



Higher Education Review of Liverpool John Moores University

February 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Liverpool John Moores University. The review took place from 8 February to 12 February 2016 and was conducted by a team of six reviewers, as follows:

- Emeritus Professor Andrew Downton
- Dr Simon Jones
- Mr Ryan Marshall (student reviewer)
- Dr Carol A Vielba
- Ms Sophie White
- Dr David Wright.

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

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

In reviewing Liverpool John Moores University the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

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

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

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

² Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859.

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

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

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Liverpool John Moores University

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Liverpool John Moores University.

- The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities is **commended**.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities is **commended**.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Liverpool John Moores University.

- The detailed nature of module-level definitive documents that make academic standards clear to both staff and students (Expectations A2.2 and C).
- The curriculum enhancement internships and projects that bring added benefits beyond conventional programme development activity (Expectations B3, B4 and Enhancement).
- The proactive investment in developing teaching staff in the University and its delivery organisations that improves the quality of student learning opportunities (Expectations B3 and Enhancement).
- The University's integrated approach to employability that enables students to better develop their graduate potential (Expectation B4).
- The University's engagement with postgraduate research students as partners, which enhances the quality of their learning opportunities and professional development (Expectations B5, B11 and Enhancement).
- The consistent and effective monitoring and review of programmes that assures the quality and standards of awards (Expectations B8 and A3.3).
- The establishment and operation of Academic Oversight Panels, which strengthens the strategic and operational governance of large partnerships (Expectation B10).
- The comprehensive ways in which the University obtains, monitors, shares and acts upon student feedback in order to improve student engagement and the learning experience (Expectations B5 and Enhancement).
- The WebHub facility that streamlines and systematises the identification of enhancement opportunities (Expectation: Enhancement).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendation** to Liverpool John Moores University.

By May 2017:

- Articulate assessment policies and processes in sufficient detail to avoid inconsistent local interpretations (Expectation A3.2).

Theme: Student Employability

The University takes a holistic and integrated approach to employability. There are employability and entrepreneurship activities and support at all levels of the University, within and outside of the curriculum. The University has invested in improving the opportunities and employability of its students, ensuring that the mechanisms in place are suitable, reviewed and enhanced appropriately. Staff show a high level of commitment to the University's strategy for employability and enterprise and the opportunities are well understood by students.

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

About Liverpool John Moores University

Liverpool John Moores University (the University) has a vision 'to be recognised as a modern civic university, delivering solutions to the challenges of the twenty-first century'. Its mission is 'to create and sustain a vibrant community for learning and knowledge where staff and students work together in an active and supportive partnership; providing opportunities to enrich our students, partners, and the wider society through education, training, research, scholarship, and knowledge transfer'. The University also views both its social and economic responsibilities within the city and region and its wider global impact as important aspects of its mission.

The University's student population is more than 20,600, with students coming from more than 100 countries, and studying more than 300 programmes across a wide range of disciplines. Eighty-six per cent of the students are undergraduate, 11 per cent postgraduate taught and two per cent postgraduate research. In addition, there are more than 5,000 students registered on collaborative provision leading to University awards.

The University has a number of collaborative partnerships including further education colleges, UK-based private organisations, health organisations, European and international partners, as well as business and industry partnerships and a number of knowledge transfer partnerships.

Since the Institutional Audit by QAA in 2009, a new Vice-Chancellor and three new thematic Pro-Vice-Chancellors were appointed. The University's mission and strategy were reviewed in 2012. Some reorganisation of the University has taken place, resulting in four faculties and re-structured professional services teams. This included the establishment of the post of Registrar, and an Academic Registry, which includes four Faculty Registrar posts and a central Academic Quality Services team, to ensure a consistent approach to, and institutional oversight of, quality assurance and enhancement.

Changes were made to the University's committee structure from the start of the 2012-13 academic year, in order to align it with the strategic plan. The committee structure was reviewed again in 2015, as part of the Governance Effectiveness Review. This resulted in the current committee structure, together with committee guidance and standardised templates to ensure consistency of reporting across the University.

The key challenges facing the University relate to the achievement of its strategic objectives, in particular the planned growth of postgraduate taught and research student numbers, the development of new external partnerships, and increased international student numbers. These objectives reflect challenges in the higher education sector as a whole, such as the removal of student number controls, the challenge to meet student expectations in the new

tuition fee regime, and the need for graduates with higher and specialist skills, as highlighted in a number of national business/industry reports.

In 2014-15, the Education Committee set up an Academic Framework Project Board and six project Working Groups to consider and make recommendations relating to curriculum enhancement, focusing particularly on the University's academic credit framework. This is to ensure continuing alignment with the Quality Code and sector norms relating to module credit size, to facilitate student single semester exchange programmes, and to harmonise existing academic practice across the University.

Extensive consultation with staff and students was undertaken. Consultation also took place with collaborative partners and external examiners, the latter confirming that the proposed changes were in line with sector practice. Following this process, all programmes will be validated in 2015-16 for implementation in 2016-17, in line with the agreed changes to the Academic Framework regulations. Existing students will continue to be taught on programmes following the current Academic Framework regulations, that is, changes to the Academic Framework regulations will not be applied retrospectively.

In its previous QAA review, the University received one essential, one advisable and five desirable recommendations. QAA confirmed that the University had satisfactorily completed all requirements for follow-up action in December 2012.

Explanation of the findings about Liverpool John Moores University

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 setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The University positions its awards, both at home and in its collaborative partners, at the appropriate level of FHEQ through use of its Academic Framework regulations and its Research Degree regulations. Both sets of regulations have been drafted to align with the FHEQ, which in turn aligns with European frameworks. The University's Academic Regulations define a credit scheme that can be mapped to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System.

1.2 Alignment of programmes with external frameworks, including Subject Benchmark Statements, is tested during validation and review. At validation, members of approval panels, which include external advisers, are required to confirm that programmes and modules are at the correct academic level and that external reference points, including the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), have been taken into account. Alignment is reconfirmed annually by external examiners and through annual monitoring.

1.3 Guidance is produced on award titles, level and qualification descriptors, and the application of external frameworks for staff involved in programme design. Templates used in validation and programme monitoring require reference to be made to levels, Subject Benchmark Statements and relevant PSRBs. This information is also recorded on programme specifications. The University advises staff of published changes to Subject Benchmark Statements and qualification descriptors.

1.4 The review team found that the University has in place systems, policies, processes and procedures that are designed appropriately in order to secure the threshold standards of all its provision through the use of UK and European reference points.

1.5 The review team looked at policy and process documents, internal handbooks and guidance, and examined minutes of committees, reports produced during programme validation and annual monitoring, programme specifications and external advisors' and examiners' reports. The team also met staff responsible for oversight of standards.

1.6 Examples of minutes and panel reports indicate that alignment with external reference points for academic standards is considered effectively at validation and also monitored effectively. Alignment is confirmed by external advisors and external examiners. References to levels and subject benchmarks, and other relevant frameworks including those of PSRBs, are made clearly in programme documentation.

1.7 In the 2009 QAA Institutional audit, a concern was raised that some of the University's collaborative provision, which allowed entry to the University with advanced standing, was not aligned with the FHEQ. In response to recommendations made in the report, the University strengthened its processes for mapping this type of provision in partners against University programmes that are already aligned with the FHEQ. Work was undertaken to check alignment of all awards with the FHEQ. Greater emphasis was placed generally on consideration of the FHEQ in the validation and review of collaborative provision.

1.8 The University has recently revised its programme specification template in order to align more fully with *Chapter A* of the Quality Code. The new template requires learning outcomes to be expressed for all target, interim and exit awards at all levels, in order to secure threshold standards by awarding qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes.

1.9 On the basis of the evidence provided, the review team concludes that the systems, policies, processes and procedures that the University has in place to secure threshold standards through alignment with the FHEQ, and reference to qualification characteristics, credit frameworks and Subject Benchmark Statements, are implemented consistently and effectively. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

1.10 The University's Academic Board has oversight of academic standards. Operational responsibility for them is delegated to key subcommittees - Education Committee, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC), and the University Research, Scholarship and Knowledge transfer Committee. QAEC has responsibility for the regular review and audit of policies and processes related to academic quality and standards. The subcommittees of Academic Board report separately to the Strategic Management Team on resource matters.

1.11 Academic standards are secured through the University's Academic Framework for Quality and Standards, which applies to all University provision at home and with collaborative partners. It encompasses the Academic Framework regulations for taught and research degrees, and policies and procedures for assessment and validation, and monitoring. The University states that the aim of its Academic Framework is to 'ensure that all awards offered by LJMU are consistent with, and comparable to, awards conferred throughout higher education in the UK and that students are treated equitably within clearly defined criteria when assessing whether academic standards have been met'.

1.12 The University's policies and systems for setting and monitoring standards are set out in University handbooks and manuals, available to staff and students both in hard copy and on the internet. Each faculty has a Registrar who is a senior academic, among whose responsibilities are those of guardian of the University's Academic Framework. Although the University's Academic Framework is universally applicable, approval may be granted for variations, for example to accommodate accreditation by PSRBs or overseas legal requirements. Approval is granted by the Education Committee.

1.13 The team found that the University has academic frameworks and regulations that are designed to be transparent and comprehensive. It also has appropriately designed systems, policies, processes and procedures of governance in place for the award of credit and qualifications.

1.14 In order to test the effectiveness of these arrangements the review team examined committee terms of reference and minutes, University policies, handbooks and guidance, job descriptions, examples of documentation recording exceptions to the Academic Framework, and papers relating to the new Academic Framework. The review team met with staff and students to discuss the accessibility of the University's Academic Frameworks and regulations, and their implementation. Discussions were also held with staff responsible for the development and implementation of the new Academic Framework.

1.15 The review team found that the University's Academic Framework regulations are applied consistently across all provision. Guidance is available to staff on the interpretation of regulations, which are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Staff and students whom the review team met stated that they find University policies and regulations to be accessible and easy to use.

1.16 The University Registrar, working with Faculty Registrars, keeps the Academic Framework under review, evaluating the impact of changes made and proposing new ones. In anticipation of the periodic review of the University's provision, which is undertaken across the board every five years, the Education Committee established an Academic Framework Project Board in 2014-15 to review and revise the Academic Framework. As a result, significant changes are being made to the framework which will be implemented in 2016-17.

1.17 Existing students will continue to follow the current framework and regulations as their programmes are taught out; new students will follow the new regulations. The University has undertaken extensive planning in order to be able to work simultaneously with students studying under different regulations. The changes, which aim to promote harmonisation of academic practice across the University, in-year completion before progression, and facilitation of exchange arrangements, include semesterisation, new module credit sizes and changes in compensation.

1.18 On the basis of the evidence provided, the review team concludes that the University has transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations in place to govern the award of academic credit and qualifications. Therefore, the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.19 The definitive record for each programme is the programme specification, which provides key information, as specified in *Chapter A2.2* of the Quality Code, about alignment with the FHEQ and other external frameworks; aims, learning outcomes, content and assessment; and quality assurance arrangements. Comparable documents are produced for research degrees. Programme specifications are created and approved on standard templates during validation. The same documentation requirements cover both home and collaborative provision.

1.20 Processes are in place to approve amendments to programmes within the normal validation cycle. Administrative changes are approved by Boards of Studies. Minor amendments require approval by the Faculty QAEC. Major amendments must be approved by the University Standing Panel or another University-level committee.

1.21 Module information is recorded on a standard template and supplemented by a module guide. Academic Quality Services maintain the definitive course records in version control on central databases, Prodcats and Modcats. Programme specifications are available publicly on the University website and made available to students on the virtual learning environment (VLE) through links in their programme guides. Module specifications and guides are made available internally through the VLE. Equivalent information is available for research students. Individual records of achievement for taught students are generated from the central student record system.

1.22 The review team found that the University has in place systems, policies, processes and procedures that are designed appropriately to ensure the maintenance of definitive records for all programmes and qualifications that provide a reference point for delivery, assessment, monitoring, review and issuance of records of study.

1.23 In order to test the effectiveness of these arrangements the review team examined process documents and templates and internal review and policy documents and guidance. The team saw samples of programme documents and transcripts. The team met staff involved in various ways in the creation and maintenance of programme documentation, as well as student users of the documents.

1.24 Sample documentation seen by the review team confirmed that the University's systems generate appropriate, comprehensive, current and accessible programme documentation for all programmes, including research degrees. Students whom the team met confirmed that information about the structure, content and assessment of their programme is readily available through the VLE and is both accessible and helpful.

1.25 Students are particularly appreciative of the module specifications and accompanying module guides, which are prepared for all modules using standard templates. Guides provide students with details of the module syllabus, timetable, assessment structure, deadlines, reading material and staff contacts. Specifications provide key facts about level, credit value, learning hours and assessment methods. The review team

considers the detailed nature of the module-level definitive documents that make academic standards clear to both staff and students to be **good practice**.

