Higher Education Review of Brunel University London

March 2016

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Brunel University London. The review took place from 14 to 17 March 2016 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Patsy Campbell
- Professor Geoffrey Elliott
- Mr Robert Evans
- Mr Alex Pool (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Brunel University London 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 Brunel University London the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

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

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

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

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Brunel University London

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Brunel University London.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Brunel University London.

- The impact of the Recognised Programme Developers in supporting new programme development and achieving consistency of approach (Expectation B1).
- The wide range of opportunities and support for student transitions into study, and progression into the work environment (Expectations B4, B2).
- The extensive range of support and training provided for staff and students by the Brunel Educational Excellence Centre, which enhances learning opportunities (Expectations Enhancement, B3 and B11).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Brunel University London.

By September 2016:

- work with the students' union to monitor and review annually the processes for student representation to ensure the effective engagement of students as partners (Expectation B5)
- ensure that all departments and colleges consistently provide timely and developmental feedback to students on their assessments (Expectation B6).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The actions being taken to review the Student Charter, and progress its dissemination to staff and students, and embed the principles of the Student Partnership Strategy (Expectation B5).
- The work underway to develop a policy setting out postgraduate research students' role in supporting learning and teaching, the academic levels at which they teach, and the extent of their contribution (Expectation B11).

Theme: Student Employability

Brunel University London's mission is based on a history of engagement with industry, and the employability of its students has been at the core of its work since the formation of the University in 1966. Student employability is a core element of the Strategic Plan and the Education Strategy. The University seeks to deliver its employability strategy by a combination of institutional and college-led initiatives, embedded both across the curriculum and by way of a range of activities supplemental to the curriculum.

The University pioneered the use of sandwich courses: undergraduate degree programmes that include a yearlong work placement in industry. The University continues to place high value on working with employers in business, industry and the public sector for the benefit of students. The University seeks to combine teaching and research excellence with the practical and entrepreneurial approach pioneered by its namesake, Isambard Kingdom Brunel. There is a wide range of activities available to students, including internships and work experience, along with volunteering through links with local businesses, community groups and third-sector organisations.

The University's Professional Development Centre (PDC) supports the enhancement of the professional skills of all students and prepares them for their prospective careers. It does this through the provision of training in professional skills, including the Ready Programme, and through work placements. The University's Innovation Hub, launched in 2014, is a focal point for entrepreneurs and innovative ideas on campus, offering student workshops, mentoring, bespoke support and the possibility of funding to develop their business ideas. The PDC provides an integrated service to students, combining training, support and knowledge of the requirements and characteristics of employers. The Graduate School supports the particular needs of postgraduate students and early career researchers.

There is a wealth of varied and meaningful activity to support employability, developed through engagement with employers, which is appreciated by students. These activities have a positive impact on the development of the professional and work-related skills of students to ease their transition into the work environment.

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

About Brunel University London

Brunel University London (the University) was founded by Royal Charter in 1966. The University has evolved through mergers with other institutions, the most recent and significant of which was with the West London Institute of Higher Education in 1997. Until this time, the University's focus was on engineering, science, technology, social science, education and management. The merger with the West London Institute of Higher Education added expertise in new subject areas, such as performing arts, humanities, health, social work, sport sciences and business. Following this expansion the University has continued to offer a broad-based curriculum provision.

The University's mission, vision and strategic priorities include a commitment to excellence and quality, and an aspiration to improve significantly the educational and research activities it provides. The University's mission is 'to create knowledge and advance understanding, and equip versatile graduates with the confidence to apply what they have learnt for the benefit of society'. The University's vision is 'to be a world-class creative community that is inspired to work, think and learn together to meet the challenges of the future'.

Academic oversight is provided by Senate, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, which has delegated authority from Council for the regulation, governance and quality assurance of the academic work of the University. The Senate is supported in its work by a number of subcommittees, which develop and monitor policy and processes, and have institutional oversight in their areas of responsibility.

In August 2014 the University's academic provision was reorganised into three colleges following a far-reaching Transformational Change Programme: the College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences (CBASS); the College of Engineering, Design and Physical Sciences (CEDPS); and the College of Health and Life Sciences (CHLS). Each college is led by a dean, who has overall responsibility and is accountable to the University for the college's education and research provision. The deans are each supported by three vice-deans for education, international and research. The University has also established three interdisciplinary Research Institutes to consolidate critical mass in areas of research strength: the Institute of Energy Futures; the Institute of Environment, Health and Societies; and the Institute of Materials and Manufacturing.

In the 2015-16 academic year the University offered two foundation programmes, 117 undergraduate programmes, 135 postgraduate programmes and one taught doctoral programme. A number of programmes are subject to accreditation by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). In 2014-15 the student population included 9,720 undergraduate students, 2,670 postgraduate taught students, 1,008 postgraduate research students, 597 students in London Brunel International College (LBIC), and 60 students on jointly delivered provision with Ahlia University, Bahrain and Technische Academie Esslingen (TAE), Germany. The student population is 45 per cent female and 55 per cent male. The student body is supported by a staff complement of 1,473 full-time and 698 part-time staff.

The University has responded positively to the changing environment for the higher education sector. Under the leadership of the Vice-Chancellor appointed in October 2012, the University embarked on a Transformational Change Programme in 2013, designed to meet the challenges of the future and achieve the ambitions envisioned in the Strategic Plan. The new academic infrastructure, supported by professional and administrative services, has allowed the University to reshape and refocus the delivery of education and research, supporting its commitment to excellence and quality. The new academic structure organised around subject disciplines aims to promote collaborative activity in academic delivery and consistency in the student experience.

Significant investment in the estate and infrastructure has taken place since the last review, with £400 million spent over the past ten years. This investment has provided staff and students with a modern campus close to London with the benefit of extensive new facilities, including the new Eastern Gateway Building. Further investment of £150 million over the next five years is planned, including a learning and teaching centre, a health and sport centre, and an engineering complex.

The University has addressed all recommendations arising from the QAA Institutional Audit in 2009. The action plan was monitored regularly by the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), with progress reported to the Senate. All actions relating to recommendations have been addressed. The mid-cycle follow-up of the Institutional Audit in January 2013 confirmed that the University had made good progress in addressing the recommendations of the Institutional Audit. The review team confirmed that good progress had been made with actions following the previous review.

Explanation of the findings about Brunel University London

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.

Explanation of the findings about Brunel University London

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* 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's awards are aligned to the relevant level of the *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and with the *Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area* (FQ-EHEA). Academic credit is routinely used as the measure of study and assessment in accordance with the Higher Education Credit Framework for England. The programme approval process requires proposals to demonstrate that qualifications are set at the appropriate level within the FHEQ, that programme intended learning outcomes align with relevant qualification descriptors and that qualifications are only awarded when defined programme outcomes are met. All qualifications are positioned at the appropriate level (4, 5, 6, 7 and 8) of the FHEQ. These equate to levels 1, 2, 3, 5 and Doctorate within the University's academic framework. Individual programme specifications contain all relevant information about the qualification. The structures and processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.2 The University's oversight of quality and standards is provided by its academic governance arrangements, with overall responsibility residing with Senate. Senate has ultimate responsibility for quality and standards of the awards through sign-off of the programme approval process, and thereafter receiving summaries of reports of external examiners' and annual monitoring reports.

1.3   All programmes involving collaboration with partners are validated through the University's standard procedures and therefore comply with the requirements of this Expectation. This matter is further addressed under Expectation B10.

1.4   The review team scrutinised the process through studying a range of documents, including the Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy Framework, a selection of programme specifications and annual monitoring reports, and minutes of committee meetings. The Expectation was also tested in meetings with senior staff, teaching staff and students.

1.5   The requirements of the FHEQ and Quality Code are clearly set out in the University's academic frameworks as well as in the University's regulations and procedures. These reference points are used as part of programme approval, monitoring and review and ensure that awards of the University are set at the correct academic level and that programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptors.

1.6   The review team found that close attention is paid to the requirements of the FHEQ in the level of qualifications, and the mapping of learning outcomes to programme aims and module content. Clear understanding and familiarity with the requirements and processes were also demonstrated in meetings with staff. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.7   The University's Academic Framework is contained in the Senate Regulations. Senate Regulations apply to undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes. These define progression requirements and contain the criteria governing the recommendations for the grade of award made by the University.

