and the response to external examiners to secure academic standards. College procedures apply to making scrupulous use of the reports in the processes of monitoring and review to improve student learning opportunities. The range of processes and opportunities for discussion and action arising from external examiner reports provide ample opportunity in theory to meet the outcome.

2.49 To explore how the College considers and takes action arising from external examiner reports, the review team met senior staff, teaching and support staff. The team looked at external examiner reports, and associated monitoring and review documentation, to confirm the process operates as described.

2.50 In the previous QAA review, the College found external examiner reports from consortium programmes of limited use in focusing on issues specific to College programmes. However, improvements to the content of the reports led the College to be confident that it can identify its own programmes and take appropriate action. The College does not respond to external examiner reports for degree-awarding body programmes in its own right, although it has done so for Pearson programmes. Monitoring of external examiner issues for Pearson programmes takes place half-yearly using a standard template with a level of risk identified.

2.51 In exploring the effectiveness of monitoring and review processes under Expectation B8, the review team examined an external examiner report for Pearson programmes in 2014 to follow issues through College monitoring processes. The team found overlapping processes and duplication, leading to a lack of focus in tackling the points made. However, the team concludes that although College processes for responding to external examiner reports lacked focus, programme teams considered and implemented issues raised.

2.52 The review team found that students can access external examiner reports through degree-awarding body VLEs but not through the College's own site. The College does not provide students access to Pearson external examiner reports. College staff provide a breakdown of key points from external examiner reports and present them at meetings where student representatives are present. Students who met the team had little knowledge of the role and reports of external examiners and did not know how to access their reports. Course handbooks are inconsistent in information provided to students about external examiner reports. One handbook on an awarding body template provides detail on the role of the examiner and accessing reports. Other handbooks briefly mention the external examiner but not how the reports can be accessed. The course handbook checklist and one course handbook make no reference to external examiners. The review team **recommends** that the College make external examiner reports more easily accessible to students.

2.53 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate, resulting from omissions in providing students with easy access to external examiner reports. While there is a lack of clarity about responsibilities for responding to external examiner reports, the College makes thorough use of external examiner reports in improving student learning opportunities.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.54 The College has its own processes of programme monitoring and review, as well as those of the degree-awarding bodies. Annual monitoring is a feature of both processes. The College fulfils the requirements for monitoring set out in its partnership agreements. Students feed into the programme review through end-of-module questionnaires, staff-student meetings and Faculty Board meetings. Annual programme reports and action plans consider student views generated by this process. Kingston University provides templates with data for comment by programme teams, which establishes a foundation for the report. Faculty Boards and the HESB terms of reference include monitoring and review responsibilities. College-wide processes of monitoring and review apply to all levels of programmes. SARs at programme level are interrogated by validation panels, termly Performance Review Boards, and the rolling Quality Improvement Action Plan. SARs and Quality Improvement Action Plans follow standard headings on outcomes, quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and leadership and management. SARs contain considerable data on student recruitment, retention, achievement, success, age, gender and ethnicity, supplemented by contextual commentary.

2.55 The design meets the Expectation in theory, with both College and degree-awarding body processes of monitoring and review. The College quality cycle establishes regular and systematic processes of review. The review team met the Principal, senior staff, students, and teaching and support staff. The team also examined review documentation for awarding body programmes, as well as SARs, the Quality Improvement Action Plan, and Performance Review Board documentation. Minutes of Faculty Boards and the HESB, and meetings with employer representatives, provided further evidence.

2.56 To provide more analytical and discursive responses from programme teams, the College recently introduced a new template for higher education programmes, replacing the previous bullet-point approach. The new template explicitly requires commentary on issues identified by the course team, by students and by external examiners. Examples of programme reviews in the new format are detailed and reflective. College SARs have less reflective commentary with greater emphasis on data. All review documentation contains action plans to secure improvements. Additionally, the process of monitoring and review takes place three times a year as part of the SAR, Quality Improvement Action Plan and Performance Review Board process. External examiner monitoring sheets identify levels of risk, required actions and dates for achievement. Annual monitoring processes specific to higher education feed into Faculty Boards and the HESB, both of which are charged with monitoring academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities.