1.26 On the basis of the evidence provided, the review team concludes that the University has effective systems in place to ensure the Expectation is met in both design and operation and that the associated level of risk in this area 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

1.27 The University has separate defined procedures for the validation of home and collaborative programmes. These are described further under Expectation B8. Both make use of appropriately qualified external and independent internal advisors and are overseen by officers from Academic Quality Services, who ensure that the prescribed processes are followed. The structure of each taught award in terms of credit and level is defined in the University's Academic Frameworks. The expectations of its MPhil and PhD awards are defined in the University's Regulations for Research Degrees. There are separate regulations for other research degrees including professional doctorates and the award of PhD by published works. Any new award must be approved by the University's Academic Planning Panel (APP), which has delegated authority for this from Academic Board.

1.28 The documentation required to support the validation of a taught programme includes a programme specification, module descriptions and a narrative explaining teaching, learning and assessment strategies. It requires mapping of programme learning outcomes against individual modules and details of how each module is assessed. Programme validation requires confirmation that academic standards are aligned with the FHEQ and that the curriculum is aligned with the appropriate Subject Benchmark Statement and any PSRB requirements, if appropriate. It also requires confirmation that the teaching, learning and assessment strategies will enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Programmes must also align with the University's Academic Frameworks. In the case of home programmes the outcomes of validation are reported to the University Standing Panel. In the case of collaborative programmes, there is a formal validation event held at the delivery organisation, chaired by a senior academic from a different school from that of the proposing team, and the outcomes are reported to the Collaborative Quality and Standards Panel (CQSP). New programmes in new delivery organisations are approved for three years; all other programmes are approved for five years.

1.29 The review team tested this by examining the University's Academic Frameworks and programme approval procedures and by scrutinising validation documentation for home and collaborative programmes, as well as the minutes of the committees involved.

1.30 The University has adopted the qualification descriptors in the FHEQ for all its taught and research awards. Professional doctorates are regarded as research degrees but are validated following the procedures for taught programmes as they include compulsory course elements.

1.31 The Academic Frameworks and guidance documents make explicit the need for awards and individual programmes to align with the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements, and internal and external advisors are required to comment on this in their reports. Credit is assigned to modules in accordance with UK sector norms. Practical guidance to help programme teams ensure that qualifications are set at the right level is provided in the Regulations in Practice and the Curriculum Design Guide. The latter includes guidance on writing learning outcomes, assessment methods and grading criteria appropriate for different levels of learning.

1.32 Validation documentation is comprehensive and links between assessment, the achievement of learning outcomes and the level of award are clearly articulated. Validation reports indicate that the views of internal and external advisers are taken into account and that changes are made in response to their comments. The minutes of the University Standing Panel indicate that it exercises its responsibilities diligently, referring back for further consideration any proposal that does not meet University requirements. In the case of collaborative programmes, these are only signed off when any conditions specified at validation have been addressed.

1.33 At the time of the review, the University had two dual-award taught programmes in the area of astrophysics with the University of Liverpool but no joint awards. It also had eight students enrolled on dual-award postgraduate research degree programmes with a total of six international institutions, although it also had plans to increase the number of these types of arrangement in the future. In both cases the University is able to secure the academic standards of the awards through jointly agreed study/research programmes and assessment procedures, by University staff being designated members of examination boards and by the use of jointly approved external examiners.

1.34 The review team concludes that the University has robust systems in place to secure the standards of its awards and that these are aligned with Expectation A3.1. The Expectation is therefore met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.35 The University's qualifications and credit are awarded on the achievement of programme and module learning outcomes, measured by assessments designed to test the learning outcomes. Assessment is subject to the University's Academic Framework and regulations, which state that the purpose of summative assessment is to enable students to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes of the modules, and that assessment tasks must be aligned with the module learning outcomes as specified on the module pro formas.

1.36 Programme specifications are approved through a validation process that includes ensuring that there is a sufficient volume of assessed study to demonstrate that learning outcomes will be achieved, and that assessments ensure that students have the opportunity to achieve and demonstrate intended outcomes.

1.37 Programme specifications set out the programme-level learning outcomes that must be achieved before an award is made, as well as the aims of the programme and the modules and credits that make up the programme. All students are provided with assessment criteria outlining the basis on which the learning outcomes are deemed to have been met. Students receive feedback on their assessment within 15 working days, as outlined in the Academic Feedback Policy.

1.38 If a student has a declared disability that may affect their ability to complete an assessment this is communicated to the programme team so that any necessary agreed assessment requirements can be put in place. Extensions and alternative assessment arrangements are available, as are extenuating circumstances.

1.39 External examiners must input to, and confirm their involvement with, the moderation of assessment process. Through annual reporting, external examiners are asked to confirm whether the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme and whether it is conducted in line with University policies and regulations.

1.40 Assessment Boards confirm that sufficient credit has been obtained by individual students to enable progression to the next level of the programme or achievement of an award. Boards determine requirements for deferred assessment(s) and any referral requirements for students failing a module(s), ensure the maintenance of appropriate standards of assessment, and ensure that students are assessed in accordance with the approved regulations and procedures.

1.41 Under the current Academic Framework, credit can be awarded even if all module learning outcomes have not been met, by applying compensation. However, under the revised Academic Framework, compensation will not be permitted.

1.42 The review team tested this Expectation by reviewing documentary evidence such as University policy documents, programme and module outlines, internal and University validation reports and external examiner reports. The team also met senior staff, teaching staff and students to assess understanding of the process.

1.43 The review team found that the design and approval of modules, programmes and qualifications uses University-wide guidance and templates described in the Academic Framework and operated through Regulations in Practice, and follows an approval process embedded within the governance structure. The assessment design has been established through discussion with the teaching teams, with input from external advisers and students while being mindful of Regulations in Practice to ensure parity, suitability of timing, and diversity of tasks.

1.44 The review team heard that the University adopts a common grading criterion for assessed work, that the requirement for anonymised marking must be used for all written examinations and coursework, and that there is a policy of no more than three summative assessments per 24 credits.

1.45 Staff whom the team met lacked, in some instances, a clear understanding of the principles of marking expressed through University-wide guidance concerning double (blind) marking, moderation practice, or online marking. While Regulations in Practice identify policies concerning marking, moderation and academic misconduct, they are at a high level and offer a University view in principle rather than exacting practice. The approach taken to marking assessed work within faculties, schools and programmes therefore follows local practices.

1.46 The review team also found that there is a lack of clarity in the instruction for the uniform promotion of, and application for, academic integrity within programmes or modules. In Regulations in Practice, the Regulation C5.2 identifies the programme leader responsible for providing clear guidance and instruction to students on academic integrity, and guidance is provided in handbooks. Given the above findings, the review team **recommends** that the University articulates assessment policies and processes in sufficient detail to avoid inconsistent local interpretations.

1.47 Overall, the review team found that the achievement of relevant learning is demonstrated through assessment, and that the UK threshold standards and the University's own academic standards have been satisfied. However, assessment policies could be further articulated to avoid inconsistent local interpretations. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

1.48 The University has a standard annual monitoring procedure that is applied to its home and collaborative programmes and professional doctorates. The procedure is reviewed and approved on an annual basis by QAEC. It is described more fully at Expectation B8.

1.49 External examiners' reports, and the schools' responses to them, are incorporated in the annual monitoring report, which is discussed at the Board of Studies. Programme-level annual monitoring reports are compiled by School Directors into school-level reports, which are reviewed by Faculty QAECs. School Director summary reports include commentary on the maintenance of academic standards, and also require identification of any potential threats to academic standards in the future.

1.50 Quality Enhancement Officers and Associate Deans (Quality) in each faculty compile faculty annual monitoring reports, which are considered by QAEC. These also highlight any issues requiring attention in order to safeguard standards at faculty or University level. In addition, Quality Support Officers provide a summary of annual monitoring reports for collaborative programmes for consideration by CQSP. In parallel with this process, Quality Enhancement Officers in each faculty independently report on issues arising from external examiner reports, and these are compiled into an annual quality report that is considered by both QAEC and Academic Board.

1.51 Each research degree candidate is examined by an independent internal and an appropriately qualified external examiner. They are required to comment on whether the thesis and the performance of the student meet the standards of the award. An annual summary of issues arising from research degree examiners' reports is compiled by the Graduate School and considered by the Research Degrees Committee.

1.52 Periodic review includes closure of the existing programme to new entrants, a critical evaluation of the existing programme and validation of a revised version, following the procedures described in Expectations A3.1 and B1. However, in anticipation of changes to programme structure arising from the revised Academic Framework, programmes due for periodic review in 2014-15 were instead subject to quality health checks. These included consideration of alignment with the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements, student achievement and issues raised in external examiners' reports.

1.53 The review team tested the Expectation by scrutinising the University's regulations and procedures, external examiners' reports, annual monitoring reports and the minutes of the committees involved. Processes were also explored with teaching staff based in the University.

1.54 The review team found that monitoring and reporting processes at programme, school, faculty and institutional level ensure that full and appropriate consideration is given to academic standards. Where a programme is delivered by the University and one of its delivery organisations, the same external examiner is used for both, wherever possible.

Annual monitoring, School Director and faculty overview reports are completed to a high standard, with any matters requiring attention noted in action plans. The overview reports compiled by Quality Enhancement Officers enable the University to maintain institutional oversight of any negative responses from external examiners to standard questions. The review team noted that in the very few instances where such responses had been given, the issues concerned were followed up promptly and thoroughly.

1.55 The annual report of the outcomes of research degree examinations to the Research Degrees Committee enables the University to monitor submission and completion rates and to note and respond to any concerns arising from external examiner reports.

1.56 New programmes in new delivery organisations are subject to periodic review after three years, other programmes after five years. The critical evaluation of the existing provision, which is considered alongside updated programme specifications and module descriptions, includes commentary on the continued alignment of the programme with the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, the University Academic Frameworks and any PSRB requirements. It also addresses any proposed changes in learning outcomes and assessment strategies. The review team finds that the consistent and effective monitoring and review of programmes that assures the standards of awards contributes to the good practice identified in *Chapter B8*.

1.57 The review team concludes that the University has in place and implements effective monitoring and review procedures that enable it to determine whether threshold academic standards are achieved and whether its own standards are maintained. Therefore, the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.58 External advisers are appointed as part of programme validation, periodic programme review and collaborative programme validation. Advisers normally meet with the programme team as part of early programme development, and also produce a final report on the curriculum and standards being set for the programme. There is also input from an internal adviser from a different school, appointed by the University, who acts as a critical friend for the programme team in providing generic advice and support on curriculum development, University policies and procedures and external reference points, and attends planning meetings, including the meeting with the external adviser. Due to the changes in the Academic Framework, the limited number of programmes due for programme review in 2014-15 were subjected instead to a quality health check, in preparation for full revalidation the following year. This process, approved by QAEC in June 2014, did not involve a traditional summative review event, but still included formative input from an external adviser.

1.59 Similar processes apply to the approval of programmes developed with collaborative partners, where the University expects external assessors to attend the validation event. In addition to external advisers appointed to review each programme approval or revalidation, the University includes one external panel member with experience of QAA's Higher Education Review in the constitution of the University Standing Panel, which considers and approves all school programme validations on behalf of QAEC and Academic Board.

1.60 All home and collaborative programmes are monitored by an external examiner who is appointed by the University. The external examiner receives a copy of the programme specification and module descriptions, moderates draft assessment tasks and marked student work and attends assessment boards, at which any standards issues are highlighted and discussed. External examiners are required to confirm in their reports that the academic standards set align with the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements and that the standards and achievement of students are comparable with those in other higher education institutions. They must also confirm that assessment policies measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme and that assessment is conducted in line with University policies and regulations. Where relevant, external examiners are also required to comment on the comparability of home and collaborative provision and on the extent to which any requirements of PSRBs are met. External examiners can also raise any serious concerns about academic standards directly with the Vice-Chancellor or invoke the QAA Concerns Procedure.

1.61 It is also a requirement that external examiners are given the opportunity to meet with students once every academic year, either face to face or by video call if students are engaged in programmes delivered remotely, for example by collaborative partners. External examiners have also been consulted on proposed changes to the University's Academic Framework regulations.

1.62 The University has relationships with a large number of PSRBs for programme accreditation or recognition, and reports from these bodies are considered by Faculty QAECs as well as by the University QAEC. Action plans to address conditions or recommendations are produced by programme leaders and school directors and monitored by the relevant Faculty QAEC. PSRB input is also sought from the external adviser during programme validation, if the programme is one for which accreditation will be sought, in order to ensure that the programme will meet the accrediting body's requirements.

1.63 The review team read a range of course approval and review documents covering both the University's own programmes and those delivered in collaboration with its partners. It also considered documents and reports relating to external examining, and talked to staff and students about the use of externality.

1.64 Students studying at both the University and with collaborative partners confirmed their experience of working with external advisers as part of programme validation and review. All external examiners' reports are sent to the October meetings of Boards of Study as part of the annual monitoring process, and the team confirmed that external examiners' reports are also available on the VLE community sites.

1.65 Overall, the University uses external experts effectively to ensure that its academic standards and UK threshold standards are set during programme approval, and subsequently maintained through external examiner oversight. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards

1.66 In reaching its judgement about threshold academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.67 All seven Expectations have been met and the associated level of risk for all is low. There is one recommendation in this area relating to the lack of detail in assessment policies and processes (Expectation A3.2). There are two features of good practice. One relates to the detailed nature of the module-level definitive documents (Expectation A2.2) and the other relates to the consistent and effective monitoring and review of programmes (Expectation A3.3).

