



# Application for Taught Degree Awarding Powers: Norland College

## Scrutiny team report

November 2018

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## About this report

This report reflects the findings of a team appointed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) to conduct a detailed scrutiny of an application from Norland College for the power to award taught degrees.

The application was considered under criteria approved by Government in 2015. In advising on applications, QAA is guided by the relevant criteria and the associated evidence requirements. QAA's work in this area is overseen by its Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP), a subcommittee of the QAA Board.

ACDAP's initial consideration of applications establishes whether an applicant has made a case to proceed to detailed scrutiny of the application and the evidence on which it is based. If satisfied on this matter, ACDAP agrees that a team may be appointed to conduct the scrutiny and prepare a report, enabling ACDAP to determine the nature of the recommendation it will make to the QAA Board.

Scrutiny teams produce reports following each of the engagements undertaken. The final report reflects the team's findings and is structured around the four main criteria contained in the 2015 TDAP criteria,<sup>1</sup> namely:

- governance and academic management
- academic standards and quality assurance
- scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff
- the environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes.

Subject to the approval of the Board, QAA's advice is communicated to the appropriate minister. This advice is provided in confidence. The minister determines whether it should be disclosed to the applicant. A final decision on an application, and the notification of that decision, is a matter for the Privy Council.

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<sup>1</sup> The TDAP criteria are available in Annex A of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' *Taught Degree Awarding Powers and Research Degree Awarding Powers: Guidance for Higher Education Providers: Criteria and Process for applying for Taught Degree Awarding Powers and Research Degree Awarding Powers* (September 2015) at [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/526813/BIS-15-525-degree-awarding-powers.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/526813/BIS-15-525-degree-awarding-powers.pdf) (PDF, 535KB)

## Executive summary

### Governance and academic management

The College has good financial planning, quality assurance and resource allocation policies, which are aligned with the College's mission. Governance, and subsequent reporting lines, ensure that thoughtful consideration is made at all levels of the organisation for the maintenance and delivery of higher education, underpinned by strong and effective academic leadership. Changes continued to be made throughout the scrutiny period regarding the role and function of several subcommittees of the Board of Directors, and at times some members did not have a full understanding of their role. As a small organisation, there are a relatively large number of committees, and that significant effort is required to avoid unnecessary duplication of business between committees with similar membership and in consideration of risk. The College's amended committee structure and subsequent revised terms of reference in operation from 2018-19, address these areas.

There is robust and coherent oversight of risk, enabling effective management of the academic provision and of change management. Risk is routinely discussed, and appropriate and timely actions taken at all levels of the organisation. The Board of Directors undertakes appropriate ownership of the Risk Registers, with ongoing oversight maintained by the Executive Team.

The College demonstrates the capability of managing successfully the additional responsibilities associated with the exercise of taught degree awarding powers. To a large extent, its plans demonstrate a recognition of the work associated with ending its arrangement with the awarding body and managing the impact of this change. Should degree awarding powers be granted, the College plans to transfer students to their own award relatively swiftly (subject to student agreement) which will result in a short transition period that will require careful management by the College.

On the basis of these findings ACDAP concludes that Norland College Limited meets Criterion A.

### Academic standards and quality assurance

The College adheres to the regulatory framework of its validating university, which is implemented fully, conscientiously and consistently. A regulatory framework, based closely on that of its current awarding body, has been prepared in readiness for taught degree awarding powers and in the view of the team is fit for purpose.

The College makes good use of external reference points and external advice to set and maintain the academic standard of its single undergraduate award. The initial development of the programme was informed by a wide range of internal and external stakeholders, including external academics, employers, practitioners and alumni, known as Norlanders. The concurrent delivery of theory through the degree, and practical skills through the College's own Norland Diploma that is mapped to the Early Years Educator (level 3) qualification criteria, enables the development of students as effective, highly sought-after early years practitioners. The College has excellent industry links, enabling it to provide students with a variety of placement settings. These links are used to good effect to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant and current.

The College has operated its programme approval, monitoring and review processes diligently in accordance with the requirements of its awarding University. Critical self-reflection and external perspectives are built into the arrangements. Although there was scope for greater external input at the time of re-validation in 2016, the College has acted

speedily to address a recommendation from the QAA HER (AP) in 2017 by approving procedures that clarify its expectations for external consultation which are appropriate to its current status. Its prospective policies for programme approval, monitoring and review, should it acquire degree awarding powers, are soundly based.

The College's arrangements for the assessment of students are robust; Assessment Scrutiny Panels inculcate a collegiate approach to the development of assessment tasks, marking rubrics and assessment criteria; students are supported to develop their assessment literacy; marking and moderation are carried out rigorously. The College does not make use routinely of module results data at examination boards as a means of affirming the consistency of assessment outcomes at the point of award, although this is addressed through annual monitoring processes which are College-wide and thoroughly executed. Action planning and monitoring is evident at all levels with the institution and the College is a self-critical community with a strong ethos of continuous improvement in all aspects of its operations.

As a small institution offering one degree, robust arrangements for external advice and guidance are crucial to engender confidence in its academic standards and quality, particularly as it seeks to become an independent degree awarding institution. The College has addressed recommendations from the HER (AP) review concerning external academic consultation in re-validation processes and the use made of external examiner reports to strengthen this area. The College intends to seek the advice of an External Advisory Board for two years after the grant of degree awarding powers and to appoint an external advisor to Academic Board.

On the basis of these findings ACDAP concludes that Norland College Limited meets Criterion B.

### **Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff**

The teaching staff at the College are appropriately qualified for the roles they undertake with a mix of teaching and practical experience. Although the College has recently managed instances of long-term staff sickness absence effectively, the relatively small size of the staff cohort means that the College is vulnerable should there be a long-term sickness or a resignation from a key post. As with all small organisations there are posts, including those in management, where there are limited back-up possibilities. The College is aware of this issue and has put in place contingency plans for such eventualities and for successful succession planning.

The staff appraisal process is robust and clearly identifies development needs. Mechanisms are in place to support staff by providing development opportunities that enhance competency in teaching, facilitate learning and undertaking assessment. The approach taken to supporting new members of staff is a strength. There is clear evidence that all teaching staff take up the development opportunities offered, within the limits of the budgets provided. Benefits obtained by such opportunities are shared with colleagues within the College.

In the context of Early Years Studies, the College is well placed in relation to engagement in national and international networks, both in higher education and professional activities, and contributes to research and consultancy activities. The College acknowledges that currently this engagement mainly applies to a few key individuals but is taking active steps to involve more staff.

On the basis of these findings ACDAP concludes that Norland College Limited meets Criterion C.