1.8   The review team evaluated the evidence through studying a range of documents, including the relevant Senate Regulations, grade descriptors for awards and the Exemptions Policy. The Expectation was also tested in meetings with senior staff, teaching staff and students.

1.9   The Academic Framework enables colleges and departments to implement consistently and effectively processes for programme approval, annual monitoring, periodic curriculum review, engagement with PSRBs, and external peer review. The University has a range of committees reporting to Senate at institutional level, which provide oversight of academic standards.

1.10   Senate Regulations are underpinned by a 17-point grading scale for taught programmes and generic grade descriptors for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. These criteria are aligned to the FHEQ and approved by Senate. The revision of the regulations for taught postgraduate programmes in 2013 has enabled them to be brought into line with those for taught undergraduate study, and incorporate a similar award classification mechanism based on grade point averages and grade volumes. Senate Regulations provide a similar framework and regulatory requirements for the postgraduate research degrees. Senate Regulations also govern the recognition of prior learning (RPL) for specific exemptions. The latter are accessible on the University's website and can be seen by prospective students.

1.11   There are detailed requirements on the limits on re-assessment and the associated capping of marks for modular/assessment blocks. Core assessments, specified as such in the relevant programme specification, must also be passed at prescribed grades for students to be eligible to progress to the next level of the programme, and to be eligible for the final award.

1.12   The review team found that the University maintains transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations, and that these are understood by all relevant stakeholders. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.13   Programme specifications are intended as the definitive record of each programme and qualification offered by the University. They are available externally on the University's website, and internally on the intranet in the Programme Document Repository. Programme specifications are made available to prospective students through the course information web pages and through the Programme Specifications Portal. Senate Regulations require that specifications must be provided to each student on enrolment and students must then be notified of any subsequent changes. These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.14   The review team scrutinised the process through studying a range of documents including a selection of programme specifications and annual monitoring reports. The Expectation was also tested in meetings with senior staff, teaching staff and students to discuss the approach to maintaining and using definitive programme records.

1.15   Programme specifications are prepared by the programme team during the approval process and thereafter oversight is maintained by the Quality and Standards Office. Links to programme specifications are provided from student handbooks. Specifications are routinely reviewed each year through the annual monitoring process, and programme leaders are required to confirm that they remain valid and current. Amendments to specifications require formal approval through the programme approval process, normally by way of a minor modification. The Programme Document Repository also contains previous versions which are available as records of study to past students and staff.

1.16   The review team found that there is a robust and well-developed process to ensure that programme specifications are compiled in accordance with the relevant guidelines, and that they contain all relevant information on curriculum structure and module credits, programme outcomes, learning and assessment strategies and module elective choices. Meetings with staff and students confirmed that programme specifications are understood by a range of stakeholders and are readily accessible. Definitive records of each programme are available through programme specifications, which are accessible on the University's website.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.1): 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

1.18   In response to recommendations made following the Institutional Audit in December 2009, the University has scrutinised and revised all of its policies and processes for programme approval and review. This scrutiny has informed the development of new programmes and the modifications to programmes which form part of an award or qualification. All proposals for new programmes must now be approved by Senate before implementation, to ensure alignment with external quality and standard reference points. This also applies to major modifications to existing programmes.

1.19   The University adopted a new Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy Framework in 2014. This policy articulates University processes relating to design, development and approval of all taught programmes and doctoral programmes that involve taught elements. The policy takes a risk-based approach and sets levels of scrutiny for each proposal. The framework is itself reviewed annually by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), and revised as required. The University uses the relevant Collaborative Operations Manual and Code of Practice where a new programme involves affiliated college provision.

1.20   The Framework document describes the two stages of programme approval, and sets out requirements for the composition of panels at each stage. These requirements include staff and students, and at the final stage, at least two academics from another institution are proposed by the college, forwarded with other members of the panel to the Quality Assurance Committee and appointed by the Chair of the Quality Assurance Committee. The design of the upgraded processes for approval and the annual and periodic monitoring review processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.21   The team read documentation provided by the University relating to programme approval, including Senate Regulations, minutes of committees relating to the approval process procedural papers, and programme specifications, external examiners' reports, and a range of annual monitoring and review reports. At the review the team held meetings with senior staff and teaching staff to ascertain how well the new approval process is working.

1.22   Documentation of the approvals process is clear and comprehensive. There is a thorough and robust set of processes which ensure that academic standards embodied in programme structures meet UK threshold standards, align with external and professional reference points including the FHEQ, PSRBs and Subject Benchmark Statements, and meet the University's own academic regulations. Extensive engagement with external advisers and expert subject specialist advice ensures that the programme's intended learning outcomes are scrutinised, and that the proposed learning, teaching and assessment methods will promote student achievement.

1.23   The University normally reviews all programmes every five years through the periodic academic programme review (APR) process. Senate oversees the process of this periodic review, approving the schedule, receiving reports and considering action plans. Monitoring and review of alignment with professional and UK threshold academic standards, in addition to the University's own standards, is undertaken through APR. A robust and

well-tried process for programme closure, scrutinised and operated by the Strategic Approval Scrutiny Panel (SASP) and signed off by Senate, is in place.

1.24 The new Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy Framework has significantly reduced the attrition rate of newly developed programmes. The Framework has provided an effective structural response, particularly in its innovative use of Recognised Programme Developers (RPDs). Its encouragement of synoptic methods of assessment has allowed a more holistic examination of the curriculum. Proposals for new programmes arise through University departments, colleges or central committees but must be scrutinised by the Strategic Approval Scrutiny Panel and agreed by the Education Strategy Committee before progression. To support staff in the design and approval of innovative and sustainable programmes, the University's new role of RPDs has assisted in achieving consistency of approach. This matter is considered as good practice under Expectation B1.

1.25 The two-stage programme approval process ensures that students, staff, relevant externals, employers and specialists contribute a wide range of ideas during the first design stage and that the reflective nature of the exercise permits the level of risk involved in each proposal to be fully identified and evaluated. The first stage enables academically robust proposals to successfully emerge. Stage two includes a full design review panel with external specialist expertise and senior staff and students. At this stage all aspects of the proposal, including aims, curriculum, learning outcomes, learning, teaching and assessment process, level requirements, and structural coherence, are defined.

1.26 Senate has oversight of the process and gives final approval to every proposed programme after the panel reports to the relevant College Education Committee (CEC). This process is also used for collaborative programmes. All roles for those involved are clearly defined and training for staff and students ensures that they are understood. The two-stage process works effectively.

1.27 The review team found that the current process for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees is appropriate and robust, and operates consistently across the University to ensure academic standards are in accordance with internal and external frameworks. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.28   The University has detailed requirements in relation to assessment of students on taught programmes published online in Senate Regulations. The University recognises the importance of defining and assessing learning outcomes in its programmes of study. These are confirmed as part of the programme approval process, and are tested for alignment against relevant qualification descriptors of the FHEQ and other external threshold standards, and published in Programme Specifications. The levels and volume of credit associated with an award are also further defined in published Senate regulations.

1.29   Senate regulations make clear the standards that students are expected to achieve. External examiners' reports confirm that the threshold standards are appropriate for each award and in accordance with the FHEQ and relevant PSRB requirements. The role of the Vice-Chancellor's representatives within the examination board process ensures consistency between colleges. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.30   The review team tested the effectiveness of the University's processes by scrutinising a wide range of documentary evidence, including the academic regulations and the process of annual programme monitoring. The team reviewed external examiners' reports and minutes of examination boards. The team met a range of academic and professional support staff at college level and within central University departments. The team held meetings with staff and students to gain feedback on the award of credit and the operation of assessment processes.

1.31   There is evidence of a clear understanding among staff of the importance and use of learning outcomes in programme design and assessment setting. Appropriate external scrutiny is in place in defining standards and is understood by staff and defined in published Senate regulations for the setting and assessment of standards.

1.32   There is sound evidence of the effective use of external benchmark standards in programme design, the definition of learning outcomes in programme specifications, and in the assessment of students. The regulations and involvement of the Vice-Chancellor's representatives on examination boards ensure the consistency of use and application of threshold standards, which are effective and understood by staff.