1.68 There is evidence that the University is fully aware of its responsibilities for setting and maintaining the academic standards of awards. Previous responses to external review activities provide confidence that areas of weakness will be addressed promptly and professionally. The review team concludes therefore that the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of the awards **meet** 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 QAEC maintains oversight of the processes and outcomes of programme design and approval. Operational matters are devolved to the University Standing Panel in the case of home programmes and the CQSP in the case of collaborative programmes.

2.2 The Academic Frameworks define the structure and content of programmes and make explicit the need for them to align with the FHEQ, appropriate qualification characteristics and Subject Benchmark Statements. There are separate approval procedures for home and collaborative programmes and those involving PSRBs. Although professional doctorates are regarded as research degrees, because they include compulsory taught elements, they follow the approval procedures for taught programmes.

2.3 The guidance documents are reviewed and updated annually. Academic staff are kept up to date on any changes via the University's Quality Enhancement Officers and, in the case of collaborative programmes, via the Partnerships Forum, Link Tutors and Quality Support Officers. No new collaborative programme can be approved until the delivery organisation has been approved by the Senior Management Team.

2.4 All proposals for new programmes are first scrutinised by Faculty Management teams and then by APP to ensure that they are aligned with faculty strategies and the University Strategic Plan and that they can be appropriately resourced. Any variations from the University's frameworks must be approved by the Education Committee. Validation of an existing programme does not require these prior approvals and can proceed directly to the planning stage.

2.5 Programme teams compile a standard set of documentation, which includes a detailed programme overview, the programme specification and module descriptions. These are considered by independent internal and external advisers who are required to comment on the appropriateness of the curriculum, learning outcomes, and teaching, learning and assessment strategies. Approval requires their confirmation that the programme is aligned with the FHEQ and the relevant PSRB standards. In the case of collaborative programmes a validation panel is convened and a formal validation event is held at the delivery organisation. This is chaired by a senior and experienced academic from a school other than the proposing school.

2.6 Consultation with students is a central part of the process. In the case of home programmes the validation documentation must include evidence of student engagement. In the case of collaborative programmes the validation panel meets students during the validation event. Students were also piloted as members of validation panels in 2013-14 and 2014-15 and from 2015-16 they have been formally included.

2.7 Following completion of this stage, proposals can then go forward for final approval by the University Standing Panel or the CQSP as appropriate.

2.8 The review team tested this by reviewing the University's quality frameworks and guidance documents, by reading validation documentation and by following the process through for both home and collaborative programmes. The review team also discussed the process with academic staff and students.

2.9 The team found that the guidance documents describe in detail the processes involved, the documentation required at each stage, and the roles and responsibilities of those involved. An extensive series of templates is provided to facilitate the process and to ensure that the University's requirements are met. The responsibilities of the role holders and committees involved are clearly defined. The guidance documents also provide useful information for panel members and additional specialist training is provided for members of collaborative validation panel members.

2.10 The Academic Frameworks are augmented by the Regulations in Practice, which provide practical guidance on their interpretation, and by the Curriculum Design Guide, which provides comprehensive and accessible information for programme teams during the planning stage. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that programmes are student centred and accessible and that the curriculum is linked to research and scholarship. Guidance is also provided on writing learning outcomes and assessment methods appropriate for different levels of study.

2.11 Programme overview documents are comprehensive and include details of admissions criteria, strategies and methods for teaching, learning and assessment, the availability of learning resources and how the needs of students with physical and learning disabilities are met. The curriculum vitae of all teaching staff, including where relevant those of the delivery organisation, are also made available.

2.12 External advisers are consulted at an early stage and their views, and those of students, are taken seriously and changes made. In the case of collaborative programmes planning meetings involve delivery organisation staff, and the documentation is subject to a 'critical evaluation' by an independent panel of readers prior to the validation event. Validation processes are overseen by quality officers from Academic Quality Services. These ensure that the appropriate University procedures have been followed and that any concerns identified by the advisers are addressed.

2.13 The minutes of the University Standing Panel indicate that it exercises its responsibilities diligently, and will refer proposals back for further consideration to ensure that programmes meet University requirements, and any conditions, before final approval is granted. Collaborative programmes are not approved until confirmation has been received that any conditions imposed by the validation panel have been met.

2.14 QAEC is able to maintain oversight of validation activity via an annual report that is compiled by Academic Quality Services. This lists new programmes and awards, identifies features of good practice and any matters requiring further consideration. In the case of collaborative programmes, panel members and programme leaders can provide feedback on their experiences of the validation process to Academic Quality Services after the event.

2.15 Overall, the University's procedures for the design, development and approval of programmes are appropriate and the University follows them assiduously. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.16 The University's Strategic Plan and Access Agreement underpin the University's strategic approach to admissions. Targets are set by the Strategic Management Team and key performance indicators are monitored by the Education Committee. The Recruitment Policy Panel monitors the recruitment cycle, and is responsible for governance and strategic oversight.

2.17 Policies are set out by the University to ensure that the admissions process is transparent and fair, including the Admissions Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, and Admissions Complaints and Appeals Policy. Admissions are enforced by a University-wide structure with targets being set and regularly monitored. The Admissions Policy, reviewed annually, sits in line with the University's Strategic Plan and enables clear resources to be available to students.

2.18 There is an admissions hub in each faculty, which is responsible for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, an international admissions team for international students and the Graduate School handles postgraduate research admissions.

2.19 Staff members have the opportunity to attend a training programme run by the Head of Admissions. Faculty Heads of Operations are then responsible for training and providing annual updates.

2.20 Prospective students have access to a range of information to assist them in making the right decisions when applying to the University. Customisable prospectuses are available online and in print format. In addition, substantial information can be found on the University's website including programme details, applicant guidance and relevant policies. Information is reviewed annually to ensure currency and accuracy.

2.21 Outreach and recruitment events are organised by Student Recruitment and Admissions, with support from other departments. The range of activities includes open days, recruitment fairs, tours and funding talks. To assist with outreach, the University employs Student Advocates who give presentations, steward open days, deliver taster sessions and provide shadowing opportunities. Advocates undergo extensive training to prepare them for their role.

2.22 The Admissions Complaints and Appeals Policy is accessible to applicants for all modes of study. Unsuccessful applicants also have the opportunity to request feedback from the University as stated in the Admissions Policy.

2.23 Applicant communications are managed via the University's Student Information System. Template letters, emails and automated responses, which can be adapted according to individual offer decisions, ensure a consistency of message and approach across all programmes of study regardless of subject, faculty or school. These templates are reviewed and updated annually prior to the start of the undergraduate recruitment cycle.

2.24 If an application to study at the University is successful, undergraduate applicants receive an applicant pack providing more details on the next steps in the application process and information on student services, together with detailed funding guidance, a scholarship leaflet and an application form. International students receive an international applicant guide.

2.25 The review team scrutinised the Admissions Policy, Code of Practice for Admissions, Admissions Complaints and Appeals policy, prospectuses, Access Agreement, Terms of Reference for Recruitment Policy Panel and admissions training. The team held discussions with support, academic and research staff and with undergraduate, postgraduate and collaborative partner students.

2.26 The University makes use of different approaches to engage prospective students, such as social media outputs, to help ensure that prospective students have a clear understanding and accurate expectation about the courses and student experiences on offer. Targeted information for international applicants is published via the website.

2.27 Undergraduate applicants are also directed to an applicant microsite where they can access more information about applicant days, campus tours, and other information/activities designed to provide the additional information required at this stage of the student lifecycle.

2.28 The review team found that students had a positive experience when applying to the University. They received clear and accurate information and appropriate support from staff members when required. Disability support was also in place for those who required it. Policies and procedures relating to admissions are accessible and clearly understood by staff whom the team met.

2.29 There is clear information for all modes and levels of students and a transparent admissions process underpinned by policies and supported by strong institutional oversight. Therefore, the review team concludes that the University's approach to recruitment, selection and admissions meets the Expectation in both design and operation 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

2.30 The University's Strategic Plan 2012-17 provides the internal reference point for the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2012-2017. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy provides the framework for the delivery and enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment. It is designed to help the University to achieve its relevant targets, by using the key performance indicators from the Strategic Plan for three key areas: delivery of excellence in learning, teaching and assessment; embedding scholarship; and establishing and enhancing the student partnership, with particular reference to employability and entrepreneurship.

2.31 Both the Strategic Plan and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy are overseen by Academic Board, which reports to the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, and the Board of Governors. All Academic Board members receive a comprehensive induction and briefing pack, which facilitates shared understanding of the University's mission and goals. The success of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy is routinely measured at programme, school, faculty and University level by the use of key performance indicators.

2.32 The Education Committee is responsible for determining the key performance indicators and priorities for learning and teaching on an annual basis. These feed into the annual Faculty Learning, Teaching and Assessment progress reports and action plans. These reports and action plans are agreed at Faculty Education Committees, reported to Education Committee, and communicated to staff and students via the Associate Deans (Education) and through the annual monitoring process. After consideration by the Education Committee, Academic Board receives an annual progress report.

2.33 In order to assist with the progress reports and action planning, data, such as National Student Survey (NSS) results, is available via the University's WebHub portal. The information provided on WebHub allows trends in data to be monitored and interpreted.

2.34 The Learning and Teaching Development Panel, which reports to the Education Committee, acts as the main institutional-level subcommittee with regard to enhancement, and provides a forum for discussion and reflection on both existing and projected enhancement activity.

2.35 The Teaching and Learning Academy was established in October 2014 and formally launched in June 2015. Its purpose is to enhance the student learning experience through educational enhancement and innovation and the transfer and adoption of existing effective practices and approaches. The Teaching and Learning Academy brings together a number of existing and new activities under one umbrella and acts as a focal point for teaching and learning activities within the University. So far the Teaching and Learning Academy has been successful in securing funding from the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to explore United Kingdom Engagement Survey (UKES) outcomes for curriculum enhancement and learning gain in higher education respectively.

2.36 The University has recently implemented a revised Teaching Observation Scheme, which amalgamates two previous schemes - Observation of Teaching and Peer Review. Full-time staff and teaching assistants, who are not enrolled on the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGCertLTHE), are observed biennially and feedback from a trained observer encourages reflection on teaching approaches.

2.37 The identification and sharing of good practice in learning and teaching is promoted via a comprehensive range of mechanisms and activities, for example, Faculty Staff Development Days, the University's VLE, a dedicated practice-sharing resource (LJMU-Share), the LJMU Teaching and Learning Conference and the Professional Services Conference, through the Research and Practice Seminar Series and the Innovations in Practice journal.

2.38 The University has policies and strategies in place to ensure that there is inclusivity in the curriculum and there are a number of networks and development programmes in place. The extent to which equality and diversity is taken into account by the University is monitored by the Equality and Diversity Committee, which has oversight of policy, objectives and the action plan relating to enhancement in this area. The Equality and Diversity Committee also has responsibility for raising awareness of the importance of Equality Impact Assessments of University policies, procedures and practices with due regard to the protected characteristics.

2.39 The review team considered the effectiveness of the learning and teaching provision through the scrutiny of strategy documents, policies, procedures, action plans and relevant committee paperwork. The team also discussed learning and teaching with staff and students from both the University and its partners during the review visit.

2.40 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy emphasises the importance of engaging students in their learning, which is further outlined in the Curriculum Design Guide. Staff revealed a clear understanding of the Strategy and its aims.

2.41 With a few reasonable exceptions, all new academic staff are required to take the PGCertLTHE. The course is offered through part-time study and provides a route to Fellow of the Higher Educational Academy (FHEA) status accredited by the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA). Through the setting of an institutional target the University demonstrates a commitment to increasing the number of staff with HEA Fellowship.

2.42 Academic staff and postgraduate research students can also undertake the SEDA-accredited '3is' programme. This programme is mandatory for postgraduate research students who wish to teach, and an additional mandatory workshop is provided for those students who also wish to take part in marking and assessment. Research students confirmed that they are aware of the requirement to undertake the 3is training before embarking on any teaching activities and appropriate checks are in place to ensure that research students do not start teaching activities unless training has been completed. Other training, some accredited, is also available for academic and support staff.

2.43 There is a newly revised annual appraisal scheme for all staff, Personal Development and Performance Review (PDPR), which helps to identify staff development needs. To ensure take-up of the scheme, the Senior Management Team have approved new key performance Indicators for the completion of staff PDPRs. Academic and professional staff spoke highly of the number and range of opportunities for personal development and training.

2.44 The University's commitment to achieving excellence in learning and teaching is extended to its partners. The PGCertLTHE is currently being delivered to 15 senior staff at

YPC, a partner College in Malaysia. The UK regional partner teaching staff also confirmed that they have access to the same training and support as their University colleagues. In addition to this, collaborative partners are invited to attend and present at both the annual Learning and Teaching Conference and at the partnership forums. By providing staff training and development for its collaborative partners the University ensures the distinctive nature of degrees awarded in its name. The review team considers that the proactive investment in developing teaching staff in the University and its partners, which improves the quality of student learning opportunities, is **good practice** (see also Enhancement).