### **The environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes**

The College's approach to monitoring taught provision at programme and module level includes scrutiny of annual reports: these promote a review of learning outcomes, delivery and assessment, identification of good practice and areas for potential improvement. Students report satisfaction with the timeliness, quality and helpfulness of feedback on assessed work. There are high levels of student satisfaction as evidenced through the absence of any formal complaints or appeals in five years and the high National Student Survey (NSS) satisfaction levels.

Appropriate learning resources are available, which were enhanced when the College moved to its new campus in Oldfield Park in 2017. Student access to non-practical learning resources is underpinned by enhanced IT support for both academic staff and students. The College has taken appropriate action to establish its own student record system and made significant investment in this area. Although the full functionality is yet to be implemented, careful attention is given to data accuracy

The College is actively challenging the composition of its student body in terms of diversity and equal opportunity which is seen as a sector wide issue for Early Years practice that historically has seen the recruitment of only female, middle-class students. There are early signs that the steps being taken are having an impact.

On the basis of these findings ACDAP concludes that Norland College Limited meets Criterion D.

### **Privy Council's decision**

The Privy Council's decision is to grant Norland College Limited renewable taught degree awarding powers for a six-year term beginning on 14 March 2019 and expiring on 13 March 2025.

## Introduction

This report provides a summary of the work and findings of the scrutiny team (the team) appointed by QAA to review in detail the evidence submitted in support of an application for taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) by Norland College.

The application was considered by QAA's Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP) in May 2017 when the Committee agreed to proceed to the detailed scrutiny of the application. The team appointed to conduct the detailed scrutiny comprised Mr Craig Best, Professor Ian Giles, Professor Alan Jago, Ms Sarah Riches (scrutiny team members) and Dr Dave Dowland (secretary). The detailed scrutiny was managed on behalf of QAA by Mr Alan Weale, Quality Manager.

The detailed scrutiny began in September 2017, culminating in a report to ACDAP in November 2018. In the course of the scrutiny, the team read a wide range of documents presented in support of the application. The team also spoke to a range of stakeholders and observed meetings and events pertinent to the application.

## Key information about Norland College

Norland College was founded in 1892 by Emily Ward, a pioneer of childcare education in England. Norland College's mission is 'to uphold and enhance our prestigious reputation and provide a bespoke higher education, training and consultancy, informed by cutting-edge research, and cultivate outstanding graduates with lifelong career opportunities, professional support and continuous learning'.

The mission is discharged primarily by providing a full-time academic course leading to a degree in Early Years Development and Learning validated by the University of Gloucestershire, and a bespoke concurrent diploma course (the Norland Diploma), which equips students with essential practical skills and placement experiences in the care and education of babies and young children. The College has no plans to expand its provision beyond the current undergraduate programme and the associated target annual recruitment of 100 students each year.

The College also operates an employment agency to help its graduates find employment. The agency offers advice and guidance regarding employment, contracts and related support to Norland graduates throughout their working lives. It places Norland graduates in positions with families in all parts of the world. In addition, Norland offers bespoke training and consultancy services to a variety of organisations and families, based on an expanding research capacity. The College operates from two sites in the city of Bath, York Place and new premises at Upper Oldfield Park. Most of the teaching takes place at the new Upper Oldfield Park premises.

The College had a successful QAA Review for Specific Course Designation in 2014. The College was subject to a Higher Education Review (Alternative Provider) in October 2017 that also resulted in a positive outcome.

Norland College currently has 261 students enrolled, with an intake of 100 annually from 2017. The College employs 58 staff in total, including 30 full-time staff made up of 12 higher education teaching/management staff, five diploma lecturers, four placement staff, two teaching assistants and seven academic support staff.

# Detailed scrutiny against taught degree awarding powers criteria

## A Governance and academic management

### Criterion A1

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers is governed, managed and administered effectively, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. Its financial management is sound and a clear relationship exists between its financial policy and the safeguarding of the quality and standards of its higher education provision. In the case of an organisation that is not primarily a higher education institution; its principal activities are compatible with the provision of higher education programmes and awards.

### **Financial planning, quality assurance, and resource allocation policies are coherent and relate to the organisation's higher education mission, aims and objectives**

1 Financial planning is driven by the Board, and the Principal is responsible for any budget proposals to the Board. Detailed scrutiny of financial planning is devolved from the Board of Directors to the Finance Committee, which meets four times a year, and is chaired by a member of the board. The Chair of the Board is also a member. The function of the committee is to ensure that the College maintains its forecasted income and expenditure against its actual financial returns. The Committee also reviews the financial accounts and proposed budgets before they are formally submitted to the Board of Directors on an annual basis.

2 The operational oversight of the College's finances is maintained by the Chief Finance Officer who provides precise and accurate reports to the Board of Directors and executive team. Financial planning is clear and ensures all stakeholders are aware through regular reporting and monitoring at the Executive and Senior Leadership team meetings, Finance Committee and the Board of Directors. There is a clear annual budget setting process, which aligns with operational planning through the development of departmental operational plans. An annual budget is produced and presented at the Executive and Senior Leadership team meetings, before recommendations are made to the Board of Directors through the Finance Committee. The Chief Finance Officer and relevant governance of the financial oversight ensures the stewardship of the College's finances is secure. The College maintains effective quality assurance and resource allocation policies which align with the College's financial planning.

3 The Audit Committee, meeting a minimum of two times a year, has delegated responsibility for assuring the Board of Directors that conditions of funding, as set by regulatory and funding bodies, are used for proper purposes and confirms effectiveness of the College's systems of internal control, its management of risk, and governance processes. The College directors and executive make use of both an external auditor report and an annual report of the Chief Finance Officer to contribute to the evaluation of the effectiveness of financial management. Both reports receive extensive and comprehensive consideration. The Audit Committee membership is new, and training and guidance for Independent Directors is being provided on a continuing basis.

4 As the College operates as a company limited by shares under the Companies Act 2006, the Articles of Association prohibit the shareholders receiving any dividend and consequently any profit made is reinvested in the College. The Board intends to establish the College as a subsidiary of a charity trust, which will allow the College to operate under

the financial arrangements of an exempt charity. The surplus and reserves place the College in a sound financial position. Prudent financial management is undertaken by the College directors, executive and Chief Finance Officer. The College's reserves also remain stable and provide a sound base for continued operational existence.

5 The Board of Directors meets a minimum of four times a year to provide proper and robust oversight of the strategic business and finance of the College. Financial management is strong and currently stable, with a good forecast over the next five years. The intention to be a subsidiary of a charity foundation and to reinvest its financial returns into increasing the provision of scholarships and bursaries will assist the College's widening participation agenda.

**Higher education mission and associated policies and systems are understood and applied consistently both by those connected with the delivery of the organisation's higher education programmes and, where appropriate, by students**

6 The College's mission is stated in the Articles of Association and contained within its current Strategic Plan and provides a clear rationale for delivering early years education. The College also operates an employment agency to assist graduates to find employment. A new strategic plan was published during the scrutiny period, the development of which involved engagement from all staff and students at the College.