1.33   The review team found that the University has established a robust set of processes that are monitored by an effective committee structure. The University ensures that learning outcomes at programme and module level are appropriately tested through assessment practice, and that credit and qualifications are only awarded where the achievement of learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment. External examiners are fully engaged in this process and confirm that academic standards are being met.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.35   The University reviews all its programme on an annual and periodic basis. External examiners have a key role in ensuring that threshold academic standards are achieved and maintained. The University specifically requires examiners to report on the quality and standards of the provision, including the account taken of the Quality Code, alignment with FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements, and on the comparability of student achievement. Academic standards are monitored through annual monitoring, and every five years through Academic Programme Review (APR). These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.36   The review team examined documentation about the University's quality assurance policies and procedures, especially those relating to the approval, monitoring and review processes employed, including summaries of external examiners' reports, approval review and monitoring documentation and data analysis. It tested its findings through meetings with staff and students.

1.37   All departments take part in the annual monitoring, which reviews all programmes at department level. Departments consider external examiners' reports together with a wide range of other material including standardised data sets, student feedback submissions and module reports. Reports are scrutinised at CECs and subsequently at Senate, with recommendations for action where appropriate. Actions taken are reported through the committee structure. External examiners' reports and responses are stored on the external examiners' repository on the University intranet.

1.38   The roles of staff engaged in the maintenance and monitoring of standards and lines of communication are clearly defined. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality Assurance and Enhancement) has oversight of actions and responsibility for ensuring that recommendations are addressed. CECs consider, review and maintain the academic standards of awards and make recommendations to Senate. A summary of external examiners' reports and actions taken is presented annually to Senate.

1.39   Academic Programme Review (APR) normally occurs every five years and thoroughly examines the educational provision of each college through self-evaluation and peer discussion. Panels consist of students, internal staff and at least two external members who are subject specialists approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality Assurance and Enhancement). Panels consider qualitative and quantitative data and determine whether academic standards are being maintained and enhanced. Reports, recommendations and action plans are forwarded to Senate for approval. Action plans are monitored through the annual monitoring process, and reported to Senate by the CEC through their annual monitoring reports.

1.40   The processes for monitoring and review of standards are flexible, robust and fit for purpose. The roles of all those participating in the monitoring and maintenance of standards are clearly defined. External examiners confirm annually that learning outcomes and standards align with the programme specification. Monitoring and review processes are used

systematically and consistently to ensure that academic currency is maintained and that programmes continue to meet the threshold standards. Data is used effectively in this process. Training for periodic and annual monitoring for students and staff is becoming embedded throughout the University.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.42   The University recognises that external and independent expertise plays a key role in quality assurance processes, programme design and approval, periodic review, and the assessment of students. The University engages separate external and independent expertise in the design and approval of programmes of study. The role and use of externality in various settings is clearly evident in the published Senate regulations. Programme design panels and periodic review panels normally include two academics or professional representatives from outside the University and their role and use are defined in various policies and Senate regulations.

1.43   Externality is evident in programme design and approval, with external examiners appointed to oversee the maintenance of academic standards. Senate regulations define the appointment and role of external examiners in the moderation of assessments. Examination board processes and procedures explicitly require examiners to comment on standards, programme content, delivery and the student experience. Examiners receive information and training, and those who cannot attend are sent the relevant material. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.44   The review team considered a range of documentation relating to the programme approval monitoring and review processes. They evaluated the use of external expertise in programme design and the assurance and maintenance of academic standards through scrutiny of external examiners' reports, including the annual overview to Senate. The team examined records of meetings with employers and other stakeholders to assess the level of external engagement in programme design, delivery and review. The team considered evidence of the use of external expertise in forums and committees, including Boards of Studies, College Education Committees (CECs), the Quality Assurance Committee and Senate. The review team met staff involved in programme development, including senior managers, professional services and academic staff.

1.45   There is robust evidence of the University making effective use of the external examiner system to demonstrate independent external scrutiny of the achievement and maintenance of academic standards. External examiners' reports confirmed that standards were being met at the appropriate level of qualification. There is evidence of the effective use of external examiners' reports for discussion in boards of study, and other forums and committees, to inform learning and teaching practice. Documentation, regulations and processes ensure that the University effectively responds to external examiners' comments through its annual monitoring process. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality Assurance and Enhancement) monitors all examiners' reports and approves responses and actions. An annual report is presented to Senate on the external examining process, summarising comments, issues and actions. This provides institutional oversight of the effectiveness of the external examiner system.

1.46   Representatives of partner organisations and PSRBs are regularly involved in the process of programme development, review and approval. The University engages effectively with a wide range of organisations to gather intelligence about emerging workforce needs. This involves a wide cross-section of University staff.

1.47   The review team found that the University has embedded rigorous processes to ensure that external and independent expertise plays a significant role in the management and assurance of academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards: Summary of findings

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

1.49   All of the Expectations for this judgement are met and the associated levels of risk for each are low.

1.50   The review team concludes that the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards at the University **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 The University has in place a distinctive portfolio of programmes which mirror its strategic plan to develop and enhance excellence in education by including an element of research-based learning in all programmes. Senate considers and approves the introduction of new programmes of study leading to an award and delegates the responsibility for maintaining strategic oversight of processes of programme design development and approval to the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). This ensures these operate systematically and consistently across the three colleges.

2.2 The University has in place clearly defined processes, roles and responsibilities for programme design, development and approval set out in the Programme Design Development and Approval Policy Framework. The framework sets out a typology of initiatives and defines responsibility for scrutiny and approval based on risk, on behalf of the Education Strategy Committee (ESC). Modification must be approved by the ESC or College Management Board. External input to the approval process is required. The new two-stage programme approval process is described by the University. The new process has introduced flexibility into future programme design, especially in the areas of assessment, and is intended to encourage initiatives and enhance the provision. These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3 The team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of the documentation of the programme design, development and approval process, including the relevant University regulations and the Programme Design Development and Approval Policy Framework. During the review visit the team explored the level of information, understanding and training of participants in the approval process related to relevant external reference points and academic standards, and held meetings with staff and students.

2.4 Following strategic approval by the ESC, the full Design Review Panel ensures that all appropriate prerequisites are in place, including aims, learning outcomes, and learning and teaching strategies. Content is aligned to the FHEQ and subject benchmarks. Academic standards at each level are coherently defined. Programme approval reports go first to the College Education Committee and then to Senate for full approval.

2.5 The University has introduced the role of a Recognised Programme Developer (RPD) to assist the programme development teams and Design Review Panels. At present 23 academic staff have been given full training in programme design and development methods. Their role is to train other staff in programme development and approval processes and encourage them to explore and develop appropriate programmes with research-led, innovative structures, while ensuring that all areas of quality and standards are protected. RPDs discuss their experience at an annual forum and disseminate good practice to colleagues during subsequent training sessions. The sharing of expertise provides significant enhancement to the University's provision. The impact of the RPDs in supporting

new programme development and achieving consistency of approach is **good practice**. This matter is also addressed under Expectation A3.1.

2.6   The University has not, until recently, formally engaged students in programme design or approval. Under the Programme Design Development and Approval Policy Framework, students are formally involved at each stage of the process, including participation in the full Programme Design Review Panel.

2.7   Programmes offered by the University are underpinned by a large research element which impacts in a beneficial and innovative way, enabling the development of a distinctive portfolio of programmes based on a rich research resource. The academic direction of the proposed programmes is checked against the Education Strategy.

2.8   Senate has ultimate responsibility for considering and approving all new proposals for programmes, although the oversight and responsibility for developmental stages of programme approval are delegated to the Quality and Standards Office (QSO), and the QAC retains oversight and maintains consistency of approval processes.

2.9   At all stages programme elements are all aligned with quality and standards reference points and codes of practice. Intended learning outcomes are ensured by the design panel at the second stage of approval, and the management of the whole process is the responsibility of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality Assurance and Enhancement).

2.10   Initiatives have already arisen from the new reflective two-stage approval programme process. In particular the block system of teaching and assessment has been embraced by the College of Health and Life Sciences, allowing generic issues applying to all subject-based modules to be examined by synoptic assessment. Students are intended to be fully involved in the development of these programmes.