2.45 The University proactively recognises and rewards excellence in teaching and learning through the University-run Teaching and Learning Excellence Awards and through support of the Liverpool Students' Union (LiverpoolSU) Amazing Teacher Awards. The students whom the review team met spoke positively about the Amazing Teacher Awards, and many had made nominations in order to celebrate and thank their teachers for their positive contribution to the learning experience. Senior staff met by the team confirmed that the awards were one of the means used to spot talent, and that recipients were given time and space to pursue their projects and share their good practice. It was further noted that there is also a route to promotion via learning and teaching excellence as well as via research activity.

2.46 The Learning and Teaching Development Panel oversees the University-wide curriculum enhancement internships and projects. Through these, the University provides competitive funding for internships and projects that address an aspect of curriculum-related enhancement and which clearly demonstrate alignment with University strategies such as the University Strategic Plan, the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, issues highlighted in programme annual monitoring reports, Faculty/School NSS action plans, and LiverpoolSU objectives. The internships and projects must have potential to benefit a wide number of students and must be capable of being completed by one or more students working alongside staff. This accords with the University's mission to provide work-related learning opportunities for all students. The outcomes of projects and internships are shared via a variety of platforms, such as through the committee structure and the annual Teaching and Learning Conference. While projects and internships are initially seed-funded by the University, they may be sustained by further faculty funding. The curriculum enhancement internships and projects that bring added benefits beyond conventional programme development activity is **good practice** (see also Expectations B4 and Enhancement).

2.47 Overall, the policies and procedures of the University foster a culture that allows a student to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth, and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking. The University has procedures in place to review and enhance systematically the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation in *Chapter B3* is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.48 The Strategic Plan echoes the University's ethos of 'dream, plan, achieve' and seeks to ensure that students are supported to develop and achieve to the best of their abilities whatever their background. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and associated action plans, as well as other professional services strategies such as Estates, Information Technology Services, Library, and World of Work Career Services, support the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Management Team considers key performance indicators for student achievement, and student achievement, progression and retention data is reported to the Academic Board and the Board of Governors. Data from the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey is also routinely discussed through the governance system.

2.49 All taught students have a personal tutor assigned to them. Programme guides include details of the role and how to contact them. All research students have a supervisory team and the responsibilities of supervisors are set out in the Code of Practice for Research Students and Supervisors. Since the start of 2015-16 all supervisors new to the University and new to supervision are expected to attend the Research Supervisor's Workshop prior to taking part in supervision.

2.50 Students have access to a wide range of support for their academic and personal wellbeing and development. Students receive information about the opportunities, support, services, and facilities available via a number of different sources, including the website and VLE and programme and student handbooks.

2.51 In 2013-14 the University established the Induction and Transition Working Group, which resulted in revised pre-arrival information for new taught students and a revised University induction programme. In addition to the existing school-based programme and Library induction events, a University induction has been introduced for undergraduate and international students, postgraduate taught students are invited to networking events, and postgraduate research students also receive an induction by the Graduate School.

2.52 All students have access to the Student Advice and Wellbeing Team, which provides an extensive range of face-to-face and online support covering accommodation, health, wellbeing and study skills. Specialist advice and tailored support is also provided, for example for young adult carers, mature students, and students with mental health difficulties or learning disabilities. A support network for students with autism and Asperger's is also in place. The University also provides funding to support students from lower income backgrounds, and participated successfully in the National Scholarship Programme.

2.53 The Library and IT services provide a wide range of learning resources to facilitate students' learning. These resources are reviewed regularly to ensure effective delivery. In 2015 the Library achieved the Customer Service Excellence kite mark and the Library is now working with other support services across the University to share and develop good practice in customer service.

2.54 The Equality and Diversity Committee has oversight of policy objectives, and the action plan relating to enhancement in this area. Guides are available for staff, students and governors, and a calendar of events promoting equality and diversity is published on the

intranet. Staff support networks promote equality and diversity in the areas of cultural diversity, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality, and gender equality. The University also supports Stonewall, Athena SWAN, AURORA leadership, and StellarHE Leadership Development. A recently introduced improved surveys platform for module appraisal is enabling the University to consider student satisfaction results against gender and ethnic group data. The University is also actively reviewing and considering measures for the improvement of Black and Minority Ethnic achievement.

2.55 The Disability Policy has recently been approved by the Academic Board following extensive consultation. The role of the Disability Coordinator has been formalised under the revised policy to ensure that all students who have disclosed a disability receive a consistent and equitable level of support. Study Needs Assessments are carried out for eligible students and individual student learning plans drawn up in consultation with the Disability Advice Team and the student. The student's allocated Coordinator is then responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place and for liaising with the student's programme team regarding any issues related to the student's support needs. The University is further developing an accessible and inclusive campus through new investments, plus the ongoing provision of information regarding the externally run Disability Assessment Centre on campus.

2.56 Overall, the University's Strategic Plan has clear targets, which draw on externally benchmarked data for student progression, achievement, satisfaction and employment. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy provides an appropriate framework and the University's infrastructure and services are designed to support students effectively.

2.57 The review team considered the effectiveness of the measures in place to enable student development and achievement through the scrutiny of strategy documents, learning infrastructure including the website, intranet and VLE, policies, procedures, action plans and relevant committee paperwork. The team tested its findings in meetings with academic and professional staff and students from both the University and its partners during the review visit.

2.58 Overall, students whom the review team met confirmed that they are well supported and where problems had been identified with disability and welfare support these had been quickly resolved. Students were complimentary about the services, support and inductions provided by the Library. Inconsistencies in the support provided by the personal tutoring system were highlighted by students, and at the time of the visit the Personal Tutoring Policy was under review.

2.59 During 2015-16 the University is piloting Directed Study Weeks (one per semester) for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students to help students improve their study skills and to further raise awareness of the support available. The review team heard that one benefit of the Directed Study Weeks had been that space had been created in the timetable to facilitate scheduled meetings between students and their Personal Tutor.

2.60 The University expresses a strong commitment to employability and to delivering work-related learning opportunities and employability and professional skills development for all students. The review team found that the University is taking deliberate steps at institutional level to enhance the employability and entrepreneurship skills of its students. This includes use of a dedicated Employer Engagement Team to seek and develop links with employers. Also, the University-wide initiative, Curriculum Enhancement Internships and Projects, detailed under Expectation B3 and identified as good practice, not only enhances the curriculum, but also provides a work-related learning opportunity for students to develop their employability skills.

2.61 The review team found that support for employability is extensive, well coordinated and effective. Staff at all levels show a strong commitment to the University's mission in this area and feel that it is a high priority. The World of Work Skills Certificate is well established with the Bronze level embedded in the curriculum for undergraduate students. Programme teams set out in their programme evaluation documentation how they will address employability, and PSRB accreditation is actively sought and facilitated.

2.62 Students told the team that their programmes prepare them well for employment and, on the whole, they value the work-related learning opportunities. There was clear evidence of student engagement with the increased opportunities to gain employability skills and workplace experience through take-up of the optional Silver and Gold World of Work Skills certificates and increased participation in placements and internships.

2.63 There was also clear evidence for the University's commitment to the employability agenda through their proactive enhancements to the advice and support provided for embedding employability, and increasingly internationalisation, within the curriculum, in the creation of the new Employability Champion posts within each school and in the support and resources provided relating to entrepreneurship and enterprise.

2.64 The review team found evidence of employer engagement at local, regional and national level. Furthermore, the University's alumni can contribute to the career development of students by sharing experiences, mentoring, providing information and giving advice. The University has established a number of cultural partnerships that have led to additional opportunities for students, such as internships with the Sound City Music Festival.

2.65 Undergraduate students are encouraged to engage in personal development planning to help them reflect on their learning and to prepare for their future careers. Research students are encouraged to take part in the Researcher Development Programme and Your Career, Your Choice Programme, and to reflect on their personal and professional development via meetings with their supervisors as well as at their progression milestones.

2.66 In light of the many examples above, the review team considers that the University takes a well-designed holistic approach to enabling student development with an emphasis on students, academic and professional services staff, employers and alumni working in partnership. The University's integrated approach to employability that enables students to better develop their graduate potential is **good practice**.

2.67 Evaluation of support for students is carried out through various annual student surveys and module evaluations as well as through service websites or bespoke surveys. Actions have been taken in response to student feedback, for example providing new tools to support development, such as an electronic search tool. The University is making good use of survey data through annual monitoring reports and action planning at all levels. The survey results, which in some cases are made centrally available via WebHub, help inform the analysis of student satisfaction and achievement and therefore the appropriateness of the University's approaches to student development and support (see Expectations B5 and B8).

2.68 The University is effectively monitoring and evaluating its approach to, and resources for, helping students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. This was particularly evident in the University's approach to employability. Therefore, the review team concludes that the University meets the Expectation in both design and operation and that 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

2.69 The University has a committed approach to offering an inclusive student experience in partnership with its student body. Student experience is at the core of the University, having key institutional strategic aims in the Strategic Plan, two student nominees who attend the Board of Governors and a positive working relationship with the LiverpoolSU, one of the responsibilities of the Student Voice Committee. The Student Charter 2015-16 has been enhanced to include more information on student experience and is used in addition to student handbooks to set students' expectations.

2.70 Students are provided with opportunities to comment on their experience at University and are encouraged to take part in various surveys such as NSS, UKES, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). The outcomes of the NSS and PTES are detailed in annual monitoring reports and are then shared with student representatives at Boards of Studies and various other committees. Minutes are published on the VLE for associated courses. LiverpoolSU also gains access to survey data through a shared drive so that discussions can take place, while staff members have access to detailed breakdown and analysis tools via the WebHub portal.

2.71 A holistic student representative system is in place that allows students to engage in numerous learning opportunities and which values them as partners. Representatives are present on all taught programmes at all levels and are able to attend committees and subgroups. LiverpoolSU plays a large role in ensuring that representatives undergo comprehensive training to prepare them for the role and in publishing information to help students to understand and engage with their role.

2.72 Student representatives sit on programme-level Boards of Studies. External examiner reports and annual monitoring reports are shared with students. Staff actively encourage student representatives to feed back to peers and allocate time during lectures to do so to complete the feedback loop. A Critical Friends Group was set up between LiverpoolSU, academics and professional services staff in order to develop further the course representative system. Overall, students are able to make valuable contributions of feedback in numerous areas to assist in educational enhancement and quality assurance.

2.73 Events such as the Student Representative Awards Scheme, Nursing and Allied Health Student Awards, and the Course Representative Accreditation Scheme demonstrate how the student representative system has been enhanced to provide extracurricular activities to engage students.

2.74 Faculty Education Committees produce action plans as a result of discussion of the content of Student Voice reports. These actions are then followed up by the Learning and Teaching Development Panel.

2.75 Student-staff forums have been introduced as a pilot scheme with a strategy to incorporate them across the University. Students co-chair the meetings and allow a broader discussion of their issues.

2.76 In evaluating how the University engages students as partners in the quality assurance of their learning opportunities, the team reviewed key documents such as the

student submission, strategic plan, Student Charter, programme guides, the Module Evaluation Policy, terms of reference for the Student Engagement Panel and Student-Staff Forum, materials relating to course representatives, Faculty Student Voice reports, Board of Study Protocol and minutes and asked questions to undergraduate, postgraduate and collaborative partner students, academic, support, research and senior staff members.

2.77 Students whom the team met value the student representative system and how the student surveys are used, and gave examples of how their voice has positively effected change. The team found that academic staff actively encourage course representatives to feed back to their peers the results of Boards of Studies on issues that affect them. This contributes to the good practice in the Enhancement Expectation regarding the comprehensive ways in which the University obtains, monitors, shares and acts upon student feedback in order to improve student engagement and the learning experience (see Expectation Enhancement).

2.78 Postgraduate research students are strongly engaged as partners in developing and reviewing their student experience. They are represented on both faculty and University Research Degree Committees (RDCs) and Research, Scholarship and Knowledge Transfer Committees. In 2015, research student voice events were introduced in conjunction with LiverpoolSU. The University participates in biennial PRES research student surveys, facilitated through PRES student champions who are volunteers from among the research student representatives in each faculty. Results from the 2015 PRES survey exceed sector and peer-institution mean scores and have nevertheless been reviewed by faculties to identify individual faculty enhancement action plans. Postgraduate research students spoke very highly of their representative system. Therefore, the University's engagement with postgraduate research students as partners, which enhances the quality of their learning opportunities and professional development, is **good practice** (see Expectations B11 and Enhancement).

2.79 Overall, the review team concludes that the University has a substantial and effective student representative system in place. With more than 1,100 course representatives and a very active group of postgraduate research representatives, the University is able to provide many opportunities to engage. The introduction of student-staff forums shows the University's commitment to making enhancements to student engagement. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.80 The University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy highlights the strategic aim of delivering excellence in learning, teaching, and assessment. Assessment requirements, which apply to all taught students, are outlined in the Academic Framework regulations.

2.81 The Academic Framework sets out the maximum amount of credit that can be obtained through prior learning and the policy and processes for dealing with managing this are set out in the Recognition of Prior (Experiential) Learning (RP(E)L) policy. In the case of collaborative recognition and articulation arrangements, the mapping of learning outcomes required confirms the prior learning that will be recognised. Faculty Recognition Groups, chaired by Faculty Registrars and constituted as subcommittees to Faculty QAECs, have responsibility for the approval of recognition of prior and certificated experiential learning.