7 Staff and students are made aware of the strategic plan through constant reference to the plan within the quality assurance processes, inclusion within the comprehensive staff induction, and through staff development. Departmental operational plans run for one academic year and set out key performance indicators (KPIs) that are aligned with the College's strategic plan and reported into the College's governance structure. Students are aware of the College's mission, and associated policies and systems, through the detailed Programme Handbook and specific time allocation during induction to ensure that regulations and policies are familiar with new cohorts.

8 The scrutiny team's observation of internal assessment boards, confirmed a sound understanding and robust application of relevant policies and regulations, including the regulations of the awarding body. The team concluded that the College's unique mission and associated policies and systems are understood and consistently applied.

**There is a clarity of function and responsibility at all levels in the organisation in relation to its governance structures and systems for managing its higher education provision**

9 The College has an established governance structure. The Board of Directors consists of 14 members out of a maximum 15 allowed; the Principal is an ex-officio member. Members of the Executive Management team attend the Board of Directors' meetings. The College has appointed four new Independent Directors during the scrutiny period, which has extended the Boards' skills and experience in areas of marketing, higher education and information technology. All new members of the Board of Directors, including co-opted members, are provided with an induction by the Clerk of the Board, which outlines the scope of their duties. The induction process continues to be developed to ensure that a clear understanding is established of the duties of a Director, the necessary skills, and the distinction between governance and academic management.

10 Staff are made aware of the business and decisions of the Board of Directors and Academic Board by the Principal and by academic staff representatives on the boards. A detailed summary email is provided to all staff from the staff representative on the Board of Directors and updates are given at the monthly all staff meetings.



11 Students are involved in the governance arrangements of the College through membership of the Board of Directors and the effective student representation system. The College is committed to ensuring effective student engagement through the formalisation of a dedicated academic staff member in the role of Student Engagement Facilitator.

12 The College's governance, and subsequent reporting lines ensure that thoughtful consideration is made at all levels of the organisation for the maintenance and delivery of higher education. The College acts conscientiously and diligently and the Independent Directors are mostly well informed. However, changes continued to be made throughout the scrutiny period regarding the role and function of several subcommittees of the Board of Directors, and at times some members did not have a full understanding of their role, for instance in relation to that of the Audit Committee. The College has continued to work diligently to address areas of duplication and enhance the knowledge of the Independent Directors. The introduction of a skills matrix for Directors and updated terms of reference will address any inconsistency and duplication. As a small organisation, there are a relatively large number of committees, and significant effort is required to avoid unnecessary duplication of business, in particular between committees with similar membership. The College's amended committee structure and subsequent revised terms of reference in operation from 2018-19, address these issues.

13 The Academic Board, chaired by the Principal, is the main academic body of the College, responsible for determining all matters related to academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The Academic Board has delegated powers to establish other committees for a particular purpose, for example, Award Board, Module Board, Assessment Scrutiny Panel, Programme Committees for the Degree and Diploma and, from September 2017, the Learning and Teaching Committee.

### **There is depth and strength of academic leadership across the whole of the organisation's higher education provision**

14 The current Principal was appointed in September 2016. The Principal is supported by the Vice-Principal and Chief Finance Officer who together form the Executive Group. The wider Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is formed from five Heads of Departments, which include: Research, Consultancy and Training; Human Resources, Resources and Compliance; and External Communications, Agency and Alumni. The staffing structure continued to be revised throughout the scrutiny period, and adjustments made in a timely manner in response to staff changes. The College revised its staffing structure to ensure effective and combined oversight of research and teaching under the Vice-Principal. The scheme of delegation sets out clearly and effectively the role responsibilities of senior staff. The team were however informed towards the end of the scrutiny period, that changes to the wider SLT were underway, and that a new post of Head of Learning, Teaching and Research and BA Programme Leader had been established. The new post subsumes the previous role of BA Programme Leader, and the responsibilities for management, learning and teaching which resided with the Vice-Principal remit. Functions of this new role will include line management of the Diploma programme leader and lecturers, as well as taking the lead on research.

15 Current responsibility for all programme delivery and learning support resides with the Vice-Principal, whose full title is Vice-Principal, Head of Quality and Standards and Registrar (previously, Vice-Principal, Head of Academic Services and Registrar). The Vice Principal attends the Board of Directors, is a member of the Executive Group and the wider Senior Leadership team. The Vice-Principal is responsible for the leadership and direction of the College's management of academic standards, quality assurance and the broader academic and student support provision. The Principal chairs the Internal Assessment Board, and the Awarding Body representative chairs the Module and Award Boards.

16 Support for the Vice-Principal is provided by the Academic Support Services Manager and the new position of Head of Learning, Teaching and Research and BA Programme Leader. The small team within the College carry out multiple roles and responsibilities but these are organised to capitalise on the skills and dynamics of the staff involved.

17 The scrutiny team's observations of committees and meetings provided evidence that the College's senior leaders, who both attend and chair many of the College committees and groups, provide efficient and robust academic leadership. In particular, the Vice Principal provides strong professional leadership and a clear understanding of the external higher education landscape.

**The organisation develops, implements and communicates its academic policies and systems in collaboration with those responsible for the delivery of its higher education programmes, and with relevant stakeholders**

18 The College has a mature partnership with its current awarding body, which has ensured the College has appropriate internal procedures for maintaining standards and for assuring and enhancing its provision. The College has some devolved responsibilities that are adapted from the awarding body processes, including the process for admissions.

19 The College has developed an appropriate set of Academic Regulations and academic quality assurance procedures in preparation for the granting of taught degree awarding powers. The small size of the College has facilitated academic staff engagement in the development of the regulations and procedures given that a significant proportion are members of both programme committees and Academic Board.

20 Staff confirmed that the College communicates its approach to implementing changes and introduction of policies and procedures through multiple mechanisms, including weekly lecturers' meetings, monthly all staff meetings and through standard guidelines available on the College's virtual learning environment (VLE). The team was provided with examples of a highly collaborative approach to the development and dissemination of strategic planning, risk oversight and awarding body regulatory changes. Academic policies, systems and activities are monitored and reviewed, and appropriate and timely action is taken when deficiencies are identified.

21 The College currently adheres to its awarding body's academic regulations and has a guide to the management of quality and standards and delegation protocols which provide effective arrangements for the maintenance of academic standards and the enhancement of the quality of education.

22 The College has the opportunity to feed into the design, approval and review of the University regulations and has membership at the Partnership Board. The awarding body maintains oversight of the application of the regulations by the College. At the most recent periodic review the awarding body confirmed confidence in the College's approach to the implementation of regulations. As stated in paragraph 19, the College has developed its own shadow Academic Regulations and external examiner procedures, which closely align to that of its current awarding body to ensure a smooth transition if granted degree awarding powers.