2.57 Although their terms of reference are clear, the minutes of Faculty Boards examined by the review team lack clarity and consistency. Without a standard template, one set of Faculty Board minutes is headed as a team meeting, while another does not indicate which subject area is covered. Not all minutes show evidence of student membership or input. There is no evidence that Faculty Boards report to the HESB, as required by the terms of reference, or follow a meeting cycle or standard agenda. The frequency of Faculty Board meetings varies according to the programme, militating against a regular reporting cycle. As outlined under Expectation A2.1, the review team made the recommendation that the

College standardise the operation of Faculty Boards to meet their terms of reference in full.

2.58 The review team looked at an external examiner report for Pearson programmes in 2014 to follow issues raised through College monitoring processes. The team found that although mention of issues raised could be identified at several points in the College review and monitoring processes, there was a lack of focus in tackling the points made. Although some issues were identified in the monitoring sheet, they were not discussed in the SARs or by the HESB, although they appeared in the Quality Improvement Action Plan. While subsequent monitoring by Pearson in the Quality Review and Development Report do confirm that all quality process are in place and effective, the review team **recommends** that the College make more effective use of external examiner reports in the annual monitoring process.

2.59 Employers confirm that the College elicits and welcomes suggestions for improvement at programme level. Students are positive about the opportunities for suggesting course improvements, describing this as a positive and continual process. They confirm the ample opportunities to provide feedback through tutorials, questionnaires and programme representatives. However, students did not know of membership of committees other than student representative meetings. Although the terms of reference for the HESB include student membership, an examination of the minutes showed no student representatives present or with reported apologies.

2.60 Further to this, the minutes of Faculty Boards and the HESB do not provide examples of how the College systematically identifies opportunities for enhancement. To identify enhancement opportunities in a systematic manner as part of the process of monitoring and review, and also to secure effective student participation in review at College level, to scrutinise the development of new programmes and to provide a focus for responding to external examiner reports, the review team **recommends** that the College ensure the Higher Education Standards Board discharges more effectively its responsibilities for programme approval, monitoring and review.

2.61 The College Enhancement Action Plan identifies a number of targets to secure the enhancement of student learning opportunities, and there are examples of improvements having a positive impact on student learning. For example, the Faculty Board for Fashion identifies extended studio hours as an enhancement initiative, confirmed by staff and students.

2.62 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate. Overlapping processes result in a lack of clarity about responsibilities for monitoring and review. Faculty Boards and the HESB do not fully meet their terms of reference or discharge their responsibilities. However, regular monitoring and review take place, with student and employer involvement at programme level. Degree-awarding bodies and Pearson confirm conformance with their review requirements.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.63 The College encourages students to adopt an informal approach to complaints in the first instance. The College has its own Complaints Policy and an Academic Appeals Policy, which apply to students on Pearson programmes. Degree-awarding body regulations apply to cases of academic appeal, whereas complaints are a matter for the College in the first instance. The Deputy Principal monitors complaints.

2.64 The design meets the Expectation in theory, as degree-awarding body and the College Complaints and Appeals Procedure apply. The procedures are published in handbooks and are available on the VLE of the College and awarding bodies. The review team examined College policies for complaints, and College and awarding body policies for appeal. Meetings were held with students to confirm the efficacy of the processes and to test student knowledge on where to find information on making a complaint or appeal.

2.65 The College Complaints Policy is clear, if brief. The review team found that the College's own Academic Appeal Policy lacks detail. It sets out the stages of the process, which can include reference to an appeals panel, but lacks detail on the criteria for appeal. However, students are clear that they would go to their tutor in the first instance and consult their programme handbook if they had a complaint or appeal. Not all programme handbooks referred to complaints and appeals, and these are not items included in the College handbook checking process.