2.82 The RP(E)L Advisory Forum meets each semester to consider and improve processes for recognising credit and sharing good practice. The forum reports to APP via the Academic Framework Management Group and its discussions inform policy. The Education Committee recommended the approval of a new RP(E)L policy by Academic Board, and this was implemented for 2015-16.

2.83 Guidance for staff on assessment and feedback is provided through Regulations in Practice and the Curriculum Design Guide. Good practice relating to assessment and feedback is actively shared through the annual Learning and Teaching Conference and other staff development events. In addition, staff must undertake a PGCertLTHE if they do not have a teaching qualification or HEA Fellowship, which requires reflection on assessment practices.

2.84 Programme guides set out the policy for submitting coursework, including a broad statement on the marking criteria used for assessment, the feedback strategy, and a statement as to how fairness, consistency, and standards are assured, including external examining plus the University's policy on marking and giving feedback within 15 working days. Guides also include information about progression requirements and award classifications, referrals and deferrals, and assessment board protocols. Assessment submission schedules are outlined in module guides or on the VLE programme community sites. Assessment criteria are detailed in module guides and assessment briefs. Programme guides also advise students on inappropriate practice to be avoided, such as plagiarism, collusion and cheating, which is also referred to in the Student Handbook.

2.85 The University identifies that marking and moderation processes are in place, and that as a minimum, at Level 5 and above, 10 per cent or 10 assessed assignments, whichever is the greater, must be double-marked. This is confirmed by external examiners. Dissertations and major projects are double-marked and external examiners are asked to state whether there is evidence of this double-marking, while samples of work are also reviewed to confirm that the standard of marking is appropriate before an assessment board is held. A moderation report must be completed as part of the process.

2.86 The University has policies and procedures in place to ensure assessment is secure, irrespective of whether submission is online through the VLE or on paper. It is accepted that certain types of assessments, such as dissertations, assessed work carried out in studios or workshops, and oral presentations, cannot be anonymised. The University's invigilation instructions are designed to ensure examinations are carried out securely both at home and at collaborative partner institutions. In some cases, referrals may take place overseas.

2.87 If a student has a declared disability that may affect their ability to complete an assessment, alternative assessments can be provided. Where unforeseen circumstances impact on a student's ability to complete an assessment this may be dealt with by extensions, alternative assessments, deferred consideration, or extenuating circumstances procedures. School Extenuating Circumstances Panels, chaired by School Directors (or equivalent), review extenuating circumstances cases and report decisions to Assessment Boards.

2.88 The University's Academic Framework regulations and Postgraduate Research regulations define academic misconduct and also set out the terms of reference and operation of Academic Misconduct Panels, last reviewed in 2014-15. Academic judgement and online plagiarism detection evidence form the basis for a case to be made to the Faculty Registrar, who determines whether the evidence provided is such that an academic misconduct panel should be convened. Training is in place and training is provided for staff participating in these panels. The presence of faculty representatives on panels and the initial use of the Faculty Registrars ensure consistency across the University.

2.89 Assessment boards confirm student progression, determine deferral and referral requirements, recommend any awards to be conferred, and receive a report on the number of extensions and alternative assessments per module, as noted on the moderation template. The chair and the external examiner sign the recommendation list for awards, which are subject to the conferral of the Academic Board, on a monthly basis. To ensure regulations are applied consistently across the University, a cross-faculty representative and an Academic Registry representative are included in assessment board membership. External examiners also confirm that boards have operated in accordance with the regulations.

2.90 In order to provide a more consistent approach to assessment, institutional grade descriptors have been developed and were approved in July 2015 for implementation in 2015-16.

2.91 An assessment tariff has been provided for staff in developing assessments in the new Academic Framework. Assessment approaches for each programme is a required element of programme validation, including an assessment map, and programme teams must provide a rationale for the different assessment types to be used and how they enable students to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes. External examiners are asked to comment in their annual reports on the effectiveness of the assessment strategy and any recommendations for improvement.

2.92 The review team tested this Expectation through scrutiny of the Assessment Policy, Marking and Moderation Policy and newly proposed Assessment Tariff, and other documents related to setting assessments, training and support of staff, and external examiner reports. The team met senior and teaching staff and students to triangulate its findings.

2.93 The team found that recognition of prior learning mechanisms are robustly and centrally operated from a University-wide perspective and the Admissions Department. When academic decisions are sought from faculties and programme leaders, a named

faculty RPL Officer supports the making of that decision and ensures consistency within the faculty. Academic decisions are reported through the necessary governance structures, from within the faculty to University level.

2.94 The review team found that the basis for effective assessment is well understood by teaching teams, which aim for a diversity of assessment types, carefully timetabled to take account of student experience. Assessment strategies are designed by the teaching teams, with input from the students by formal consultation through the annual monitoring and review process, staff-student committees and informal feedback. In the new academic model, University guidance has been enhanced by new University information that includes an assessment equivalency tariff, levelness, and, where appropriate, noting PSRB requirements.

2.95 In designing programme level assessments, the review team found that there is a clear understanding of the need to develop academic literacy, and to promote a progressive pedagogy. Teaching teams actively debate the effectiveness of assessment, seeking innovations in the curriculum, and analysing the impact of assessments at a modular level with regards to impact on retention, progression and attainment. Teaching teams plan to deliver graduate attributes to support independent learning, appropriate to the level, to support student achievement.

2.96 Students confirm that they play an active part in the assessment process, both in terms of influencing the type of assessment and in receiving personalised feedback, and that they feed forward, on a one-to-one basis. Both staff and students share an understanding of the University policy to offer feedback on summative assessments within 15 working days, which then enables individual feedback if requested of a tutor.

2.97 All staff engaged in marking students' work are qualified through possession of Fellowship of the HEA or equivalent. New members of staff are automatically enrolled on the University's PGCertLTHE, and research students on the 3is module on assessment and marking, prior to assessing students' work. The review team heard that tutors inexperienced in marking are supported through a buddy system, and further help in approaching the assessment of work is proactively available.

2.98 Collaborative partners deliver assessments written by University staff, which have been approved by the external examiners appointed to each franchise or validated programme. Time-dependent assessments, for instance examinations, are timetabled to ensure that the risk of unfair practice is minimised. Partners see external examiner reports and contribute towards action planning, participating in annual monitoring and review procedures for the programme. Exam boards are conducted with collaborative partners, chaired by a senior member of University staff.

2.99 The review team confirmed that the summative assessment process for internal verification of assessment tasks is conducted through an approval and validation process at a faculty and University-wide level within the quality governance structure. Likewise, conducting assessments is carried out in accordance with University-wide guidance concerning submission dates, extenuating circumstances, anonymised marking, and moderation. All assessments are included in all programme handbooks, and on the VLE, which acts as the definitive guide for teaching staff and students alike.

2.100 Overall, the University's policies and procedures relating to recognition of prior learning and assessment are clear, equitable and reliable. Generally, these are implemented effectively and robustly, although with some variations in quality of feedback to students.

Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.101 In setting guidelines for the use of external examiners, the University has aligned its processes with *Chapter B7* of the Quality Code. These are reviewed and approved annually by QAEC.

2.102 There is a robust and transparent process in place for the appointment of external examiners and explicit criteria are provided to support staff in identifying examiners and avoiding potential conflicts of interest. The Pro-Vice- Chancellor (Education) provides institutional oversight of the process and gives final approval to all faculty-level recommendations, which are then reported to QAEC.

2.103 The role of the external examiner is defined within the Academic Framework regulations guidance for external examiners and Regulations in Practice. New external examiners receive written guidance and information about attendance at a University briefing session. Briefing session content is provided online for those who cannot attend these sessions. Less experienced external examiners, and those from outside the higher education sector, are provided with mentors and often operate as part of a team of more experienced examiners.

2.104 External examiners provide an annual report to the Vice-Chancellors' Office, using a standard template. In addition to confirming that academic standards are being maintained and are comparable with the sector, and that assessment processes are fair and equitable, the reports also identify aspects of good practice, and any areas that need further consideration.

2.105 Where relevant, external examiners are asked to comment on the comparability of home and collaborative franchise provision. If there are PSRB requirements, external examiners are also asked to comment on these. External examiner reports are discussed at Boards of Studies. Students are provided with information about the role of the external examiner, their name, role and institution in their programme guides. Multiple years of external examiner reports are available on the VLE module sites.

2.106 External examiners' reports are reflected upon in annual monitoring reports and thus receive consideration at various levels within the University. A summary report of themes arising from external examiner reports is considered by QAEC and is included in an annual quality report, which is reported to both QAEC and to Academic Board.

2.107 External examiners are advised that they may raise any serious concerns, in confidence, with the Vice-Chancellor and that they have the right to invoke QAA's Concerns Scheme, although this has not been invoked to date.

2.108 The University encourages its staff to become external examiners and facilitates the sharing of practice arising from this experience through discussion sessions held twice a year. There are currently 229 members of staff who are external examiners.

2.109 The review team scrutinised external examiners' reports and the templates for reporting and guidance documents. Regulations and relevant policies on the appointment, induction and use of examiners were also reviewed, as were the minutes of relevant committees. The team met with senior, academic and support staff, staff from collaborative provision, and students at all levels and at partner organisations.

2.110 The review team found that the University uses external examiners effectively to confirm academic standards and assessment both for home provision and collaborative partners, which forms an integral part of the annual monitoring reporting mechanism. External examiner reports are considered at Academic Board, Quality Assurance Education Committee, Faculty QAEC and Boards of Study. Within this reporting, there is clear evidence that issues and good practice arising from external examiner reports are appropriately followed up and action planning reported. However, there was limited evidence to demonstrate systematic continuous monitoring of external examiner recommendations.

2.111 The team found that the University ensures that all boards are populated by at least one external examiner, and engagement and attendance is monitored to ensure effective discharge of their duties.

2.112 External examiner reports are available on the VLE community sites in addition to course action planning and other external metrics. However, the students whom the team met demonstrated limited knowledge of the external examiner role and their reports. The review team heard that there is currently a Staff-Student Liaison Committee pilot in the Faculty of Engineering and Technology and the role of external examiners is discussed there.

2.113 External examiners have travelled to collaborative partners, and so play an active role in assuring quality and standards within that provision. These students confirmed that they had met the external examiner both formally and informally to discuss their courses and the student experience. Collaborative management confirms their role in acknowledging and signing off the appointment of external examiners for their provision, and their knowledge of annual monitoring reports and subsequent action plans.

2.114 The University clearly demonstrated that it has taken deliberate steps to map its practices to *Chapter B7* of the Quality Code. Overall, its policies and procedures make scrupulous use of external examiners. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.115 The University has a standard annual monitoring procedure for home and collaborative programmes. It covers all undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes and professional doctorates. It is monitored by QAEC and re-approved annually. In addition, the University undertook a full review of its procedures for programme review in 2013-14 to ensure that they are aligned with *Chapter B8* of the Quality Code. Annual monitoring of postgraduate research students is reviewed in *Chapter B11*.

2.116 Annual monitoring takes place at module, programme, school, faculty and University level. The University has recently adopted a revised system of module appraisal that allows the inclusion of module-specific questions and permits the analysis of responses by programme. Programme-level annual monitoring reports are completed by programme directors in conjunction with programme teams and are considered at a Board of Studies meeting at which student representatives are present. Reports cover actions arising from the previous review and feedback from students, external examiners and, if appropriate, PSRBs. Programme teams are also required to report on how any school, faculty and University priorities have been addressed.

2.117 School Directors compile summary reports that cover academic standards, teaching and learning, and how the school has addressed the objectives in the University's strategic plan. These reports also include feedback on library, IT and other support service quality, and identification of staff training and development needs. Feedback from NSS and PTES also feed into annual monitoring processes, both at programme and school level. Programme annual monitoring reports and School Director summary reports are considered by Faculty QAECs.

2.118 Drawing on programme and School Director annual monitoring reports the Quality Enhancement Officer and the Associate Dean (Quality) in each faculty compile an overview report for consideration and approval at faculty level and submission to QAEC. These comment on the degree of engagement with the process and identify good practice. Quality Support Officers provide a similar report of collaborative programmes for consideration by the CQSP.

2.119 An independent overview of external examiner reports within each faculty is also compiled by the relevant Quality Enhancement Officer. These comment on the operation of the process, note any negative answers to standard or other questions and identify any common issues and themes for faculty or institutional-level consideration. They are fed into an Annual Quality Report, which is reported to both QAEC and Academic Board.

2.120 The University has recently established Academic Oversight Panels to strengthen governance of strategically important or large partnerships and a Joint Liaison Group to strengthen oversight of its joint programmes with the University of Liverpool. These are described in Expectation B10.

2.121 The guidance for validation also includes comprehensive procedures for dealing with amendments to programmes. The approval mechanism varies according to the scale

and impact of the change. Minor changes can be approved by Faculty QAECs but major changes require approval of the University Standing Panel or a full validation.