23 The College has developed a Guide to the Management of Quality and Standards (GMQS) which contains information on the UK Quality Code and College practices, combined with the delegation protocol. This guide ensures that the College has a clear framework for decisions within the College, at all levels. The College has considered the additional responsibilities for making decisions relating to the award of degree-level

qualifications, by establishing a clear committee structure that aligns appropriately with its quality cycle.

24 The established approach to the routine approval, monitoring and review of procedures ensures that policies and documentation are reviewed according to a published schedule, which, following a recent QAA annual monitoring visit, has been updated to provide appropriate version control and clear approving bodies (the Board of Directors, the Senior Leadership Team or the Academic Board).

25 In its application, the College provided evidence that it had established routine approval, monitoring and review procedures that align with its awarding body and the UK Quality Code. Observations and evidence provided to the team illustrated that the approaches taken were generally robust, but in the case of a revalidation in 2016, could have exhibited broader external academic input. Notwithstanding this observation, the process was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the validating University (see paragraph 51).

### **Higher education activities take full account of relevant legislation, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and associated guidance**

26 The College takes account of many key external reference points, including the Early Childhood Studies Subject Benchmark Statement, which was used as a reference point for the validation of the programme in 2013. The College's modules and programme align with the UK Quality Code. In preparation for taught degree-awarding powers scrutiny, and due to an update of the subject benchmark, a full mapping exercise was undertaken, which assured the Academic Board and was confirmed in the Annual Monitoring Visit report by QAA in 2016.

27 During the scrutiny there was evidence of progress in College staff engaging within the wider sector and taking into account changes to the current higher education landscape, its impact on the College and practice; including the changes introduced by the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations.

### **Academic risk and change management strategies are effective**

28 The College has a robust and coherent approach to the management of academic risk and change management. The Delegation and Financial Protocol sets out the risk and change management approach, which identifies final responsibilities and essential delegated responsibilities. The College routinely updates its comprehensive Norland College Risk Register which is aligned with the College's Strategic Plan and identifies both operational and academic risk.

29 The Norland College Risk Register is maintained by the Executive Management team and operationally monitored by the Chief Finance Officer. The Board of Directors regularly receives an update at each meeting and makes necessary variations to the risk level. Each sub-committee owns a number of risk areas. The SLT is updated on developments to the Register which enables the College to take timely and necessary operational actions. The academic team are informed when necessary at weekly team meetings.

30 In its application, the College provided some examples of the responsive and quick action of the senior leadership as a result of the Board raising the level of risk within the Risk Register. An example of effective change management concerned the need to acquire larger premises to accommodate growing student numbers. The College took a collegial approach to risk and change management and ensured that all stakeholders were engaged in the development and delivery of the identification and refurbishment of new premises.

The College successfully managed to complete by spring 2017, although the relevant working group delayed the full move until the end of the academic year in light of feedback. The Risk Register was updated with issues concerning IT identified in the National Student Survey (NSS) outcomes and remained rated as red throughout the scrutiny period. The Principal took direct control of the action plan and of the appointment of an IT Manager. Evidence of the above action being discussed and updated was available throughout the scrutiny observations.

**Robust mechanisms are in place to ensure that the academic standards of the organisation's higher education awards are not put at risk**

31 The awarding body retains ultimate responsibility for the academic standards of the awards offered through the College, although elements of the awarding body's procedures have been incrementally delegated to the College since 2013. The College takes deliberate steps to ensure that academic standards are aligned with the UK Quality Code, the relevant subject benchmark and external guidance. The effectiveness of the College's approach was demonstrated when the awarding body's validation panel identified no specific conditions or recommendations for the approval of the new BA award. Further confirmation is provided through periodic review and revalidation in 2016, the positive outcomes of the QAA specific course designation in 2014, the QAA Higher Education Review Alternative Providers (HER(AP)) in 2017 and through external examiner feedback. Observation of module and programme exam boards also provide evidence that the University's regulations are robustly and consistently implemented.

32 Annual monitoring and the quality cycle are the processes which ensure that standards are maintained. A process of review and evaluation is well established and effective, which considers appropriate data, and which engages with staff and students through membership of relevant committees and module review. The variety of mechanisms in place enable the College to ensure that academic standards are not put at risk and that the College discharges its responsibilities conscientiously and competently and has appropriate structures in place.

**The organisation has the capability of managing successfully the additional responsibilities vested in it were taught degree awarding powers granted**

33 In 2016 the College commissioned an independent analysis of its readiness for degree awarding powers, an approach which aligned with the strategic direction of the College to be a unique alternative to studying a degree course at a University.

34 In its application, the College considered that due reflection on the requirements of additional responsibilities had been made and that the scale of the College operation meant that the Academic Board could direct and maintain adequate oversight of functions: an assessment that was echoed in the scrutiny team's meetings with SLT. The current awarding body has provided a letter of support and has devolved significant areas of function, specifically admissions, student records and learning resources. The delegation of function assures the College's ownership of additional responsibilities.

35 The College introduced a Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) Steering Group which established a group to provide advice and constructive criticism of the College's preparations, application, and subsequent transition. The College produced a cross College TDAP action plan to ensure effective oversight of preparation and activities during the scrutiny year. Midway through the scrutiny process the College updated its plan in relation to post scrutiny, which to a large extent demonstrates recognition of the work required and the potential impact of exiting its current awarding body arrangement.

36 If the College is granted degree-awarding powers, the Academic Board will be responsible for overseeing the reliability and validity of assessment procedures, as outlined clearly in the External Examining Policy. The College intends to seek the advice of an External Advisory Board for two years after the grant of degree awarding powers and to appoint an external advisor to Academic Board.

## **B Academic standards and quality assurance**

### **Criterion B1**

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers has in place an appropriate regulatory framework to govern the award of its higher education qualifications.

### **The regulatory framework governing the organisation's higher education provision (covering, for example, student admissions, progress, assessment, appeals and complaints) is appropriate to its current status and is implemented fully and consistently**

37 The College adheres to the regulatory framework of its validating university, which is implemented fully, conscientiously and consistently. The awarding body has confirmed the compliance with its regulations through its periodic review and re-validation, and the 2017 QAA HER(AP) review, noted that the College meets expectations concerning academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities.

38 The awarding body continues to provide greater autonomy to the College, such as in areas of student admissions. The Annual Monitoring Visit Report by QAA in 2016, awarding body annual monitoring, and the 2017 HER (AP) confirm that the College is effective in its devolved responsibilities. Student awards and progression is considered by the Award Board of Examiners chaired by a representative of the awarding body and held at Norland College.