2.66 However, students who met the review team recognised the role of mitigating circumstances regulations, which they judged as clear and well explained by tutors. Students judged appeal, complaints and mitigation rules to be fairly and equally applied.

2.67 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, as procedures and information exist for complaints and appeals, which students know how to access and judge as fair. While this information is not always consistently referred to programme handbooks, students are clear about how the procedures are applied.

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

2.68 To assess the effectiveness of the College's procedures, the review team reviewed a range of documentation regarding information and resources, which are made available to students on placements. The team also met students, staff and work-based mentors, who identify the effective support provided by the College for students and mentor on placements.

2.69 The College highlights that all students on the Foundation Degree in Early Years have a mentor in the workplace while on placement. Mentor training covers the role of the mentor and highlights how the role develops employability skills. Mentor booklets provided to students and mentors clarify more specifically the roles and responsibilities that can enhance work-based learning. Mentors are considered an essential part of the process for work-based formative assessment in cooperation with the College. The Field Liaison Officer visits mentors and students to provide further guidance and support during the placement-based modules.

2.70 Mentor feedback from mentor training days identifies the support they receive as being useful, and this feeds into curriculum design. Students also highlight mentor support in the workplace as a key strength of the College. Therefore, the review team identifies as **good practice** the effective use of the work-based mentoring process to support and enhance student learning opportunities.

2.71 Students on the teacher training programme are required to have a minimum of 100 teaching hours during the course of the programme, and assessment is undertaken at the workplace four times per year. Observations are carried out by the College personal tutor and the workplace mentor, who receive training from Canterbury Christ Church University. No students from the College were registered on this programme at the time of the review.

2.72 The College delivers live projects and industry collaborations across the Pearson provision, including work experience and career talks, and national and international competitions and shows. The College has plans to attend the New Designers exhibition this year to enhance the employability and networking opportunities for students. The College also hosts exhibitions for students to potentially sell their artwork and further extend their networking opportunities.

2.73 The review team found that the College has effective policies and procedures that underpin the management of work placements delivered through the programmes. Students and work-based mentors highlighted their placement experience with the College positively, which included the support for students while on placement, an area acknowledged as good practice. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

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

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.75 In reaching its judgement about the quality of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.76 All Expectations in this area have been met. The College has suitable processes in place to meet the Expectations in relation to the quality of student learning opportunities. A moderate risk was identified in three of the ten Expectations, with the remainder identified as low risk. The Expectations identified as having moderate risk were in the areas of programme design, development and approval; external examiners; and the monitoring and review of programmes. The recommendations highlight, in particular, that more needs to be done to formalise these processes in practice, most significantly through ensuring Faculty Board and the HESB fulfil their requirements as set out in their terms of reference. Recommendations also focus on the use of external examiner reports, both in making these available to students and in how they are effectively used in the annual monitoring process. Another specific recommendation related to clarifying policy and procedures for admissions appeals.

2.77 A number of areas of good practice were identified in reaching this judgement. The College works to support students with a particular emphasis on equality and diversity, and the review identified an effective approach to supporting students in this area for higher education students through the admissions process. The other areas of good practice focus on the effective way the College engages employers and uses work-based mentors. This is explored more widely under the section of this report relating to the theme of student employability. The introduction of the higher education peer observation process was affirmed as a positive approach to address the shortcomings of the current College-wide teacher observation process that do not adequately reflect the requirements for higher education teaching.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College provides information using a variety of print and digital methods. The College maintains records on its students for the purposes of managing programmes, and tracking progress and achievement.

3.2 Information about the College's higher education provision is available via the College website, UCAS, degree-awarding body websites and the higher education pages in the College prospectus. The marketing department and Performance Managers are responsible for ensuring that all public information is accurate. Performance Managers check information contained within the higher education prospectus, the College website and UCAS to ensure accuracy. This checking procedure is done on an informal basis. Any promotional material in relation to the course developed by Kingston University that includes partner details is sent to the partner for approval before publication to ensure accuracy.