2.122 New programmes in new delivery organisations undergo periodic review after three years, all other programmes after five years. However, given the anticipated changes in programme structure as a consequence of the revisions to the Academic Framework, those programmes due for periodic review in 2014-15 were instead subject to a one-off quality health check. This was done on the understanding that such programmes would be redesigned and validated in 2015-16. The health checks included consideration of alignment with external benchmarks and internal regulations, feedback from external examiners and students, evaluation of teaching, learning and resources and areas for development.

2.123 In addition, during 2014-15 the University revised its periodic review process so that from 2015-16 it requires closure of the existing programme to new recruitment and validation of an updated version. Validation follows the procedure described in *Chapter B1*, except that it incorporates a 'critical evaluation' of all aspects of the programme by the programme team. Permanent closure of a programme can only go ahead after the proposal has been considered by the relevant Faculty Management Team and approved by the APP.

2.124 The review team tested this by scrutinising annual monitoring reports, school and faculty-level summary reports, reports compiled by quality officers and the minutes of the committees involved. Processes were also discussed with academic staff in both the University and its delivery organisations.

2.125 The review team found that annual monitoring procedures for taught programmes are comprehensively documented. The schedule of activities, roles and responsibilities of the staff involved and the reporting requirements are clearly described and enable review processes to be completed in a timely and effective manner. Processes are understood by academic staff in both the University and its delivery organisations.

2.126 The University's WebHub interface automatically populates standard templates for programme and school-level monitoring reports with live data. This facilitates the interrogation, analysis and reporting of key performance indicators against University-defined thresholds and national statistics. This ensures parity of reporting across programmes and that any measure that falls below the University threshold is identified and addressed. Annual monitoring reports are evaluative, describe how the previous action plan has been addressed and set out action plans for the following year. Full consideration is given to feedback from students, external examiners and, in the case of collaborative provision, the Link Tutor's report. Features of good practice identified by annual monitoring promote enhancement at programme, school and faculty level and can also inform developments at University level.

2.127 Faculties, CQSP and QAEC maintain oversight of engagement with, and the outcomes of, annual monitoring via School Director summary reports and the parallel but independent reports compiled by quality officers. The University maintains oversight through the comprehensive Annual Quality Report, which covers home and collaborative programmes and which is reported to QAEC and Academic Board. This systematic approach ensures that the outcomes of annual monitoring are considered appropriately at the different levels within the University's management and reporting structures.

2.128 Where a programme is being permanently closed, the exit strategy includes provision for those students remaining on the course during the teaching out period and measures to ensure that external examining and annual monitoring processes are maintained. Where a programme is continuing, the 'critical evaluation' that is compiled by the programme team includes consideration of the maintenance of quality and standards, that school and faculty support is sustainable, that the programme continues to fit with

agreed University strategic priorities, that the curriculum continues to reflect national and subject developments and that there is evidence of an ongoing demand. The process also requires input from current students. In the case of collaborative programmes, the documentation supporting the validation must include the primary evidence to support the critical evaluation and marketing material.

2.129 During 2105-16 any programmes that were not already aligned to the new Academic Framework were subject to periodic review and validation, with the latter following the procedure described in *Chapter B1*. The review team found that this major exercise had been well planned and carefully scheduled, and that teaching staff in both the University and its delivery organisations were aware of the implications for their programmes.

2.130 The University's annual and periodic review processes enable it to monitor quality and standards effectively. They focus not only on quality and standards, but also on development and enhancement at all levels. Action plans are followed up to ensure that loops are closed. In light of this and the above paragraphs, the consistent and effective monitoring and review of programmes that assures the quality and standards of awards is **good practice** (see also Expectation A3.3).

2.131 Overall, the monitoring and review of programmes are not only effective, regular and systematic, but are soundly based on school ownership of academic provision and peer review by external examiners, and have student input as an integral part of the process. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.132 The University makes its policies relating to complaints and appeals available to students through its website, along with guidance notes. Policies are clearly separated into the Student Complaints Procedure while appeals policies and procedures can be found in separate University Academic Framework regulations for Undergraduates and Postgraduates. Principles of fair access are set out in the Student Charter for taught students and in the Research Degree Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Students and Supervisor for Research.

2.133 The Student Governance team has institutional oversight of the complaints and appeals policies, procedures and operations. They ensure that all members of staff are kept current, while providing formal training when necessary so that staff can best inform students who seek advice. Annually, Student Governance also produces a range of statistics on complaints and appeals showing trends and outlining areas for improvement at a local and institutional level. This is presented in key performance indicators, OIA reports and Academic Board papers.

2.134 If students require neutral advice on how to make a complaint or appeal, they are able to meet with an adviser at the LiverpoolSU to discuss their matter in confidence.

2.135 During the admissions process, prospective students are able to make a formal complaint or appeal under the independent Applicant's Complaints and Appeals Policy, which has been detailed in Expectation B2 above.

2.136 The policies and procedures in place at the University are robust and fit for purpose, allowing staff to handle effectively any academic appeal or complaint made by students. Policies are kept up to date and evaluated regularly to make enhancements.

2.137 The review team tested this Expectation through meetings with senior and academic staff, professional support staff, postgraduate research students and taught students, both at the University and at partners. The team also scrutinised the Student Complaints Procedure, Academic Framework regulations for undergraduates and postgraduates, Research Degree Regulations, appeal form and guidance notes, Student Governance presentation on complaints and appeals, and minutes to Academic Board, QAEC and Education Committee.

2.138 The review team found that students are confident in being able to access relevant complaints and appeals policies if required and that they understand where to get support.

2.139 As a result of the ongoing evaluation, the University has been able to make several enhancements to procedures for students and staff. Improvements to the customer relationship management system have resulted in more accurate auditing and more responsive feedback to students, updating them on open cases. Also, regulations have been brought in line with the Office for the Independent Adjudicator's Good Practice Framework for Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals, and the University has adopted a 90-day time limit for completing internal procedures.

2.140 Overall, the University takes adequate steps to ensure that students have access to appeals and complaints policies and procedures while being able to access guidance when necessary. In addition, the University's strategic approach allows for clear institutional oversight and for procedures to be enforced effectively. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met in both design and operation, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.141 The University's collaborative provision portfolio, delivered in the UK and overseas, involves around 15 per cent of its students. Collaborative programme delivery takes a number of forms. Franchise and validation arrangements account for the largest number of students in partner organisations. The University also has recognition and articulation arrangements in place, normally combined with franchise and validation arrangements, which allow students who have completed a defined course of study in the partner organisation to enter one of the University's programmes with advanced standing. Other forms of collaboration include an embedded college delivering Level 3 and 4 provision and pre-master's programmes; a small number of dual awards for higher degrees; and distance learning, both locally supported and taught by flying faculty. All collaborative provision is taught in English with the exception of one programme which is in the process of closure. The University provides home-based students with opportunities to undertake placements and to participate in overseas student exchanges. Numbers in collaborative provision have declined recently as a result of planned changes in the University's portfolio but are anticipated to increase in line with the University's strategy, which identifies partnerships of different sorts as key to realising its vision of a modern civic University with global reach.

2.142 The University has established structures, processes and posts to manage its collaborative provision that work alongside those in place for home-based programmes. Its overall approach involves deploying standard procedures with adjustments to take account of local conditions and the higher risk involved in collaborative working. There are also variations in requirements related to different forms of collaboration. The details of these arrangements are incorporated in individual University process documents and set out in the Academic Collaborative Partnerships Operational Manual, and further guidance provided to relevant University staff and partners.

2.143 The Strategic Management Team maintains oversight of partnership development and approves initial proposals for new partners. APP ensures that the development of programme proposals for collaborative arrangements with both newly approved and existing academic partners is consistent with the University's strategic and operational planning processes. Associate Deans, Global Engagement, provide additional strategic leadership and support at faculty level.

2.144 CQSP has oversight of the quality assurance and enhancement of the University's collaborative programmes. Administrative support for the management of collaborative arrangements is provided by the Academic Partnerships Team, based in Academic Registry, with support from Academic Quality Services and local staff in faculties and schools.

2.145 Link Tutors are appointed for all collaboratively delivered programmes and act as the key contact between the University and programme staff in the partner organisation. They are appointed at school level before the validation process for a programme begins. They are involved in all aspects of the design and delivery of collaborative programmes and ensure that the collaboration operates in accordance with the legal agreement between the University and the partner, and that University policy and processes are followed. Their role involves both monitoring and also advising. They are expected to have a periodic presence

in the partner organisation and to interact with partner staff and students during the course of the year. Link Tutors receive training and an allowance of time to carry out their duties.

2.146 In larger partnerships, often with programmes spanning more than one school or faculty, the role of institutional link has been developed to provide a link at institutional level. Academic Oversight Panels have also been established. These are joint bodies operating at institutional level whose role is to maintain oversight of the delivery of the awards offered through the partnership, the experience of students registered on these awards, and potential developments. They report to CQSP. At the time of the review visit, three such panels had been established.

2.147 The review team found that the University has in place systems, policies, processes and procedures that are designed appropriately to ensure the effective management of provision delivered in collaboration with others.

2.148 In order to test the effectiveness of these arrangements the review team examined statistical information, follow-up from the 2009 QAA Institutional audit report, policies, process documents, handbooks and templates, documents relating to partner approval and re-approval, validation, and termination of provision, including three audit trails of the development of partnerships of different sorts. The team also considered committee terms of reference and minutes, reports from Link Tutors and external examiners, annual monitoring and other reports, samples of legal agreements, certificates and transcripts, documents relating to staffing and staff development, published information and student handbooks. The team met staff responsible for the management of collaborative provision based both in the University and in partner organisations in the UK and overseas, students studying on collaborative programmes in the UK, and students who had undertaken placements and study abroad. Additional documentation was reviewed as appropriate.

2.149 Documentation seen by the review team, and discussions with staff and students at the University and in partner organisations, confirmed that the University's systems and procedures are effective in managing the quality and standards of the provision that it delivers with others. Staff whom the team met were clear about roles and procedures and well informed about the obligations that the University places on its partners. Students studying in collaborative provision whom the review team met confirmed the quality of their learning experience and spoke positively about the role played in it by the University. The team found that quality assurance policies are implemented consistently across the University's collaborative provision and that the University invests in the enhancement of the provision delivered in partnership.

2.150 The processes for partner approval are set out in the Academic Collaborative Partnerships Operating Manual. The review team examined documentation relating to three examples of recent partner approvals. The process commences with due diligence and assessment of risk using standard templates. Documents must be signed off by the relevant Dean, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, External Engagement and the Registrar prior to submission to the Strategic Management Team for approval. Approval may be conditional. Partner approval culminates in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.

2.151 The second stage involves the development of programmes with the new partner, leading to the signing of a legally binding Partnership Agreement. The process begins with detailed costing of the proposed activity and financial terms, managed by Academic Partnership Team. This is followed by the submission of a programme proposal pro forma to APP for approval to develop the proposed programmes. Once APP approval has been given, work begins on Heads of Terms, which form the basis for the eventual signing of the Partnership Agreement.

2.152 Partnership Agreements are made initially for three years, after which they may be renewed for five years. All such agreements forbid serial franchising. Link Tutors play a key role in monitoring the compliance of partners with the terms of the signed agreement. Legal agreements contain clauses covering the termination and closure of programmes including protection of students' interests. Arrangements for closure of collaborative programmes have recently been revised in order to align better with the processes for closure of home programmes. A formal meeting is held with the partner, referred to as a closure meeting, which agrees plans for the teaching out of programmes. Examples of recent closures demonstrate that policies and processes are implemented effectively.

2.153 The University has processes in place for partnership review prior to the expiry of the legal agreement. The University conducts annual business reviews for its partnerships to ascertain their continuing fit with University strategy, performance, and the ongoing appropriateness and viability of the partnership. These reviews are discussed with partners at an Annual Partnership Operational Meeting and feed into the formal partnership re-approval process. Partnership re-approval involves review by a joint internal panel of senior staff from both the University and the partner. The report of the panel, together with an action plan regarding any recommendations for improvement made by the panel, is sent to both APP and CQSP.

2.154 Quality and standards in collaborative provision are managed using the same policies and procedures as in home provision. This includes the appointment of external examiners and annual monitoring. CQSP receives an overview report of all partner annual monitoring reports. In addition to the annual monitoring report, Link Tutors provide reports. Previously, Link Tutor reports were completed mid-year, but after a review of the process the University agreed that full reports should be completed at the end of the year with a mid-year check.

2.155 In order to strengthen the management of large partnerships, joint Academic Oversight Panels have been established in addition to the joint arrangements existing with its embedded college and a regional University. These panels meet three times each year, normally meeting at least once at the partner organisation. Panels are chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) and include the head of the partner institution, senior staff from both the partner institution and the University and the institutional link in their membership. The panels receive reports from the institutional link as well as Link Tutor and annual monitoring reports. Agendas include operational and strategic issues emanating from both the University and the partner; decisions are recorded on an Action Point Control Register. The review team read documents relating to the first cycle of meetings in 2015 and considers that the establishment and operation of Academic Oversight Panels, which strengthens the strategic and operational governance of large partnerships, is **good practice**.