2.11   The new rigorous risk-based two-stage process of programme development allows all foreseeable issues to be addressed prior to approval. The University anticipates that this system will reduce the high proportion of closures of new programmes which it experienced in the past. Robust processes for programme closure remain in place, culminating in a decision by Senate.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.13   The University's overarching approach to admissions is detailed in its Education Strategy supported by the Equality and Diversity Strategy. These Strategies underpin the University's commitment to widening participation. Alongside this, the University has a clearly articulated Admissions Policy which is available online and is approved by Senate. The Recruitment and Admissions Committee maintains the strategic oversight, and reports to the Education Strategy Committee. Senate has ultimate responsibility for approving entrance requirements. These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.14   The review team scrutinised the admissions process through consideration of documents, including the Admissions Policy, prospectuses and information on the University's website. The effectiveness of the University's approach was also tested in meetings with academic, professional and support staff and with students.

2.15   Admissions for undergraduate and postgraduate taught degrees are administered centrally through the admissions office. Alongside the admissions officers, admissions tutors are appointed for each department or division by the head of department. Their role is to help with any admissions decision which requires an element of academic judgement. These tutors and officers receive training to help ensure consistent and fair practices. Prospective students are well supported prior to application and following enrolment through induction processes. This is noted as good practice under Expectation B4.

2.16   The entry requirements for each programme are on the University's website, which provides clear and easily accessible information on the application process, open days, accommodation and fees. Detailed information is available on the website on the recruitment and admissions process. This includes information on how applicants can submit a complaint or appeal an admissions decision. The policy and procedures related to the accreditation of prior learning are detailed in the University's academic regulations.

2.17   Admission onto research degrees is covered by Senate Regulations and the University's Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees. Research supervisors are given training prior to selecting research students. The Admissions Policy outlines how any complaints and appeals can be made in regard to the admissions and recruitment process, and this is available on the University's website. This process is reviewed annually by the Head of Admissions. The admissions process itself is also reviewed annually, with the Recruitment and Admissions Committee maintaining oversight.

2.18   Overall, the review team found that there are well-developed processes to ensure fair and consistent admissions practices across the University. Through meetings with staff and students, it was clear that the admissions process is well understood and articulated.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.20   The delivery of learning opportunities at the University is described in policies and procedures, mapped to the Quality Code. These are published in the Education Strategy 2015-17 which highlights four themes which inform the delivery of its learning and teaching. The Education Strategy is accompanied by a delivery plan which sets out a series of key actions aligned to specific performance measures. The Education Strategy is accompanied by a Equality and Diversity Strategy to ensure equity of student opportunity. The University stresses the value of work placements and employability in the strategy, and a number of extracurricular activities and placement opportunities to engage with employers are available to students. These regulations, processes, practices and approaches would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.21   The review team tested the effectiveness of the University's learning and teaching strategy by meeting with senior staff, teaching and support staff and undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students. The team scrutinised a range of materials, including minutes of meetings including the Educational Enhancement Committee, appraisal procedures and information on learning opportunities provided for students, and evaluated the use of data to inform learning and teaching practice and staff development to enhance learning and teaching and share good practice.

2.22   The Education Strategy is delivered through a planning process that requires the three colleges to produce a five-year plan setting out actions in relation to academic objectives. The achievement of learning outcomes is supported by study and assessment blocks to enable more innovative programme design and for students to be assessed in a more flexible manner. The University has recently reviewed its approach to learning and teaching, resulting in an Inclusive Learning Teaching and Guidance policy published in October 2015.

2.23   The majority of staff at the University are research active with 86 per cent of staff submitted to the Research Excellence Framework in 2014. The University has recently conducted a review and evaluation of the impact of staff research on teaching and this is specifically addressed in annual monitoring. The University provides a range of opportunities for staff to develop their teaching approach, receive HEA accreditation, and disseminate good practice, facilitated by the Brunel Education Excellence Centre (BEEC). BEEC was established in 2014 to facilitate innovation and excellence in learning and teaching, and is supported by a formal personal development appraisal system.

2.24   Senate has overall oversight of learning and teaching opportunities, as set out in its regulations. Senate delegates responsibility to a number of subcommittees, including the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and Education Enhancement Committee (EEC), which look at all aspects of learning and teaching across the University. University oversight is supplemented by College Education Committees and boards of study that reflect on learning and teaching practice. The University has invested in facilities which support students and improve the learning environment, including new buildings for teaching and learning, and refurbishment of laboratories and the library, with significant planned future investment.

Students have access to a range of information and support to enable them to engage in learning at enrolment and during the programme of study. Information includes programme specifications and course handbooks, module information on the VLE, and a personal tutor.

2.25   The University takes effective measures to enhance the provision of learning opportunities for students through its committee structures, regulations, procedures and guidelines for supporting learning and teaching. Examples provided included the operation of teaching blocks and a synoptic approach to learning and assessment in the biosciences. The use of BEEC is effective in supporting the development of staff to improve their learning and teaching methods. There is evidence of effective oversight of learning and teaching through committee structures at University and college levels with data used to inform changes and improvements. Students are effectively supported by a University-wide tutoring system and a comprehensive approach to supporting work placements.

2.26   Staff have many opportunities to refresh their teaching practice through BEEC, which is used strategically as a forum to develop staff and provides various opportunities to identify and share good practice. These activities are supplemented by symposiums led by BEEC and also an HEA-accredited APEX programme of workshops and seminars. The role of BEEC is addressed as good practice under the Enhancement Expectation. The University effectively uses data and information which includes student feedback. Standardised data sets are supplemented with external surveys, such as the NSS, PTES and PRES, to provide risk alerts on subject areas, which are then reviewed through annual monitoring.

2.27   The University has in place robust procedures to review the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices to enable and support students to develop as independent learners and study their chosen subject. The University works with a range of its staff and students in implementing these procedures, often with active involvement from employers.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.29   The University has a range of policies, procedures codified in Senate Regulations, and various governance committees. These strategically support students' development of their academic, personal and professional potential. Operational plans include an updated Education Plan, the guiding principles of the Strategic Plan, a resource framework, along with a series of quality assurance, equality and diversity, and student welfare committees. The University raises awareness of the opportunities available to students in various forums, including at induction and enrolment, student handbooks, through student services and personal tutoring support. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.30   The review team tested the effectiveness of the University's procedures by scrutiny of the evidence provided, including committee minutes and reports, information provided through the VLE and the University website. The team met a range of students and teaching and support staff with responsibility for supporting student development and achievement.

2.31   The University monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of its provision for student development and achievement through the annual monitoring process. Data and feedback from students and external examiners are considered at programme level and at periodic review which inform action plans. Students are provided with guidance and support by colleges and student services, and information is published on the VLE. The University uses feedback from stakeholders and extensive data sets to inform annual monitoring and periodic review, and to enhance the provision of resources for students.

2.32   The University seeks to support students during their three major transition stages, from application and enrolment, between levels of study, and into employment. Student transitions are well supported prior to entry to the University. These support activities include pre-application days, Business Boot Camp, Brunel Headstart, and induction activity within colleges at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, including research degree student induction programmes. Evidence of support for students making a transition between levels of study is variable, and differs between colleges. Equality of opportunity and widening participation is a key commitment of the University, evidenced by the appointment of a Pro Vice-Chancellor (Equality and Diversity) and associate deans in each college. The University recently launched a new personal tutoring system following work carried out by the Education Enhancement Committee. This resulted in Tutoring@Brunel to support students throughout their time at the University. The University provides highly effective support for placement students and provides a number of forums, such as the Brunel Festival, Made in Brunel and STEM engineering showcases, and student ambassador programme, for students to showcase their work before transition into the work environment. The wide range of opportunities and support for student transitions into study, and progression into the work environment, is **good practice**.

2.33   Students are provided with effective guidance and support for improving employability skills. A range of internal and external activities related to employment, along with extensive work experience opportunities, provide a well-structured approach to developing students' employability skills. The University encourages students to reflect on their career aspirations.

2.34   The BEEC provides an extensive range of academic training for staff to better support students in their studies. These activities include providing an academic skills service for students and extensive training for new and existing staff to become more effective lecturers and tutors.