3.3 To assess the effectiveness of the College's procedures, the review team reviewed a range of documentation uploaded by the College regarding quality of information about learning opportunities. The team analysed content on the VLE, and checked the accuracy and accessibility of a sample of public information published via the College website. During the review visit the team also met students, senior staff and work placement mentors, who commented positively on the mentor handbooks provided by the College.

3.4 The College website is currently undergoing a process of redesign. At a programme level, the College website provides essential information. Programme fact sheets provide necessary further information for students. Although information regarding higher education is available on the current website, it is not a prominent feature. Students acknowledge that information provided is accurate and useful, although they have suggestions for improving the website links to focus more on higher education programmes.

3.5 The College website also provides stakeholder access to general policies via the Policies and Procedures page. This provides information and relevant documents on, for example, safeguarding, health and safety, equality and diversity, student disciplinarys and complaints.

3.6 Programme handbooks are informally updated by the Course Leader and reviewed by the Quality Manager. Handbooks include necessary information for students in relation to relevant guidance and policies. While the information within the handbooks is currently accurate, the College would benefit from a formal approach to checking and updating public information applied systematically across all programmes.

3.7 There is no clear formal process that outlines checking procedures for updating published information. The College communication strategy guides the provision of external information; however, it more accurately resembles a public relations strategy rather than outlining a set of guiding principles and procedures. While the checking procedures appear to be working effectively to date, the review team **recommends** that the College formalise

processes for updating published information on programmes to ensure information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.8 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate. While information provided by the College can be considered accurate and reliable, a formalising of processes would ensure information remains fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy in the future.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

3.9 In reaching its judgement about the quality of the information about learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.10 The Expectation in this area has been met with a moderate risk. The quality of information is demonstrated to be fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The introduction of the new website will address some of the issues identified by the students. However, while there exists a College communication strategy, it does not clearly set out guidance in terms of policies and principles. In particular, it is recommended that processes for updating published information on programmes are formalised.

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

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College secures deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities through the HESB, which has representation from senior management and feeds into the Governors' Curriculum and Standards Committee. The recent College Enhancement Action Plan identifies sharing best practice, increased scholarly activity, improved employer involvement and student representation at a higher level, as priority areas for enhancing the student learning experience.

4.2 The College mission and Higher Education Strategy underpin enhancement. The mission is 'to be a first class, first choice provider of Education for Learners and employers in a wide range of skills'. This includes a strategic aim to develop higher education culture, teaching, learning and vocational opportunity.

4.3 The design meets the theory in practice, as the College generates information systematically through quality improvement processes, which feeds into College management and reporting structures to identify and monitor enhancement initiatives. The Enhancement Action Plan sets targets and monitors these initiatives.

4.4 The review team asked questions related to enhancement at all meetings: with the Principal, with senior staff, with teaching and support staff, and with students. Documentary evidence examined to test the application of the theory included minutes of meetings of Faculty Boards, the HESB, the Curriculum and Standards Committee, Teaching and Learning Forums, and the Curriculum and Quality Group, plus annual monitoring, SARs and Quality Improvement Action Plans.

4.5 The review team found that the College Enhancement Action Plan provided a clear statement of enhancement priorities, providing targets and dates for achievement. The plan proposes improvements to sharing best practice achieved through revising the operation of the HESB and Teaching and Learning Forums, through increased use of the VLE, peer observation of teaching, and higher education staff conferences. The review team found evidence to confirm progress is underway. The terms of reference for the HESB and Faculty Boards were clear, but minutes do not yet show systematic discussion of enhancement. The use of the VLE to support good practice in student learning continues, as recognised by staff and students. Peer observation of teaching is still in the pilot phase. The higher education staff conference in September 2014, and the draft programme for 2015, include the sharing of good practice. Teaching staff were able to provide examples of sharing good practice from consortium meetings and from working in close-knit teams. Targets for improving the amount of scholarly activity are set for July and September 2015. The target to further increase employer involvement in the curriculum and delivery is to formalise and build upon an area judged by the review team as good practice under Expectation B6. The target to secure student representation through the appointment of a student Governor is set for the next academic year.