2.156 In order to assure quality and standards, the University maintains control over assessment processes and standards through moderation, and has oversight of admissions. Staff teaching on University provision in partner organisations are approved at validation and new staff are approved on an ad hoc basis by Faculty QAECs. A Partnership Forum, for programme and higher education staff in partners, Link Tutors and University staff responsible for collaborative provision, is held annually to brief partners on academic, regulatory and sector developments. It also covers mandatory training and provides an opportunity for sharing good practice. Regular mailings of updates and information are made to members of the Forum.

2.157 Students studying in collaborative provision are registered as students of the University and have access to University learning resources, many of which are available electronically. The adequacy of local learning resources and support services within a

partner organisation in relation to particular programmes is assessed during validation and kept under review by Link Tutors. Students in partner institutions elect representatives to programme boards and may be represented on other partner committees. Collaborative students also have the opportunity to meet with Link Tutors when they visit. A pilot scheme of student representation on collaborative validation panels has been undertaken. The University has recently changed its appeals procedure in partner organisations so that all stages of the appeal process now follow University procedures. Complaints are dealt with using local procedures, which have been vetted by the University during partner approval, and students have recourse to the University if they believe that their dissatisfaction has not been fully addressed.

2.158 All taught students in collaborative provision receive a transcript at the end of their studies. Successful graduates receive University certificates. The name and location of the partner organisation always appears on the transcript; whether it also appears on the certificate is dependent on local legal requirements and the nature of the partnership involved. Any exemptions from normal practice are agreed at validation and require documentary support.

2.159 The University maintains a publicly available register of its collaborative provision, updated annually. The University has systems in place to approve website and publicity material produced by partners. Academic Partnership Team and Link Tutors monitor the accuracy of published information at partners and report on this to CQSP.

2.160 In addition to module guides, students in collaborative provision receive a useful University student handbook for their programme, modelled using a standard template.

2.161 The University keeps a central register of placements and details the responsibilities and processes for management of placement opportunities in a Code of Practice. A briefing event for staff was held when the Code was issued. Students identify positive experiences but also some operational issues regarding placements. In order to support mandatory placements in health and education the University participates in a collaborative web-based service to identify suitable placements. Placement handbooks are produced for programmes where placement is embedded in the student's programme of study.

2.162 Study abroad arrangements require formal approval and are also supported by signed agreements. Support for study abroad is provided both centrally and locally through Erasmus+ coordinators. In 2013-14 the International Policy Committee set up a Study Abroad Working Group, which made a number of recommendations for developing international activity. Subsequently, a partnership has been established with a private organisation specialising in overseas travel for students, to help develop new study abroad opportunities.

2.163 Overall, the systems, policies, processes and procedures that the University has in place to manage provision with others are appropriately designed and implemented consistently and effectively. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.164 The University offers a range of research degrees, including MRes, MPhil, MPhil with the possibility of transfer to PhD, PhD direct, PhD by published work (for University staff only) and professional doctorate programmes. At the time of the review visit, approximately 80 per cent of all postgraduate research students were registered on the MPhil/PhD route. Seven partners offer dual awards, where the (international) partner also has research degree awarding powers, managed under individual cotutelle agreements defining the arrangements for each student. Overall research student numbers have risen substantially since the 2009 Institutional Audit. The establishment of dual awards facilitates a strategic University interest in developing international research partnerships with peer institutions.

2.165 The University RDC has delegated responsibility from the Academic Board for institutional oversight of registration, progression and examination of research students, recommendations for the conferment of research degrees, and monitoring of compliance with the Research Degree Regulations. There are no specific additional procedures or regulations for MRes and professional doctorate programmes, but the Professional Doctorate Framework is set out in full in a recently reviewed and approved policy. MRes and professional doctorate programmes are regulated through the taught postgraduate regulations because they include taught elements. However, these regulations do not reference the research elements of the awards. The research degree regulations currently make no specific reference to the professional doctorate and MRes with regard to supervision, assessment and examination of research projects.

2.166 With the exception of MRes and professional doctorates that include a taught component, each MPhil/PhD programme is individually agreed. Hence, the approved application to register for a research degree also constitutes the definitive programme documentation.

2.167 The RDC delegates operational monitoring of research student oversight to the respective Faculty RDCs. Oversight of RDC is facilitated through an annual report of its activities to Academic Board. This includes a summary of the conclusions of the faculty annual monitoring processes for research students, which identify students making satisfactory or excellent progress as well as those giving cause for concern.

2.168 The University's Code of Practice for Research Students and Supervisors provides clarification on the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of research students and their supervisors, and is aligned with *Chapter B11*, and with the European Charter for Researchers and European Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers.

2.169 The University's Graduate School was established in 2013, and is now sited within Academic Registry. It coordinates research student and supervisor support and development, including the Researcher Development Programme, mapped onto the Vitae Researcher Development Framework. Following a review in 2012, a full-time Research Development Officer was appointed in April 2014 to develop and coordinate researcher

training and development, and this has contributed to a substantial increase in attendees at Graduate School training events since 2014-15.

2.170 Admissions criteria are defined by the University Research Degree regulations and included in recruitment literature about postgraduate research programmes. Procedures for admission are set out in the University's Admission Code of Practice. University RDC is responsible for final approval of supervision arrangements, confirmation of the research student's Director of Research Studies, and an additional one or two members of the supervisory team, and maintains oversight of supervision, in accordance with the Code of Practice for Research Students and Supervisors. Supervisors are generally not allowed to act as Director of Studies for more than six students simultaneously, and the supervisory team is usually expected to meet informally with their students weekly, and have formally recorded supervisions every one to two months.

2.171 Faculty RDCs formally monitor research student progress on an annual basis, through a joint report completed with their Director of Studies for the research student annual monitoring process. The aggregated outcomes of the research student annual monitoring process are reported in a faculty summary annual monitoring report for the Faculty Research Degree Committees, reporting to the Faculty Research and Scholarship Committees. Conventional cohort-wide annual monitoring reports are produced for MRes and professional doctorate programmes with taught elements. Research student completions have exceeded HEFCE projections since 2008, and reached a record number for the University in 2014-15.

2.172 Transfer of research students from MPhil to PhD requires a written report by the student together with a progress report from the supervisor, and is assessed by an independent assessor. The independent assessor's report and recommendation are submitted to the Graduate School for review and approval by the University RDC. Research students' final theses are subject to examination by at least two and not normally more than three examiners, of whom at least one is an external examiner. A second external examiner is required where the candidate is a member of permanent staff of the University.

2.173 Complaints and appeals procedures for research students are detailed in the code of practice for postgraduate research students and supervisors, and complaints are handled through the University's standard complaints procedures. The appeals process is set out in the Research Degree regulations. A Research Misconduct Policy is also in place whereby complaints against research students can be addressed.

2.174 The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with the Senior Management Team, research staff, and research students from the University and its partners. The review team read evidence provided by the University, which included strategic statements, committee minutes, policy documents, programme information and viewing online resources.

2.175 The review team found that all the processes set out in the University's research student policies and codes of practice are consistently operated and applied. Students stated that they were fully informed about research student regulations and processes when they registered, through faculty research student handbooks, induction events and information available to them online.

2.176 In addition to the student engagement mechanisms for research students identified in Expectation B5, students reported that the Graduate School's profile and impact has resulted in better recognition of their role and status in the University. The team found that, in addition to increasing research student numbers, uptake of all these activities has substantially increased, and that students' satisfaction with the facilities, services and activities provided has consistently improved year on year. This contributes to the good practice in Expectation B5 regarding the University's engagement with postgraduate

research students as partners, which enhances the quality of their learning opportunities and professional development (see Expectations B5 and Enhancement).

2.177 Overall, the University's research degrees are delivered in an environment that assures academic standards, encourages student engagement, and offers research students the diverse range of learning opportunities and training that they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.178 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.

2.179 Of the 11 Expectations in this area, all are met and all have a low associated level of risk. There are no recommendations or affirmations and there are seven features of good practice.

2.180 The curriculum enhancement internships and projects bring added benefits not only to the curriculum but also to both the programme cohort and the personal development of the students who undertake the internships and the staff who support them (Expectations B3 and B4). The University proactively invests in developing its teaching staff at both the University and its delivery organisations, including delivering the PGCertLTHE to one of its overseas collaborative partners (Expectation B3). In every aspect of the quality of its learning opportunities the University attempts to integrate employability in order to enable students better to develop their graduate potential (Expectation B4).

2.181 The mechanisms, including WebHub, that the University has in place to monitor and review its programmes are consistently and highly effectively applied in order to assure the quality of its awards (Expectation B8). The establishment and operation of Academic Oversight Panels strengthens the strategic and operational governance of larger partnerships (Expectation B10).

2.182 The University actively engages students in the quality assurance of its learning opportunities. The University obtains, monitors, shares and acts upon student feedback in order to improve student engagement and the learning experience particularly well (Expectation B5). The ways in which the University engages with its postgraduate students as partners in the quality assurance of their learning experience also makes a particularly positive contribution (Expectations B5 and B11).

2.183 The University has plans to enhance further the quality of its learning opportunities. Student management in this area is widespread and well supported. Managing the needs of students is a clear focus of the University's strategies and policies. Therefore, the review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the University is **commended**.

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 University is committed to ensuring that the information it provides for its stakeholders and the general public is accurate, accessible and fit for purpose. The University launched a major project during 2014-15, led by the Vice-Chancellor, to set up a completely new website that has created clear, audience-specific information relating to the learning opportunities at the University alongside improved information for research and business partners. A considerable proportion of the University's information is in the public domain, with due observation of legislation related to such areas as data protection and freedom of information. A 'public information' section has been designed, which links to, among other things, key strategic documents, regulations, financial and governance information. The University Framework for Quality and Standards, which outlines how academic standards and quality assurance and enhancement are managed, is also publicly available.

3.2 The Marketing and Corporate Communications team have overarching editorial control of institutional publications and review all materials to ensure that corporate information is up to date and accurate. The Recruitment Policy Panel has institutional oversight of the publication of both web and print information for recruitment and admissions. A policy management framework and records management policy ensuring institutional oversight have been approved for implementation in 2015-2016.

3.3 Clear guidance on entry requirements and admissions processes is published both in a variety of documents and online. This information is tailored to UK, EU and international students, with guidance on equivalent qualifications awarded in different countries and on English language requirements. Online course factfiles for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are updated annually, providing details on what prospective students can expect to study, future career prospects, professional accreditation, application, entry requirements, and fees and finance. Funding guides, which are also updated at least twice a year, are provided for undergraduate and postgraduate students.

3.4 Course information is managed jointly by Marketing and Corporate Communications and Student Recruitment and Admissions in consultation with academic and faculty marketing and admissions teams. Marketing and Corporate Communications reviews and collates all changes and has overall responsibility for ensuring the accuracy of course information. All course information is reviewed at key points throughout the year in line with the outcomes of APP and University Standing Panel, as part of key information set validation and prior to key recruitment events. Recruitment Policy Panel approves any changes to entry requirements.

3.5 Website and publicity material provided by collaborative partners about the University and its awards is approved by Marketing and Corporate Communications in relation to branding and any use of generic information. Programme information is checked by the Link Tutor. The Academic Partnerships Team and Link Tutors monitor partner information, including partner websites, to ensure that content remains accurate and current,

and reports this to CQSP. A standard clause is included in the contract with the partner relating to this aspect and it is part of the Link Tutor's role to monitor partner compliance with this legal requirement.

3.6 The team reviewed the website, the VLE, WebHub and various documentation including, but not limited to, policies and procedures, handbooks and programme specifications, external examiner reports and guidance for staff. The team met with University staff and students and collaborative partner staff and students. The University also provided a demonstration of the VLE.

3.7 The review team found that the public-facing information that the University produces is accessible, consistent and accurate. There is a clear governance structure providing strategic oversight of information, which staff whom the team met understand and engage with appropriately.

3.8 Academic teams review and update programme and module guides each year, making this information available to students via the VLE. A template is used for programme and module guides to ensure that key course-specific and institutional information is included across all programmes of study, irrespective of who delivers them. Programme leaders are responsible for approving module guides before they are published on the VLE, and School Directors are responsible for approving programme guides. Academic threshold information is published on the website, to facilitate student understanding of progression and attainment.

3.9 The University continuously improves and strengthens its use of information to support quality and standards management, which includes information on student numbers and demographics, applications, enrolment targets, module appraisal, NSS and DLHE results, module statistics, progression, retention, award classifications, and staff-student ratios.

3.10 The University takes deliberate steps to make programme quality assurance information accessible to current students, such as annual monitoring report action plans, external examiner reports, NSS and other metrics. Likewise, the detailed nature of module-level definitive documents across all provision makes standards clear to both staff and students through handbooks, the VLE and tutorial provision. This contributes to the good practice at Expectation A2.2.

3.11 Information concerning the new Academic Framework has been widely promoted to current staff and students, and is clearly articulated to prospective students, collaborative partners and other stakeholders.

3.12 Overall, the mechanisms for the production of information about learning opportunities are fully understood and effectively implemented. Governance provides effective oversight, and responsibility is taken at an award level, and within collaborative partners, to ensure accuracy. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.14 The Expectation in this area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations or affirmations. There is one contributory feature of good practice in that the detailed nature of module-level definitive documents makes academic standards clear to both staff and students. Student engagement in this area could be more widespread.