39 The assessment regulations are understood by academic and professional service staff and are operated consistently and rigorously. The College has adopted a new student record system and is responsible for the preparation of data for the exam boards, although the full functionality of the system is yet to be fully developed. Staff are experienced in operational requirements of internal, Module and Award Boards. External examiners provide a report on the assessment and progress of students, noting examples of good practice and areas requiring development.

### **The organisation has created in readiness a regulatory framework which will be appropriate for the granting of its own higher education awards**

40 Should the College be granted degree-awarding powers, the College's Guide to the Management of Quality and Standards, 'shadow' Academic Regulations and External Examining Policy will involve minimal alteration to current practices, as they are closely modelled on the current requirements of the awarding body. In the majority of instances, the current College's Academic Board will replace that of the awarding body.

41 The Vice-Principal will maintain oversight of the process for ensuring regulations, policies and procedures are updated and maintained through the transition of operating two distinct frameworks should degree-awarding powers be granted. The College's TDAP Action Plan was updated in May 2018 to include actions for each of the 13 strategy areas for post scrutiny. To a large extent this plan demonstrates a recognition of the work required and the potential impact of exiting its current awarding body arrangement, although timeframes for

exiting the partnership with the awarding body and for undertaking necessary periodic and policy approvals are unclear.

#### **Criterion B2**

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for defining and securing the academic standards of its higher education provision.

#### **Higher education awards are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the Qualification Frameworks**

42 The College delivers a level 6 BA (Hons) in Early Years Development and Learning and a Norland Diploma, which the College deems to be equivalent to a Level 3 qualification. Guidance for staff on the use of external reference points is set out in the *Guide to the Management of Quality and Academic Standards and Guidance Notes – Validating New Programmes*. The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and SEEC credit level descriptors are utilised to ensure that learning outcomes and associated assessments are set at the appropriate level. The alignment of the BA programme with the FHEQ was confirmed by the validating University at the time of initial validation and at its subsequent review and re-validation. The programme specification, course map, module specifications and programme handbook are all clearly referenced against the FHEQ.

43 Continuing adherence to these external reference points is ensured through the annual monitoring process. The external examiner confirms that the academic standards of the programme are consistent with the FHEQ. QAA reviews in 2014 and 2017 also affirm that the BA programme is positioned at the relevant level of the FHEQ. The College makes effective use of the FHEQ to both define and secure academic standards.

#### **Management of its higher education provision takes appropriate account of the Quality Code, characteristics statements; credit frameworks; relevant subject benchmark statements; and the requirements of any relevant professional and statutory bodies**

44 The College makes intelligent use of the Quality Code to inform the development and management of its quality assurance framework. It undertook a mapping exercise in 2015-16 to provide reassurance to Academic Board that its policies and procedures were aligned to the Expectations of the Quality Code. The development of new policies and the review and revision of existing policies are informed by, and benchmarked against, the Code's Expectations. Staff are informed about the Quality Code as part of their induction and the College's Guide to the Management of Quality and Standards, a key internal reference point for staff, makes explicit reference to the Quality Code.

45 The Early Childhood Studies subject benchmark statement was used as a key reference point during the initial development of the programme and its re-validation. Changes to the benchmark statement prompted a mapping exercise to provide reassurance that the programme continued to meet requirements. Although there are no professional or statutory bodies relevant to the programme, account was taken of the Government's Early Years Foundation Statement and the Department for Education's definition of full and relevant qualifications. The programme specification, incorporated into the students' Course Handbook, specifically refers to the external points of reference utilised in the development of the programme. Management responsibility for monitoring and ensuring adherence to external reference points rests with the Vice Principal.

46 The validating university, external examiner and external reviews all attest to the College's scrupulous use of the Quality Code and other external points of reference to manage its higher education provision.

**In establishing, and then maintaining, comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level programmes, the organisation explicitly seeks advice from external peers and, where appropriate, professional and statutory bodies**

47 The College draws on a range of external advice and guidance in setting and then maintaining the academic standards of its BA programme. Employers, external subject specialist academics and graduates were all consulted as part of the initial development of the degree and this was highlighted as good practice in the QAA's Review for Specific Course Designation report in 2014. The University's validation and re-validation panels included independent external academic experts. The external examiner was consulted at the time of re-validation in 2016 and the subsequent major modification to the programme in 2017. The College benefits from the ongoing advice it receives from the University's Link Tutor and the external examiner. The College is responsible for nominating an external examiner for appointment by the University. In response to a weakness identified through the 2017 HER(AP) review, the College has taken several actions to strengthen its engagement with the external examiner and to address recurring comments made in external examiner reports. The College also recognises that it could be more demanding of its external examiner. During the scrutiny period, Academic Board defined and approved a new role of external advisor for the Norland Diploma (to be filled by an experienced Norlander) to provide some external input to and scrutiny of the Diploma programme. It also approved an extension of Academic Board membership to include an external perspective to be implemented should the College acquire degree awarding powers.

48 The College has adequate mechanisms currently to seek and act upon advice from external peers, although the reliance on one external examiner for the sole programme does not provide the most robust arrangement for ensuring external examiner scrutiny of all aspects of the programme. Currently, there is additional external scrutiny provided through the role of the University Link Tutor although this will discontinue should degree awarding powers be granted.

**Programme approval, monitoring and review arrangements are robust, applied consistently, have at all levels a broadly-based external dimension and take appropriate account of the specific requirements of different levels of award and different modes of delivery**

49 The BA programme was originally validated for both full and part-time modes but only the full-time route has been delivered. BA students are also registered concurrently for the Norland Diploma, which focuses on practical skills development and includes significant placement elements. Delivery of the BA programme incorporates blended learning: none of the modules are delivered wholly online.

50 Programme approval, annual monitoring and periodic review are all currently carried out by the College in accordance with the University's policies and procedures. The BA programme was validated initially by the University in 2013 and reviewed and revalidated in 2016. A major modification to the programmes was approved by the University in 2017 prompted in part by the recommendations of the periodic review panel.

51 Due to the timing of the taught degree awarding powers scrutiny in relation to the College's academic cycle, it was not possible to observe directly the operation of internal or University approval or periodic review processes. Scrutiny of documentary evidence indicates that the process of developing the BA programme for initial validation by the University in 2013 was meticulous and informed by a range of internal and external

stakeholders and advisors, including external academics and an employer practitioner. For the periodic review and re-validation in 2016 and the subsequent major modification in 2017 the College followed the University's requirements which did not specifically require consultation with external academics other than the external examiner. Although the College has developed detailed policies and procedures for the design, development and approval of programmes in a post TDAP situation, the 2017 HER (AP) team noted a lack of formally documented internal procedures for programme approval appropriate to its current status. In response, the College has now formalised its internal programme approval and re-approval procedures clearly specifying its expectations for consultation with independent academic experts.

52 The College's current arrangements for annual monitoring fulfil the requirement of its validating university. The College has developed a Programme Monitoring Policy that sets out the general principles, systems and governance arrangements for annual monitoring and the key inputs to the process.