2.35   The University's student support arrangements are appropriately designed to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.36 The University outlines its approach to working with students as partners in its Strategic Plan and Education Strategy. There is an effective working relationship between the University and the Students' Union with which the Student Charter was developed.

2.37 Student representatives are elected through the students' union. The representational structure has recently been revised, with significant funding from the University to reflect changes implemented during the Transformational Change Programme. Students sit on a number of University-wide committees, including the Quality Assurance Committee, Education Enhancement Committee, Student Equality and Diversity Committee, Postgraduate Research Degrees Committee, and Staff-Student Liaison Committees. At college level students are also members of Departmental Academic Committees, College Education Committees and Boards of Study. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.38 To assess the steps taken by the University to engage students individually and collectively, the review team met senior staff, faculty staff and undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students. The review team analysed a wide range of evidence which included committee minutes, report papers, policy documents and strategies and action plans.

2.39 Student representatives receive training provided jointly by the students' union and the University in partnership. Senior managers from the University meet weekly with elected officers of the students' union. Students are also involved in the programme review process, for which they receive training. Students at the affiliate college, London Brunel International College (LBIC), follow a similar representational structure and training, with the elected student representatives attending their student forum.

2.40 Following the good practice identified in the department of computer science, the University has adopted the concept that all Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs) should be co-chaired by a student representative and a member of academic staff. Postgraduate research students have a separate SSLC.

2.41 To enable informed conversations, student representatives are given full access to the results of the National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and external examiners' reports. The NSS results are carefully considered and after discussion with students, they inform actions and improvements by the University. The University uses the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) as a means to recognise the contribution made by student representatives on their formal degree transcripts.

2.42 Discussions with staff and students show that the Student Charter is not well known or effectively communicated to students or staff. This problem is acknowledged by both the University and students' union, and work is being done to find more effective ways of engaging the wider student body. A number of initiatives have been introduced. The Student Engagement Start and Finish Group has been established to explore barriers to student engagement and find more effective ways of addressing this challenge. The University and students' union are also looking at how to ensure that formal mechanisms are consistently

successful across all three colleges, and to progress the Student Partnership Strategy as a means of radically strengthening the student representative structure. The review team **affirms** the actions being taken to review the Student Charter, progress its dissemination to staff and students, and embed the principles of the Student Partnership Strategy.

2.43   Many student representative positions remain unfilled despite considerable efforts by the students' union and the University. Meetings with students showed that some student representatives do not feel they are treated as equal partners on committees. Examples were given of a range of committee meetings where there was an unwillingness from some staff to engage fully with students on a number of issues they raised. Other students found it difficult to raise concerns within the formal meeting structures. The review team acknowledges that the students' union recently reviewed the representation system based on the changes proposed in the Transformational Change Programme. However, the team considers that a more systematic monitoring and review of the student representation system is required to ensure that students are effectively engaged as partners. The review team **recommends** that, by September 2016, the University work with the students' union to monitor and review annually the processes for student representation to ensure the effective engagement of students as partners.

2.44   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.45   A framework of policies, regulations and processes allows the University to operate all aspects of student assessment. Regulations are published and widely available on the University website. Student access to these regulations and associated policies is also available through student handbooks. Overall responsibility for the maintenance of the assessment of awards rests with Senate. Oversight, monitoring and enhancement of related policies, conduct of assessment processes, and feedback to students lies with the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). The University has recently put in place a policy for the recognition of prior learning expressed within its University Exemptions Policy. Regulations for all awards and qualifications for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes are adhered to rigorously, and any deviations require approval by Senate. These structures, processes and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.46   The review team considered a range of documentation relating to assessment policies and operational guidance, including the Senate Regulations, academic regulations, published guidance and programme handbooks. The team reviewed the online learning resources and examined minutes of examination boards and external examiners' reports. The team met a wide range of academic and professional services staff based at college level and within central University departments. The team met with a range of undergraduate and postgraduate students to explore the effectiveness of the assessment process.

2.47   The University has revised and updated all of its assessment policies, regulations and processes, including those for the recognition of prior learning. These changes ensure that the academic standards for each award of credit or a qualification are rigorously set, monitored and maintained, and that assessment instructions and information are explicit, transparent and accessible to all intended audiences.

2.48   Annual training is provided by the quality and standards office for staff and for chairs of examination boards, and these systems operate consistently. Staff report that they find the training they receive to be thorough, comprehensive and appropriate and helpful in supporting their role as assessors. New members of staff have an experienced mentor. Assessment literacy is developed through informed conversations throughout the double marking and moderation processes and through discussion at panels of examiners. Annual training sessions for staff on assessment are provided by the quality and standards office, and the Vice-Chancellor's representatives attend all boards of examiners where awards are recommended to ensure consistency across the University. The University has secure arrangements for the examination process and the University Quality and Standards Office provides training and guidance to all staff involved in conducting and marking assessments. External examiners confirm the consistent operation of the process.

2.49   The University has in place a complete set of detailed and explicit regulations governing all aspects of the conduct of assessment and examination boards. Membership, procedures, powers and accountability of examination panels and boards are defined in Senate Regulations. Boards operate to a set agenda with standard paperwork which ensures consistency between colleges. Newly standardised mitigating circumstances

regulations, guidance and templates are now in place which ensure consistency of approach. Clear and detailed regulations for progression, transfer, the award of credit and qualifications, and for establishing and recording marks are in place. Results are held centrally and reviewed annually by Senate. Those who might be eligible for the recognition of prior learning are made aware of the opportunities available on the University website, and prospective students are supported throughout the process of application and assessment for recognition.

2.50   Assessment is designed for each programme during the approval process with the aim of demonstrating that learning outcomes have been achieved. The volume, timing and nature of assessment are defined in programme specifications. The University recognises the need to explore a greater range of methods, to provide wider opportunities to demonstrate achievement. Recognised Programme Developers (RPDs) play a key role at the design stage of a new programme to ensure that assessment tasks, methods and timing are appropriate. This matter is noted as good practice under Expectation B1. Assessment methods are considered annually through external examiners' reports and annual monitoring. Academic Programme Reviews (APRs) confirm the continuing validity of each programme's assessment strategy.

2.51   The University's Five Core Principles in Providing and Receiving Assessment Feedback include an ideal return of coursework assignments within 15 working days. Feedback on student work is not always timely, constructive or developmental. Some students stated that they found it difficult to engage with staff in meaningful dialogue, and few get developmental feedback on examination performance. The new processes of assessment instituted by the University generally work well and online assessment is being developed. Assignment feedback discussions between staff and students, both one-to-one and in groups, as well as peer feedback interaction between students are being trialled.

2.52   In some areas of the University clear submission deadlines for assignments are given to students. However, the University has no policy on required timescales for providing students with feedback on their work, but provides guidelines to staff and students for this. There is a variable approach to assessment feedback within the colleges which results in a differing experience for students across the University. In some areas feedback is rapid and developmental and allows students to use this to inform their future work. However, some students cited examples of where the late return of assessment feedback, sometimes with generic commentaries or poor written evaluation, gave them little opportunity to use this developmentally. The review team **recommends** that, by September 2016, the University ensures that all departments and colleges consistently provide timely and developmental feedback to students on their assignments.

2.53   Students are given careful instruction about good academic practice in their handbooks and in class. The University has taken deliberate steps to ensure that students understand the basis on which academic judgements are made. Recent innovations include online and face-to-face staff/student and peer discussions on grades. The library services team provides advice and training in study skills, and the University issues explanations about grading tables, referencing and citation through the web and handbooks. Information about plagiarism is explained fully to students and specialist software is used as a checking tool.

2.54   The University has established a robust regulatory framework and a well-defined set of deliberative and administrative processes to ensure there are valid and reliable processes for assessment. There is, however, inconsistent practice in providing assessment feedback, which has the potential to impact on student achievement. Further work needs to be undertaken to ensure that all departments and colleges consistently provide timely and

developmental feedback to students on their assignments. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.55 The University's policy and procedures for the use of external examiners are described in Senate Regulations and play a key role in the quality assurance processes. Institutional oversight at senior management level is the responsibility of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality Assurance and Enhancement). External examiner oversight of the affiliate college LBIC is provided by University staff and clearly defined in the Collaborations Operations Manual. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.56 The review team tested and evaluated the application of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners by scrutinising a range of external examiners' reports and responses, and considered the use of these by University committees and by boards of study in colleges. The team discussed with staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students the use made of external examiners' reports to inform learning and teaching practice and the student experience.