4.6 Further examples of enhancement initiatives provided to the review team include the extension of studio hours, developing a distinctive higher education culture, and introducing teaching and learning coaches. These examples have not fed through into the Enhancement Action Plan. The introduction of teaching and learning coaches arose from degree-awarding body training, subsequently followed up in a Faculty Board, a Teaching

and Learning Forum, and then into training and implementation. The example provides evidence of the identification and implementation of an enhancement initiative but also of how the initiative did not follow established reporting structures.

4.7 Although the review team found the Enhancement Action Plan, and examples of enhancement provided by staff, as evidence of meeting the Expectation, deficiencies in the systematic identification of enhancement opportunities remain. It is not possible to follow enhancement issues through Faculty Boards, the HESB and the Governors' Curriculum and Standards Committee. As noted under Expectations A2.1 and B8, Faculty Boards lack clarity and consistency, the HESB is yet to include student representation, and its minutes do not provide examples of how the College systematically identifies opportunities for enhancement. The review team **recommends** that the College make greater use of the quality cycle to identify enhancement initiatives more systematically.

4.8 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low. The College takes deliberate steps at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. There is a strategic approach to enhancement, with an ethos encouraging enhancement opportunities. Structures and processes are in place to identify and disseminate good practice. While the use of quality assurance procedures to identify opportunities for enhancement, and the systematic and integrated approach to planning enhancement, require some improvement, changes to the operation of committees and completion of activities will secure the Expectation more fully.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.9 In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.10 The Expectation in this area has been met with a low risk. The College has a deliberate, strategic approach to enhancement, with structures and processes in place that encourage and identify learning opportunities that enhance the experience of higher education students. A recommendation is made to more effectively use the quality cycle in the planning and identification of opportunities to further enhance the student experience. However, there are numerous examples of enhancement activities that indicate that the strategic approach the College has taken is effective in meeting the Expectation.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The College has a clear strategic commitment to student employability. The College's Higher Education Strategy establishes employability as a key priority for the College in response to government initiatives, and local and national employment needs. The College embeds student employability in a number of ways, including curriculum design. This is addressed in programme specifications, live projects and industry collaborations, work experience and career talks, and national and international competitions.

5.2 The College's academic staff are industry professionals and are therefore well placed to give relevant and up-to-date career advice for their specialist areas. Employers are in contact with them regularly with job and intern opportunities, which enables academic staff to effectively support students.

5.3 Work-based learning is an integral part of two programmes delivered by the College. Students studying for the Foundation Degree in Early Years tend to be practitioners in their field while studying on the course, and trainee teachers have a course requirement of 100 hours' teaching practice over a two-year period. The College supports students on placement through the implementation of a mentor programme, which underpins the student learning experience. Mentors highlight that being closely associated with the College enables them to stay up to date with regulations in relation to Early Years programmes. Students highlight the mentor scheme provided by the College as a key strength of their student experience. Work-based mentoring is also outlined as a strength by Canterbury Christ Church University external examiners, where mentors are involved within the lesson observation component of the assessment process. The mentor programme has been acknowledged by the review team as good practice under Expectation B10.

5.4 The College hosts exhibitions for students to potentially sell their artwork. The College has an Artist in Residence programme, which further extends opportunities for students to become practising artists. The College aids students to attend external events, for example the New Designers exhibition, which enables students to showcase their work and extends their industry networking opportunities.

5.5 The College supports progression to employment and further study, which is supported by the internal Careers, Advice and Guidance Team. Students are referred by tutors, where they can book in for one-to-one guidance, or they can access drop-in sessions. The Careers, Advice and Guidance Team deliver support sessions, which include CV writing, interview preparation and technique, options advice following their studies, and job seeking and careers induction.

5.6 External examiners comment positively on the College's commitment to student employability across all higher education programmes delivered by the College. Students value the employability focus of their studies and the support given by their tutors to achieve work of a professional standard.

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 29-32 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#).

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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