53 The College has strengthened its annual monitoring process by requiring written presentation of module reviews, and the introduction of annual reports for quality and enhancement, student engagement, admissions, the library and student support. Annual monitoring processes are college wide, thorough, executed meticulously and result in comprehensive enhancement plans which are monitored regularly by programme committees and Academic Board.

54 The BA programme was reviewed by the University in 2016 and re-validated for five years. The Panel's recommendations concerning the location of research methods and better integration of theory and practice led to the College obtaining approval for a major modification to the programme in 2017. The external examiner's views were taken into consideration and there was an external panel member. The College's partnership with the University was reviewed in 2015 and approved with no conditions for a further five years. The College has developed sound policies and procedures for periodic review should its application for degree awarding powers be successful. They include provision for the review panel to include external peers, industry professionals and student representatives.

### **There is an explicit and close relationship between academic planning and decisions on resource allocation**

55 The College's Financial Regulations state that 'financial plans should be consistent with strategic plans, curriculum planning and the estates strategy approved by the Board of Directors'. Management and committee responsibilities for resource allocation are clearly defined. The Principal makes recommendations to the Board regarding resources, which are discussed at the Finance Committee before approval by the Board. The SLT develops and monitors operational plans and prepares departmental budgets ensuring that resources required for programme delivery are provided.

56 The College's New Programme Approval form requires developers to explicitly identify any additional resource requirements for programme delivery, including additional staff, library resources, space and IT. The programme monitoring process provides appropriate opportunities for individual staff and programme teams to evaluate resources and identify any resource needs on an annual basis.

57 Learning resources have registered relatively lower student satisfaction rates in the NSS. The College has acted promptly to identify and address the causes of this dissatisfaction which was linked to use of the York Place premises for programme delivery up to the 2016-17 academic year. The College moved into new teaching premises at Upper Oldfield Park in the summer of 2017 enabling the provision of much improved teaching, library and IT facilities. The library opening hours have been extended, additional funds have



been made available to augment the library stock and additional licences secured to ensure greater availability of online resources. Concerns about the IT infrastructure have been identified in the College's Risk Register. An IT review has been completed and the recommended actions incorporated into the Principal's Action Plan. The College is optimistic that its vigorous action to improve learning resources will be reflected in more positive outcomes in forthcoming student surveys.

### **Criterion B3**

The education provision of an organisation granted taught degree awarding powers consistently meets its stated learning objectives and achieves its intended outcomes.

### **Strategies for learning and assessment are consistent with stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes**

58 The College ensures that its strategies for teaching, learning and assessment are consistent with stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes through a process of aligning the curriculum both with external reference points and the College's mission, aims and objectives as described in strategic plans. A Curriculum Alignment Map charts the link between component modules and programme learning outcomes. The College's Teaching and Learning Policy and Assessment and Feedback Policy have both been informed by relevant chapters of the Quality Code. The BA Programme Specification sets out the learning, teaching and assessment strategies and methods to be employed. Learning, teaching and assessment strategies are reviewed annually and periodically. The College makes good use of qualitative and quantitative data in these processes. Both the external examiner and the College's awarding University confirm that the teaching, learning and assessment strategies are consistent with stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes.

59 In 2017 the College established a Learning and Teaching Committee to advise Academic Board on learning and teaching strategy and policy. The Committee had only met twice by the end of the scrutiny period and consequently there is little evidence yet of its impact, although it has the potential to provide an effective forum for reflection on, and the development of, relevant strategies and policies.

### **Relevant staff are informed of, and provided with guidance on, its policies and procedures for programme design, monitoring and review**

60 The College has developed a useful Guide to the Management of Standards and Quality which provides an overview of the College academic policies and procedures. All policies relating to programme design, monitoring and review are stored on, and available to, staff on the intranet site. All new academic staff receive an induction which includes an introduction to the regulatory framework and key processes of programme design, monitoring and review. Staff understanding of relevant policies and procedures is advanced through their membership of deliberative committees, monthly staff meetings and active involvement in programme development, approval, monitoring, review and modification processes. Advice and guidance on the relevant University's processes including for programme modifications are provided by the University Link Tutor. All relevant staff have access to information, advice and guidance on policies and procedures for programme development, monitoring and review.

### **Responsibility for amending or improving new programme proposals is clearly assigned and subsequent action is carefully monitored**

61 The College has effective mechanisms for making amendments to its BA programme through review, re-validation and modification procedures.

Academic Board takes direct responsibility for ensuring that proposals for new programmes or revisions to the BA programme are ready for approval by the validating university and that any conditions or recommendations attached to the approval are responded to in full. The key operational responsibility for amending or improving new programme proposals rests with the BA Programme Leader assisted by any working group established to steer the development.

### **Coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained**

62 All modules on the BA programme are compulsory; there are no alternative pathways or options available to students. However, BA students are also registered for the Norland Diploma, a four-year programme, the first three years of which are delivered as a taught programme alongside the degree. The final year of the Diploma is a programme of practical training and experiential learning, known as the Newly Qualified Nanny (NQN) year. Students who successfully complete the degree and the diploma become 'Norlanders'.

63 The Periodic Review Panel recommended that the College explore ways of more effectively and explicitly linking practice (delivered through the Norland Diploma) to assessment within modules at all levels of the BA. This led to the major modification in 2017 that was designed in part to deliver closer alignment between the two programmes. Coherence of the two programmes is ensured by: liaison between the programme leaders, team planning at weekly lecturer meetings, team teaching and cross-teaching, and coordination of the assessment calendar. The changes were introduced for the 2017-18 academic year and will be formally evaluated through annual monitoring at the end of the year. Both staff and students judge the closer alignment of the two programmes to be beneficial; further work on timetabling for 2018-19 is underway. The College has effective arrangements to ensure that the curriculum delivered to students through the degree and diploma is coherent and supports its mission to provide the best early years education and training.

### **Close links are maintained between learning support services and the organisation's programme planning, approval, monitoring and review arrangements**

64 Learning support services, which comprises student welfare support, learning resources, IT support, placement and NQN provision, are represented at weekly academic team meetings, programme committees and Academic Board, ensuring that the student experience is at the heart of decision making. Learning support needs are considered during programme development, validation and review with relevant managers and co-ordinators meeting the University validation and review panels. These arrangements are incorporated into the College's proposed policies and procedures if its application for awarding powers is successful. Annual monitoring of learning support services is affected through module reviews which feed into the annual programme report and, from 2017-18, detailed annual reports from support services. Reports from the library and student support service are standing items at both programme committees and Academic Board. The College's formal arrangements for programme planning, approval, monitoring and review combined with the size of the College ensures that the links between learning support services and academic teams are strong and highly effective.