2.57 The University recognises the role and expertise provided by external examiners in quality assurance and the examination of student assessment. It has explicitly mapped the Expectations of the Quality Code to its Senate Regulations. The role and use of external examiners are clearly evident in the published Senate Regulations which are comprehensive and fit for purpose. Senate is responsible for the appointment of external examiners, although this role is delegated to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and International), and all appointments are reported to Senate. Termination of an external examiner appointment may be initiated by the external examiner, or by the Vice-Chancellor if the external examiner fails to fulfil their responsibilities. A summary of external examiners' reports is presented to Senate annually by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality Assurance and Enhancement). These policies and procedures allow the University to make scrupulous use of external examiners.

2.58 The University makes effective use of the external examiner system to demonstrate independent external scrutiny of the achievement and maintenance of academic standards. External examiners' comments, and responses to their reports, inform the learning and teaching environment and the student experience. The reports, and evidence provided about the consideration of these reports by staff and various College Education Committees, confirm that academic standards and the student experience are being monitored and assured effectively. Training for external examiners has been formalised as a result of the recommendation arising from the previous review in 2009, with the introduction of a briefing day and online training and induction, and support provided by individual colleges. Reports from external examiners are readily accessible to students through the VLE. Comments are rigorously discussed and actioned at a range of college and University committees and forums. Students have access to reports and their content through the formal committee process, including boards of study and liaison committees, and have opportunities to discuss and reflect on external examiners' reports and responses to them.

2.59 The University has robust and effective processes that oversee the engagement with external examiners in the management of academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.60   The University identifies three regular processes of annual monitoring, academic programme review (APR) and an annual Regulatory Audit, which take place on a planned cycle. These systems enable the Senate to maintain strategic oversight of the quality, standards and enhancement of its provision. Separate monitoring arrangements are in place for LBIC and for research degrees.

2.61   Senate is supported in overseeing the review processes by the University's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and the three devolved College Educational Committees (CECs). Arrangements for suspension or withdrawal of a programme are conducted by the Strategic Approval Scrutiny Panel (SASP) on behalf of the Education Strategy Committee (ESC).

2.62   Annual monitoring is devolved to colleges, but consistency is maintained across the University using a single mandatory process, using standard pro formas and data packs. Each department compiles and discusses its data pack, external comments, student feedback and risk alerts to identify issues and form an action plan. Students sit on monitoring committees and take part in the process. These processes and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.63   The review team scrutinised the University's procedures and their effectiveness through detailed consideration of quality assurance processes, including annual monitoring reports, departmental reports, documentation relating to periodic review, and minutes of committees. The review team also discussed the processes with staff and students.

2.64   Review processes are clearly and comprehensively described in documents that are easily accessible to staff and students on the University website. Staff are given training in how to prepare and undertake the reviews and each activity is fully documented.

2.65   Annual monitoring and review in the three colleges is now embedded and operates consistently throughout the University. The three colleges use a single mandatory template which guides the content and procedures for the process, and centrally issued standard data packs enable a consistent approach to be maintained across the University when developing and reviewing provision.

2.66   Staff and students receive training by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality Assurance and Enhancement) through briefing sessions and meetings. Support is also available on the quality assurance website and through BEEC, which has recently introduced training for those engaged in annual monitoring. The reporting mechanism is standardised and the processes are all clearly defined, as are roles and responsibilities. Programme boards of studies examine all relevant material for monitoring and review and report to the departmental academic committees. In turn these committees report to CECs, and a college overview is reported to Senate.

2.67   A regular review of the annual monitoring process is undertaken by QAC to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. University-wide issues are collated by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality Assurance and Enhancement), who reports to Senate in the annual overview. Good

practice is identified and shared formally, and enhancement of student learning opportunities is discussed prior to any modification of programmes.

2.68   Academic Programme Review (APR) normally takes place every five years. This periodic review ensures the currency and coherence of the provision, and assures the University that standards are appropriate, the student learning experience is of good quality, and the external benchmarks are being used appropriately. APR provides an opportunity for reflection on possible enhancement of the provision. External expertise is used and student representation on panels is fundamental to the scrutiny process. Postgraduate and research provision is included in the periodic review model. A range of data and information is considered, and draft reports for each academic unit are discussed with college managers and inform the overview report. Recommendations arising provide the basis for action plans, which are considered through the annual monitoring process. Externality is ensured through effective oversight of panel membership by the quality and standards office. The CEC and Senate receive the findings of panels. Institutional issues are addressed and enhancement of the provision results from the outcomes of the review process.

2.69   Additionally, the University undertakes an annual Regulatory Audit which examines implementation of University policies and processes, and the provision of information and guidance. Recommendations for action are made and checked at the following annual audit which effectively supports operational consistency across the University. Senate maintains strategic oversight of all three processes, ensuring consistency across the University. Implementation is devolved to colleges and supported by the QAC which collates and addresses institutional issues during its monitoring and evaluation of the review system.

2.70   The QAA Institutional Audit report in 2009 criticised the University for not making fuller use of data from internal and external sources to benchmark and evaluate its standards. At the time of the mid-cycle audit follow-up in December 2012, reviewers noted that significant progress had been made. All colleges now make systematic, regular and rigorous use of data during the review processes to enhance their provision. This data includes the outcomes of student surveys which are analysed at institutional and subject levels, and benchmarked against national and comparator institutional outcomes.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.72   The University sets out its procedures for handling academic appeals in Senate Regulations, while student complaints are set out in the complaints procedure. Information on appeals and complaints can be found on separate pages on the University's website. These pages have the relevant policies, guidance and forms, and web links are provided in student handbooks. The University complaints procedure and Senate Regulations also apply to students at LBIC. The policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.73   The effectiveness of the University's complaints and academic appeals procedures was tested by meetings with teaching and support staff, and those from within the University complaints and appeals team, and through scrutiny of a range of documents, including the relevant Senate Regulations and policies, as well as reports to Senate and Council. The review team also met undergraduate, taught postgraduate and postgraduate research students, and scrutinised the academic regulations, complaints policy, academic appeals policy, annual complaints and appeals report, minutes of committees and the University website.

2.74   The complaints and appeals processes were updated in 2015-16 to align with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's Good Practice Framework for handling complaints and academic appeals. The University guidelines maintain a three-stage process, occasionally taking more than 90 days for complex cases. Information on the complaints procedure includes a clear description of what constitutes a complaint, the difference between an appeal and complaint, the stages of the process, and how complaints are recorded and monitored. Students were unaware of the details of the processes but felt assured that they would know what they needed to do if the situation ever arose.

2.75   The Students Complaints Office (SCO) administers the complaints system. The Academic Appeals Office (AAO) oversees the appeals procedure which is for all students, including those studying at partner institutions. Complaints and academic appeals are monitored annually with a report that identifies enhancement initiatives. Appeals and complaints are considered widely through the University's deliberative structures. Members of staff involved in the processes are given appropriate training, and recently this has been extended to cover a wider proportion of staff, including tutors and the heads of University services. Staff are also required to undergo equality and diversity training. As well as the formal complaints procedure, the University has a mediation service as a mechanism for resolving issues. This service is advertised through the webpage, student handbooks and a booklet in welcome packs.

2.76   On completion of an academic appeal or complaint, the student is given written confirmation of the outcome and, if it is upheld, further information about any action taken on account of the review or complaint is also communicated. The University records and monitors appeals through a specialist software database. There is an annual report to Senate and Council to ensure oversight, and provide details of changes that have taken place in response to academic appeals and complaints which have been upheld.

2.77   The University has effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities, which are fair, accessible and timely. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.78   The University works in collaboration with partner institutions within the UK and internationally. Additionally, the University manages curricular-related activities involving learning opportunities provided offsite, including placements, internships and exchange arrangements. Student placements feature in the majority of the University's programmes and reflect the University's mission, which is based on a history of engagement with industry and its commitment to the principle of student employability.