3.15 The review team concludes, therefore, that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the University **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 University has a strategic approach to enhancement, implemented at institutional, faculty, school and programme levels, with systematic arrangements for evaluating strengths and addressing potential risks to quality and standards at every level.

4.2 Institutional reference points for enhancement include the Strategic Plan, the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, and the Enhancement Strategy. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy sets out a range of approaches to achieving strategic enhancement targets, which have been prioritised in action plans at faculty, school and programme level since 2012-13. Progress in enhancement is overseen by the Strategic Management Team through monthly monitoring of key institutional business performance indicators and through Academic Board and its devolved committees, in particular QAEC, Education Committee, and the University Research, Scholarship and Knowledge Transfer Committee.

4.3 Continuous improvement processes are in place through annual monitoring reports, School Director summary reports from annual monitoring reports, school NSS improvement action plans, faculty student voice action plans, and school DLHE action plans.

4.4 Enhancement of the postgraduate research degree student experience is overseen by the Graduate School, the faculty RDCs and the University RDC, reporting to the University Research, Scholarship and Knowledge Transfer Committee, and has been facilitated by the appointment in April 2015 of the first Dean of the Graduate School.

4.5 The University endeavours to engage the student voice in the University's enhancement initiatives at all levels, from module and course feedback, through student representation on programme Boards of Studies to the Student Voice Committee, LiverpoolSU/LJMU Operating Panel and the Student Engagement Panel, as well as student representation on University committees at all levels, from programme committees to senior academic committees, the Strategic Management Team and the University's Governing Body.

4.6 The Learning and Teaching Development Panel provides a link in discussing enhancement initiatives among staff across the University, between top-down institutional strategy and planning, and bottom-up feedback and improvements. Examples of areas being addressed include online course reading lists, lecture capture and module appraisal systems, where developments can then be adopted through updates to formal University policies such as personal tutoring, personal development planning, online coursework submission and plagiarism checking, and technology-enhanced learning. Implementation of revised policies is then managed through faculty registrars and Associate Deans (Education).

4.7 The review team tested the systematic nature of enhancement at the University by examining evidence of the different strategies, initiatives and structures in place. This was followed up by meetings with both staff and students to clarify the extent to which these are allowing the effective propagation of strategies across all levels of the institution and dissemination of good practice.

4.8 The team found many examples of effective strategic institutional-level enhancement developments such as the Academic Framework Review 2014-15, the development of the Graduate School since 2013, and the establishment of the Teaching and Learning Academy. Other recent institution-wide enhancements include technology-enhanced learning initiatives, such as lecture recording and automated reading lists, the embedding of employability in the curriculum, review of personal tutoring and personal development planning, and review and enhancement of induction and the transition to University.

4.9 The Teaching and Learning Academy, established in 2014, provides a focus for cross-University collaboration and coordination of a number of recent enhancement initiatives, including Teaching Excellence Awards, the 3is programme for those new to teaching in higher education, the University's PGCertLTHE (including running this programme at a collaborative partner), HEA recognition and shortlisting of nominations for National Teaching Fellowships. Staff and students whom the team met spoke highly of these initiatives and provided examples of how they have particularly improved the learning and teaching at the University. The University's Teaching and Learning Conference and the Professional Services Conference provide mechanisms for sharing good practice. These initiatives and the conferences demonstrate how the University is proactively investing in developing its teaching staff and contributes to the good practice in Expectation B3. The Teaching and Learning Academy also manages curriculum enhancement internships and projects, and externally-funded teaching enhancement projects.

4.10 Through the Curriculum Enhancement Internship Project, 17 projects in 2014-15 received funding representing all faculties and one central service. The projects were undertaken by 26 students working alongside staff. The projects addressed a range of curriculum-related and student support themes and activities such as peer-mentoring, research informed teaching, digital literacy and development of outreach programmes. As a result of these projects, not only were curriculum-related resources created, but significant learning and development was gained by both staff and students. Many projects were presented at the Teaching and Learning Conference and their outcomes are now being disseminated beyond the original faculties. Following on from the projects, research is being conducted into the experiences of those involved. Therefore, this supports the good practice that the curriculum enhancement internships and projects bring added benefits beyond conventional programme development activity (see Expectations B3 and B4).

4.11 The University has also reviewed and enhanced its survey processes in several areas. For example, in 2014 the University engaged in the national HEA pilot of the UKES to determine its usefulness in contributing student feedback to programme enhancement; a total of 25 programmes and 285 students completed the survey. Recognising the wider utility and value of the survey in providing national comparators, in December 2014 Education Committee decided to replace the internal NSS-equivalent course-level University survey for first and second year students with UKES. Institutional results for UKES in 2015 were consequently more substantive, covering 1,988 student responses across 93 programmes. The results are now considered by the Student Engagement Panel, and faculty and institutional Education Committees, with the aim of incorporating UKES data into the programme annual monitoring cycle.

4.12 Another recent student feedback mechanism which has provided opportunities for enhancement has been the module evaluation pilot to evaluate how best to complete internal module appraisals at institutional level, where current paper-based and online module feedback tools were compared in several schools. The trial was evaluated and reported to the Learning and Teaching Development Group in terms of both student response rate and the quality and timeliness of module evaluation reports that resulted

and has led to a revised institution-wide module survey tool being recommended to Education Committee, and adopted for use from 2015-16.

4.13 Students whom the team met, at all levels and from both home and collaborative provision, were able to give multiple examples of how their feedback has been received and responded to, for example, 15-day turnaround for feedback, uploading lecturer slides to the VLE and improved teaching. In light of the University's approach to student feedback described in the above paragraphs, the review team finds that the comprehensive ways in which the University obtains, monitors, shares and acts upon student feedback in order to improve student engagement and the learning experience is **good practice** (see Expectation B5).

4.14 Postgraduate research students cited a number of significant enhancements to their student experience. These include faculty and University-based seminars and research weeks, an increased range of researcher training and development opportunities, networking events with other research students and staff, such as research cafes, PGR picnics, 'lunch and learn' events and journal clubs, and social events such as Christmas parties funded by the Graduate School. Effective consultative mechanisms are incorporated in the agendas of most networking events. Additionally, the Graduate School has been proactive in working with postgraduate research student representatives to appoint PRES student champions, who have enabled the University to achieve a high response rate to the PRES survey, and very positive outcome benchmarks against the sector. This contributes to the good practice found under Expectation B5, that the University's engagement with postgraduate research students as partners enhances the quality of their learning opportunities and professional development (see Expectations B5 and B11).

4.15 Monitoring of student performance and experience key performance indicators is now primarily managed and communicated through the University's centralised online dataset, WebHub. The team heard that this has been developed in-house since 2008, and now provides extensive analytical capabilities and monthly updated reports on the University's key performance indicators, alongside those of higher education sector comparators, which are regularly accessed by 1,400 staff across the University at all levels, from module leaders to the Senior Management Team. Content includes every type of data recorded on the University student records system, including average tariff points of students admitted, employability and degree class outcomes of graduates, yearly retention and completion rates, and weekly updated student engagement and feedback data; these are accessible at University, faculty, school, programme and module level. Reviews of individual performance indicators, such as NSS outcomes, are considered by Education Committee and Academic Board annually. The WebHub facility, which streamlines and systematises the identification of enhancement opportunities, is **good practice**.

4.16 The University takes a considered and structured approach to its enhancement strategy and systematically provides students, staff and partners with the opportunity to engage with its development and implementation. The outcomes and impact of enhancement initiatives are clearly identified and shared across the University. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation has been met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.18 The Expectation in this area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations or affirmations in this area. There are five features of good practice.

4.19 The University takes a strategic approach to the enhancement of learning opportunities. Quality assurance mechanisms are used to identify opportunities for enhancement. Enhancement activities are embedded within established policies and procedures and there is a systematic process for listening to, and responding to, the student voice to support opportunities for enhancement. There is an ethos that expects and encourages enhancement and there are mechanisms for the identification and dissemination of good practice.

4.20 In particular, the WebHub facility streamlines and systematises the identification of enhancement opportunities. The curriculum enhancement internships and projects bring added benefits beyond conventional programme development activity. The proactive investment in developing teaching staff not only in the University but also in its delivery organisations improves the quality of student learning opportunities.

4.21 Student engagement in the management of enhancement is widespread and supported. The comprehensive ways in which the University obtains, monitors, shares and acts upon student feedback improves student engagement and the learning experience. Furthermore, the University's engagement with postgraduate research students as partners enhances the quality of their learning opportunities and professional development.

4.22 The University has plans to develop further its enhancement mechanisms. Managing the needs of students is a clear focus of its strategies and policies. Therefore, the review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the University is **commended**.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The Strategic Plan puts 'employability, entrepreneurship and citizenship at the heart of the Student Experience' and The World of Work Careers Centre Strategy 2015-17 supports this by establishing specific objectives related to student employability and entrepreneurship. Links with local and regional businesses is a key focus of the University.

5.2 A key objective of the Strategic Plan is that all programmes, where possible, should be PSRB recognised. Two hundred and thirty-five programmes currently have associations with PSRBs, ensuring their relevance to industrial and occupational sectors and the labour market. Staff are supported by the University in their interactions with PSRBs and there are robust procedures for approving variants to programme regulations when required for PSRB accreditation. Programme curricula are influenced at design by PSRBs and employers (see Expectation B1).

5.3 Academic staff have access to training and support so that they can develop programmes that include content with an appropriate employability focus, for example work-based learning, placements, industry-focused projects and professional, managerial and transferable skills modules.

5.4 Central to the University's employability agenda is the award-winning World of Work programme. This is an established University-wide scheme, which embeds graduate skills development into the curriculum for all undergraduate students. The Bronze World of Work Skills Certificate is a compulsory element of all Level 4 programmes, while the Silver and Gold awards are voluntary. All students' World of Work achievements are acknowledged on the Higher Education Achievement Report. Skills Support Officers within each faculty support students with the completion of their World of Work programme, and graduate employers are actively engaged in assessing the awards by marking the students' reflective statements and via conducting the skills interviews.

5.5 Work-related learning opportunities are offered to every taught student. These can take the form of placements, internships, employer lecturers, industry projects, or field trips or visits. On average, 350 employers contribute in this way per year. The number of programmes offering placement learning years is increasing. The revised Placement Learning Code of Practice aims to introduce consistency of practice across the University (see Expectation B10). The new programme specification template aims to articulate work-related learning consistently across all programmes.

5.6 Students can access careers, employability and personal development guidance and support through a range of sources, with the MATRIX-accredited World of Work Careers Service playing a core role by providing one-to-one advice sessions, workshops, e-learning support and resources and a range information, such as careers guides, job profiles and employer videos. All programmes have employment advisers appointed and there is guidance for personal tutors on encouraging discussion of career development with students during their academic tutorials. Recently, each school has identified an Employability Champion to promote and enhance the employability agenda and promote careers-related services to students.

5.7 The University has invested in providing enterprise beyond the curriculum. The Centre for Entrepreneurship supports the creation of new ventures for students and recent graduates through one-to-one support for business plans, a grants scheme, start-up fund and via cocurricular events. The Entrepreneurship team has been involved in designing and delivering curricular interventions in most disciplines across the University and plays a key

role in the award-winning young enterprise module in the Liverpool Business School, which is an example of venture-based learning.

5.8 In 2013-14 the University introduced 85 four-week funded internships for unemployed graduates and Level 5 students. The Curriculum Enhancement Internship Scheme also provides opportunities for work experience within the University and the number of participants is increasing (see also Expectation B3). One of the University's cultural partnerships resulted in opportunities for 40 students at Sound City Music Festival.

5.9 For the last six years, a Student Advisory Panel has acted as a critical friend to the Careers Centre, and an Employer Advisory Group has informed career development and employability provision at the University since 2009. Alumni engagement is proactively encouraged, for example through sharing experiences, providing information and mentoring.

5.10 The use of employment data is central to the University, and data from the DLHE survey is routinely discussed through the governance system to SMT, Academic Board, Board of Governors, Education Committee and Social and Economic Engagement Committee. Data is also shared with all staff via WebHub, and consideration of DHLE data forms part of the School Directors' annual monitoring reports. The Board of Governors has recently implemented DHLE action plans for improvement for each of the three schools that had the lowest rate of graduates securing professional and managerial jobs.

5.11 The soundness of this approach to employability is shown by the graduating class of 2014's six-year high for the percentage of students securing managerial and professional employment and postgraduate study. The University's success in supporting entrepreneurial students and graduates is reflected in the annual Higher Education Business and Community Interaction survey. In 2013-14 surveys, the University was ranked in the top 10 UK higher education institutions and second out of north-west universities for spin-off activity.

5.12 In conclusion, the University takes a holistic and integrated approach to employability. There are employability and entrepreneurship activities and support at all levels of the University, within and outside of the curriculum. The University has invested in improving the opportunities and employability of its students, ensuring that the mechanisms in place are suitable, reviewed and enhanced appropriately. Staff show a high level of commitment to the University's strategy for employability and enterprise and the opportunities are well understood by students (see Expectation B4).

Glossary

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

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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