## **Robust arrangements exist for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to those students that may be studying at a distance from the organisation are adequate**

65 The College does not offer a distance learning programme, nor does it have any plans to do so. Blended learning is facilitated by the VLE which hosts all programme and lecture material and the College intranet; both are introduced to students at induction. The 2014 QAA Review identified two aspects of good practice related to technology-supported learning: the rapid development of the enriched VLE and the coherent strategic approach to the use of technology-enabled learning.

66 The College's arrangements to support students on placement are soundly-based and thoroughly executed. All students undertake work placements in a wide variety of family and institutional settings as part of the Norland Diploma. The placements are not formally assessed as part of the degree, but the outputs may be used for degree module assessments. Responsibility for the organisation of placements is vested in the experienced placement team. Offers of a place at the College are subject to completion of a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Enhanced Disclosure check. Applicants are also informed about the College's Fitness to Practise Policy and the Code of Professional Responsibilities. Changes in safeguarding legislation are monitored and internal policies and procedures amended accordingly. There are robust arrangements in place for vetting placement settings, preparing students and employers and ensuring they are visited and observed on placements. Students make use of appraisals by placement staff and families to plan their own development.

## **Through its planning, approval, review and assessment practices, the organisation defines, monitors, reviews and maintains its academic standards**

67 The programme team makes good use of external reference points such as the FHEQ, SEEC level descriptors, the Subject Benchmark Statement and Government guidance to define the academic standards of the BA programme. Programme and module learning outcomes are linked to these reference points through the curriculum alignment process. Staff are assisted in writing aims and learning outcomes at the appropriate level through written guidance. Academic standards are approved, monitored and reviewed through validation, review and re-validation processes and annual monitoring processes, which are overseen internally by Academic Board and externally by the University. Module tutors are required to reflect on the effectiveness of teaching and students' understanding in end of module reviews. Student achievement results and trends are considered in module reviews at Programme Committee and through the annual programme report at Academic Board; any concerns are addressed in action plans.

68 Assessment is a team activity; assessment tasks and their associated criteria and marking rubrics for common forms of assessment are discussed and agreed at Assessment Scrutiny Panel meetings. Samples of assessed work are moderated rigorously in accordance with the Internal Moderation Policy. Samples are also checked by the University's Link Tutor and by the external examiner. The external examiner consistently confirms that standards are set at an appropriate level and comparable to similar programmes elsewhere. The College arrangements for defining monitoring, reviewing and securing the academic standards of the BA award are well-grounded and effective.

## **Assessment criteria and practices are communicated clearly to students and staff**

69 The BA programme is subject to the University assessment regulations which are reviewed annually. The College has developed its own Norland Assessment and Feedback Policy available on the intranet which sets out the arrangements for setting, moderating and confirming assessment tasks, assessing students' work and giving feedback. Assessment criteria are specified at module level for each learning outcome and communicated to

students through the module handbook. Several marking rubrics have been developed for common types of assessment and are included in module handbooks. Module handbooks are distributed to students before the start of the semester and are made available on the VLE. Tutors explain the assessment tasks and criteria in the first week and at intervals throughout the semester. Assessment literacy is promoted by asking first year students to assess their own work against the assessment criteria and in their second-year students have the opportunity to develop their own assessment criteria. The external examiner reports that students are well prepared for assessment and the team endorses the HER (AP) team view that the College operates effective and robust processes for the assessment of students.

### **Assessment practices fully cover all declared learning objectives, learning outcomes and modes of delivery**

70 The Programme Specification sets out how the programme team ensures that all learning outcomes are assessed. The achievement of programme learning outcomes is mapped against modules through the Curriculum Alignment document. Module handbooks clearly set out the learning outcomes, associated assessment criteria and assessment methods for each module. A variety of assessment methods is used including, essays, presentations, portfolios and multiple-choice tests. All assessment activities, tasks and criteria are approved by the internal Assessment Scrutiny Panel and by the external examiner. The role and inclusive membership of Assessment Scrutiny Panels in guaranteeing that assessment is equitable, valid and reliable was judged to be good practice by the HER (AP) team and further evidence from the scrutiny supports this view.

### **Appropriately qualified external peers are engaged in the organisation's assessment processes and consistency is maintained between internal and external examiners' marking**

71 The College benefits from the role of the University's Link Tutor and the external examiner in the assessment process. The Link Tutor checks the internal moderation process and attends examination boards. The BA programme has a single external examiner, who is due to complete her four-year term of office at the end of the 2017-18 academic year. The College has made good use of JISC email lists and the Early Years network to source a suitably qualified successor. Care is taken to ensure that the College's nominations will meet the University's criteria for appointment. The external examiner receives copies of module handbooks, assessment tasks and a sample of assessed work at each level; attends examination boards and provides an annual report for the University.

72 Consistency between internal markers is maintained by a process of standardisation. The academic team meets prior to delivery to discuss the assessment criteria and their expectations. The team all assess a sample of the assignments to agree on their approach to marking. All discussions between the first and second marker and with the University's Link Tutor are recorded on a grade sheet enabling the external examiner to monitor the marking and moderation process. Assessment processes are thorough and transparent, and consistently executed.

### **The reliability and validity of the organisation's assessment procedures are monitored, and its assessment outcomes inform future programme and student planning**

73 Assessment procedures are approved by the University at the time of validation and monitored and reviewed through annual programme monitoring and periodic review processes. Students' module results are considered initially by an internal examination board, chaired by the Principal held before the University's Module and Progression and Awards Boards. The Module Board and the University Award and Progression Board are

chaired by a University representative and normally meet on a single day at the College. Although the internal and external examination boards have access to module statistics including three-year trends, this information is not used at the boards to monitor the consistency of assessment outcomes. The data is however considered during annual monitoring and there was no evidence to indicate any current or recent inconsistency in outcomes. The Annual Monitoring Report for the University analyses assessment decisions for each module and any corrective action is included in the action plan. Student progression and achievement rates are reviewed by the programme committees and by Academic Board. Modules with a higher than normal proportion of low grades or referrals are identified, the potential causes investigated, and changes made where appropriate.

74 The College has developed its own Academic Regulations should degree awarding powers be granted. These include assessment regulations, arrangements for examination boards and external examining. The College intends to continue the arrangement of two-tier module and award/progression boards.

**Clear mechanisms are in place for use when a decision is taken to close a programme or programme element, and in doing so, students' interests are safeguarded**

75 The College has only one experience of closing a programme. In 2012 the College replaced the Diploma of Higher Education and Level 6 Top-Up programmes with the current three-year BA programme. All students were supported to complete their programmes of study. There was no written policy at the time, but the College has since developed a formal policy on course closure. A proposal to close a course is made by the Principal to Academic Board. The policy makes provision for informing prospective students and enabling current students to complete their programme either at the College or at another institution. The College has submitted a Student Protection Plan as required for registration with the Office for Students. The College's policies and plans provide an appropriate framework for ensuring students' interests are secured in the event of programme closure.