2.79   Since the Institutional Audit in 2009, there has been an overhaul of the strategy and management of arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with other organisations. Changes have been put in place to meet the recommendation of the previous report, and to align with the Expectations of the Quality Code. Arrangements for managing collaborative provision are contained in the current Strategic Plan, Education Strategy, International Strategy, Senate Regulations and the Managing Partnership Code of Practice. These management approaches and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.80   The review team scrutinised the University's arrangements through documentary evidence and met with staff involved in the management, delivery and administration of the arrangements with partner organisations and placement opportunities. The review team considered a range of evidence provided by the University relating to approval, review and management, and committee minutes, as well as legal and other documentation. The team also met students, including a group studying on the University's MSc engineering programmes at TAE, Esslingen, Germany.

2.81   Staff at all levels appreciate the importance of the processes and demonstrated clear understanding of their roles within them. A revised four-stage approval process has been introduced for arrangements with collaborative partners. Initial consideration of the business and academic case is conducted by the Strategic Approval Scrutiny Panel. Due diligence is then conducted by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) followed by approval of the proposed programme (conducted through the standard approval procedures) and final confirmation by Senate. Each proposal is formally signed off by the Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and International). The process also includes a criteria-based risk assessment stage.

2.82   Following approval, the Academic Partnerships Office oversees the management and administration of all activity relating to partnerships, including exchanges, and provides guidance and support to staff considering developing a partnership. This structure is underpinned by the Managing Partnerships Code of Practice and Collaborative Operations Manual, articulating processes for the development, approval and monitoring of partnerships. A central register of all partnerships, including exchanges, which are subject to a formal agreement, is maintained. Since 2014-15, a partnership academic lead annual report has been produced to inform the annual monitoring of each partnership.

2.83   There are currently four UK partnerships, accommodating around 560 students, and five international partnerships accommodating 145 students. The University is also engaged with the Erasmus scheme. All these arrangements are considered by the University to be

low risk. The University has limited its collaborations to joint delivery and articulation arrangements with a relatively small number of organisations, a number of which have enjoyed long-standing relationships with the University. This includes the affiliate college LBIC. These programmes all involve modules designed and assessed by the University and overseen by external examiners. Since 2013 LBIC has enjoyed full affiliated college status, with the result that all students are registered directly with the University, and therefore subject to its regulations. Collaborations are closely managed and overseen through a Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board.

2.84   Final awards are based exclusively on the achievement of assessments overseen and managed at the University, which retains responsibility for the issue of certificates and transcripts. The University also retains ultimate responsibility for all published information relating to collaborative awards, and maintains procedures for authorisation and regular review of content.

2.85   For the curricular-related activities, Senate Regulations govern the provision of placement learning, supported by the Placement Learning Policy. Management and administration is governed by the Work Placement Code of Practice and Equality Policy: Work Placement Guidelines. Together, these documents set out clearly the responsibilities of all parties. All arrangements are overseen by the Professional Development Centre through the placement forum, reporting to the QAC. Detailed guidance is provided to students, supervisors and employer hosts. Evaluation of placements forms part of the standard quality assurance mechanisms.

2.86   The review team found the University's arrangements for the management of the provision of learning opportunities with other organisations to be robust and effective. The use of standard pro formas in the evaluation of potential partnerships ensures consistency of approach, coverage of all relevant areas and accurate assessment of risk. The annual monitoring of arrangements is rigorous and enables the University to ensure the quality of learning opportunities available to its students through these collaborations.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.88   The University's policies and procedures related to research degree provision are governed and described in Senate Regulations and in the revised Code of Practice for Research Degrees approved in July 2015. The current arrangements are the result of a period of review and revision of regulations by the University of its postgraduate research provision following data analysis undertaken in 2012-13 and a University-wide review in 2014. A policy for the admissions and management of postgraduate research students studying off-campus was also approved in 2015. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.89   The review team tested and evaluated the application of the policies, procedures and practices relating to postgraduate research degree provision and management through meetings with senior staff, staff involved in postgraduate research degree supervision, and students studying for a research degree, and explored the policies and practices underpinning research degree management.

2.90   The updated policies, procedures and practices of staff responsible for research degree provision have been thoroughly mapped to the Code of Practice and are fit for purpose. The University has improved its structures for the oversight and management of research degree provision by revising the role of the Director of the Graduate School, and embedding research degree responsibilities at college level. This responsibility is now the role of the College Vice Dean of Education supported by departmental Postgraduate Research Directors, a Postgraduate Research Manager and postgraduate research administrators. These changes have ensured greater consistency of postgraduate research student experience and effective management of provision. Ultimate oversight of postgraduate research provision at institutional level resides with the Postgraduate Research Degrees Committee and Senate. These management arrangements, and the positive feedback from postgraduate research students, demonstrate that research degrees are awarded in an environment that ensures secure academic standards and an effective environment for learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols.

2.91   Students commented positively on the application process and the support given prior to enrolment, during enrolment and for research supervision, although there is some variation in experience across colleges, dependent upon the supervision team.
All postgraduate research degree students are overseen by a team consisting of two supervisors and a Research Development Adviser (RDA). Meetings between supervisors and postgraduate research degree students are formally recorded online through specialist software, a system which is well understood by staff and students. There are regular supervisory meetings and annual processes for the monitoring and review of postgraduate student performance and progression. Data is used thoroughly to monitor students' progression across the three colleges. Students know what to do if they need to make a complaint or appeal. All these processes are well understood by students and staff.

2.92   The University is effective in monitoring student performance and reviewing students at regular stages in their study, and review points are clearly understood by

students. Postgraduate research students spoke positively of the access to a range of researcher development tools and opportunities, although some dissatisfaction was expressed in the withdrawal, at short notice, of the Research Allowance Fund in one college and its impact on the ability of students to conduct surveys and research. The procedures and practices for the examination of postgraduate research degree students are fit for purpose and clearly defined in Senate Regulations and in the Code of Practice for Research Degrees.

2.93   Postgraduate research students are prepared for classroom and laboratory teaching and supporting learning through a BEEC Academic Practice and Educational Excellence (APEX) training programme. However, some students are teaching at a level higher than their own qualification. The University indicated that to ensure postgraduate research students are teaching at an appropriate level, the Director of the Graduate School has led a task and finish group to develop a clear policy for the employment of students supporting teaching and learning. The draft policy has recently been discussed at the QAC. The review team **affirms** the work underway to develop a policy setting out postgraduate research students' role in supporting learning and teaching, the academic levels at which they teach, and the extent of their contribution.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.96   All applicable Expectations are met and the associated level of risk is low in each case, with the exceptions of Expectations B5 and B6, where the level of risk is considered moderate. There are two recommendations, two affirmations and two examples of good practice.

2.97   The two recommendations arising from Expectations B5 and B6 indicate that the University should work with the students' union to monitor and review annually the processes for student representation, and ensure that all departments and colleges consistently provide timely and developmental feedback to students on their assessments.

2.98   The affirmations confirm the steps being taken to support the actions under Expectation B5 to review the Student Charter and progress its dissemination to staff and students, and embed the principles of the Student Partnership Strategy. Under Expectation B11 the review team affirms work underway to develop a policy setting out postgraduate research students' role in supporting learning and teaching, the academic levels at which they teach, and the extent of their contribution.

2.99   The features of good practice in Expectations B1 and B4 confirm the impact of the Recognised Programme Developers in supporting new programme development and achieving consistency of approach, and the wide range of opportunities and support for student transitions into study and progression into the work environment.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The University's primary channel for communicating with its stakeholders is its website. This contains a breadth of information for prospective applicants, current students, employers and partner organisations. Prospective students can view comprehensive information about programmes of study on the University webpages, as well as in printed prospectuses. Social media, open days and virtual presentations are also used as methods of communicating the University's offer. Information on how students can apply, including the admissions policies, English language requirements and scholarships, is available online. The University provides tailored information for international students, with dedicated webpages and webinars. A virtual open day is provided for any prospective student who is unable to attend in person. The University is reviewing the information available for prospective students by a working group which will report to Senate. The information review is due to conclude this academic year. These policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.2 The review team explored the University's approach to the production of information by viewing documentation, including a wide range of information available electronically, websites, handbooks and qualification and programme specifications. In addition, the review team met staff and undergraduate and postgraduate students from across the University and from partner institutions to verify its findings.

3.3 The primary source of information for current students is through the current College Student Handbooks and the virtual learning environment (VLE). The handbooks which relate to non-programme-specific information signpost students to a wide range of material including complaints and appeals procedures, mitigating circumstances and examinations. The VLE is used for more programme-specific information, including reading lists and assessment information. Information on the University's academic regulations and policies is available on the quality and standards webpages. These pages are publicly available. Information concerning student data, survey results and external examiners' reports is available on the intranet.

3.4 Academic departments and professional support services teams are responsible for ensuring the accuracy and fitness for purpose of programme information. Once approved, information is then referred to the Communications, Marketing and Student Recruitment Department for publication on the webpages and in print. The University has recently approved an Information Framework to ensure the integrity and availability of the information it publishes, having noted this as an area for further development. Academic and support staff are aware of the sign-off processes required for communicating information, and their responsibilities for ensuring the accuracy and appropriateness of the information provided. Undergraduate and postgraduate students confirm that they are satisfied with the quality and accuracy of the information provided to them prior to enrolment and during their programme.

3.5 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met 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

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

3.7   The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

3.8   Information published by the University is fit for purpose and trustworthy. Processes for the development and verification of information are understood by staff. Students confirm that information is comprehensive, accessible and helpful to them, and that they are provided with sound information to support their learning.

3.9   The review team concludes 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 clear commitment to enhancement through considered activities at institutional level. Deliberate steps to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities, and broader student experience, take place through different mechanisms and at various levels in the organisation. The University considers that changes in its structure, operational from August 2014, have enabled it to gather ideas for improvement from all sectors of its activity, across the three colleges, and to discuss and develop these systematically in line with its five-year Strategic Plan.

4.2 The University describes four categories of deliberate enhancement activities, including those emanating from the executive, those linked to a strategic strand or theme, activities linked to quality assurance processes, and activities arising from identified good practice. The University considers that a significant impact of the restructuring has already resulted in the alignment of the college's strategic priorities using key performance indicators, the enhancement of curriculum development, improved student representation at all levels, the embedding of processes for personal tutoring and improved oversight of quality assurance processes.

4.3 Initiatives linked to strategic themes include the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the Professional Development Centre and its Ready Programme, and the activities of the Employability Group, in embedding employability skills. The Brunel Educational Excellence Centre (BEEC) was established in 2014-15 to support the Education Strategy, to develop funded educational projects and to coordinate interdepartmental expertise. BEEC activity includes the identification and sharing of good practice across the University. The personal tutoring framework, Tutoring@Brunel, was established in 2014-15 to implement a training programme for all tutors to improve the overall quality of support for students.

4.4 Enhancing programme design and delivery, identifying successful programme attributes and introducing a wider range of programme structures, and teaching and assessment methods are being discussed at departmental level. Programme development has been supported by the creation of a new role of specially trained Recognised Programme Developers (RPDs). These approaches would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.5 The team read documentation provided on the enhancement strategy, policies, committee structures and projects, such as the Professional Development Centre and the Ready Group, BEEC, Tutoring@Brunel, Successful Programme Attributes in Programme Design, the Development and Approval Policy Framework, the Employability Group and other recently introduced activities. The review team met with senior staff, teaching and professional support staff and undergraduate and postgraduate students to discuss the enhancement strategy, projects and initiatives.

4.6 The identification of enhancement activities falls into four categories following the Transformational Change Programme. This programme has provided a more coherent and deliberate strategy for the enhancement of learning opportunities. Staff spoke positively of the effectiveness of this approach. Enhancement of the University's provision is considered as an ongoing process and the concern of every member of staff. Improvement initiatives originating from the delivery of learning and teaching are identified through the University's annual monitoring and review processes. The outcomes of reviews inform discussions and

actions at the three College Education Committees (CECs), the University's Quality and Standards Office (QSO) and the central Education Enhancement Committee.

4.7   The Education Enhancement Committee (EEC) reports directly to Senate, and is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality Assurance and Enhancement), with representatives from each of the three CECs. This ensures a coherent approach to enhancement, with dissemination of information through members of committees. Staff reported favourably on the increased ease of communication, speed of decision making and increased consistency emerging from the new structures.

4.8   Sustainable initiatives from the Learning and Teaching Strategy Employability Group include the foundation of a Professional Development Centre (PDC). This supports students by enhancing their professional skills in a focused way and preparing them for their careers. The PDC director reports directly to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and International). Graduate School activities, work placements, an innovation hub and modern foreign languages are offered by PDC. Additionally, first-year students can join the Ready Programme to further develop transferable skills. Students reported favourably on the programmes provided by the PDC.

4.9   The Tutoring@Brunel Framework, the University-wide approach to personal tutoring, offers training in the principles and practice of personal tutoring. Its primary aim is to improve student retention rates and address concerns. The system includes a timetable of structured meetings between tutor and students and is effective in developing students' confidence. It enables better communication with tutors and underpins commitment to the programme of study.

4.10   A range of deliberate enhancements is now underway at the University, and good practice is drawn out in a variety of ways, including the thorough review processes and the institution-wide nature of support and training initiatives through BEEC. BEEC has a strategic role in developing staff and provides a forum for identifying and disseminating good practice in learning and teaching across the three colleges. BEEC offers an effective range of opportunities for staff to develop and refresh their teaching practice, including offering HEA-accredited professional development, academic practice workshops, seminars and briefings, and an annual learning and teaching symposium to share good practice. The review team found the approach and involvement of BEEC in supporting staff in their teaching methods, providing forums for staff to spread good practice, and enabling students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential to be highly effective. The extensive range of support and training provided for staff and students by the Brunel Educational Excellence Centre, which enhances learning opportunities, is **good practice**. This matter is also considered under Expectations B3 and B11.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.13　　The role of the Brunel Educational Excellence Centre, and the extensive range of support and training provided for staff and students, enhances learning opportunities and is good practice. The Expectation in this area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The University's mission is based on a history of engagement with industry, and the employability of its students has been at the core of its work since the formation of the University in 1966. It currently seeks to deliver its employability strategy by way of a combination of University and college-led initiatives, embedded both across the curriculum and through a range of extracurricular activities.

5.2 At University level, employability is a core element of the Strategic Plan and the Education Strategy and also forms part of the operational plans to deliver the latter. At the heart of the Education Strategy is the aspiration that all students should be ready for work and have the opportunity to undertake a work placement or internship. The Professional Development Centre (PDC), formed in 2015, aims to facilitate the development of professional competencies on the part of all students, preparing them for their future careers. Its activities are overseen by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and International), which signifies the importance of its work to the University. The PDC remit includes careers guidance, work placements, the Innovation Hub (promoting enterprise and entrepreneurship to all students) and the Graduate School. The latter delivers a programme of transferable skills workshops to postgraduate students, including Master's Skills Training. Other sevices within PDC include the Job Shop and modern foreign languages teaching which enables students to study a foreign language on campus at no additional cost.

5.3 As a supplement to these activities a new optional initiative, the Ready Programme, was launched in 2013, where students work with others on projects across subject disciplines on real-life case studies to develop generic and transferable skills. Weekly sessions are facilitated by doctoral students and participants present their findings at the end of the programme. A prize is awarded by a panel of employers to the best team. All students receive a certificate and an appropriate entry on their Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR). The programme has proved popular among students and over 400 have participated to date. There is a wide range of other activities, including internships and work experience specifically for students within the widening participation scheme, along with volunteering through links with local businesses, community groups and third-sector organisations. The latter includes pro bono experience for law students.

5.4 At college level, strategic and annual plans must include details of the approach to enhancing the employability of students. In many cases specific learning outcomes relating to the development of employability skills are required in programmes. In these cases employability skills form part of the assessment within the curriculum. For example, in the College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences (CBASS), all programmes must include employability elements within the first year. These include preparing curricula vitae and for job interviews. Some programmes also prepare students for job interviews by exposing them to the practice of psychometric testing and other techniques. Work and industrial placements form an important part of later years study on many programmes across the colleges, along with activities seeking to develop team-working and networking.

5.5 There is a wealth of varied and meaningful activity to support employability, developed through engagement with employers, which is appreciated by students. While opportunities are not taken up by all students, they nevertheless have a positive impact on the development of the professional and work-related skills of students to ease their transition into the work environment.

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.