**Criterion B4**

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers takes effective action to promote strengths and respond to identified limitations.

**Critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the organisation's higher education provision and action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review**

76 Critical self-assessment is built into the College's quality assurance processes and is evident from the way it responds to feedback from internal and external stakeholders. The key component is the annual monitoring process which culminates in the Annual Monitoring Report to the University. The Programme Monitoring Policy states that the purpose of annual monitoring is to perpetuate a culture which sees quality assurance as a professional issue and not a management function. Staff engage positively in a process of continuous reflection and self-assessment informing evaluation of the student learning experience. Critical self-assessment is evident in module reviews, programme monitoring reports, support function reports and the Annual Report to the University.

77 The College listens attentively to, and acts on, feedback from internal and external stakeholders. Methods of engaging students include representation on committees, surveys, a frequently asked questions facility on the VLE, and informal 'time to talk' sessions. The College has participated in the NSS since 2016. It undertakes a detailed analysis of the results with action to address concerns fed into relevant action plans. The College has taken robust action to address students' concerns regarding NSS feedback in the areas of

Learning Resources and Organisation and Management. Staff have plentiful opportunities to contribute their views: through membership of deliberative committees, monthly all staff meetings, weekly lecturer meetings, internal conferences and away days. Staff contributions are thoughtful and informed. The College maintains good contact with its alumni, known as Norlanders, and with employers and placement providers through the Placement and NQN teams. Their views are fed into reviews of the BA and Diploma curricula to ensure currency. The College has responded in full to reviews undertaken by the awarding University and the QAA. Action plans are prepared in response, either at programme or institutional level; these are monitored regularly by the deliberative committees. Critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the College: it responds constructively to internal and external monitoring and review.

**Clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny, monitoring and review of agreed learning objectives and intended outcomes**

78 Learning objectives and intended outcomes are scrutinised and approved at the time the programme is validated, periodically reviewed and re-validated and monitored on a regular basis through annual monitoring. The BA programme was last reviewed and re-validated in 2016. Two of the Panel's recommendations prompted a major modification to the programme in 2017 which was implemented for new students with effect from the 2017-18 academic year. Module reviews provide an opportunity for tutors to identify proposed change to learning outcomes and assessments which can be affected through the modification procedure. The small scale of the College's operations enables Academic Board to scrutinise preparations for validation and periodic review, proposals for programme modification and to monitor annual programme reports and resulting action plans. Responsibility for the scrutiny, monitoring and review of learning objectives and learning outcomes is set out in the terms of reference of relevant committees and the job descriptions of key postholders. Responsibility for acting in response to monitoring and review of agreed learning objectives is clearly ascribed and discharged effectively.

**Ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation (for example on programme design and development, on teaching and on student learning and assessment) are drawn into its arrangements for programme design, approval and review**

79 The College makes good use of internal and external expertise to inform the development of its degree and diploma programmes. In 2012 the College established a validation working group which included, in addition to College staff, two external academic advisors, an employer, three Norlanders and the University's Link Tutor. The University's Validation Panel and the Review and Re-validation Panel included University staff as well as an external subject specialist. The external examiner was consulted about both the review and revalidation in 2016 and major modification in 2017. Feedback from the external examiner, provided through annual reports, is addressed in programme action plans. The 2017 HER (AP) report noted that the re-validation of the BA programme lacked input from the wider academic community and the resulting recommendation has been fully addressed in the College's formal policy and procedures.

80 The College's prospective Programme Design, Development and Approval procedure makes appropriate arrangements for consultation during the development and design process and for external academic and practitioner membership of the Approval Panel. The Periodic Review procedures also incorporate appropriate externality into its arrangements.

81 The College also makes regular use of external advisers and practitioners in their approach to learning, teaching and the development of research and scholarly activity. Prior

to the submission of its application for degree awarding powers the College established a TDAP Steering Committee, which includes three external advisers and a representative of the validating University. The purpose of the Committee was to provide advice and constructive feedback during the College's preparation for its degree awarding powers application. The team notes the College's plans to appoint an external advisor for the Norland Diploma and the planned extension of Academic Board membership to include an external should it acquire degree awarding powers. As a small institution delivering only two programmes, robust arrangements for external advice and guidance are crucial to engender confidence in its academic standards and quality as it seeks to become an independent degree awarding body. The College has responded promptly and thoroughly to external recommendations concerning externality and has identified for itself opportunities to strengthen externality should it acquire degree awarding powers, including the establishment of an External Advisory Board to provide guidance for two years post TDAP and the appointment of an external to Academic Board.

### **Effective means exist for encouraging the continuous improvement of quality of provision and student achievement**

82 The College's Quality Enhancement Strategy sets out the College's commitment to the continuous improvement of teaching, learning and employability and the techniques it employs to monitor, evaluate and enhance its academic provision. These mechanisms include: annual monitoring and periodic review processes; analysis of data, including progression, retention, achievement and employment data and student feedback; action planning at programme and departmental level; the use of KPIs to drive improved performance; staff development strategies including staff development reviews, which align personal objectives to strategic priorities, teaching observations, personal research projects and internal conferences; the sharing of good practice at regular staff meetings; and the engagement of students as partners in quality assurance and enhancement. Enhancement of learning opportunities was commended in the 2017 HER (AP) report, with four features of good practice identified by the HER (AP) team. The College has a strategic and systematic approach to the enhancement student learning opportunities resulting in a highly effective learning environment.

## **C Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff**

### **Criterion C1**

The staff of an organisation granted powers to award taught degrees will be competent to teach, facilitate learning and undertake assessment to the level of the qualifications being awarded.

### **All higher education teaching staff have relevant academic and/or professional expertise**

83 Of a total head count of 12 academic staff, 8 (66 per cent) hold academic qualifications at master's level or above and the remaining 4 (33 per cent) are engaged in higher degree study. Three staff (25 per cent) have doctoral level qualifications. 58 per cent have a professional qualification in early years work. The staff of the College combine academic knowledge with professional expertise as is essential for the nature of the programmes offered. All staff have practical experience of early years work, and 75 per cent have a teaching qualification. In addition, a number of specialist teachers are engaged for practical work teaching.

84 The validating university has required that lecturers are qualified at least one level above the level at which they teach or have extensive relevant professional experience. The College now operates this principle on its own account, and this is stated in its Academic Staff Recruitment Policy.

85 The College has made a commitment to providing staff support to enhance their qualifications. This has included supporting staff who teach on the Diploma to gain the qualifications required for degree level teaching. It also includes the provision of support for staff who do not have higher degrees to complete relevant master's programmes.

86 Students commented that they benefitted from the mix of practical and professional experience in the teaching staff. They also commented on the teachers' high levels of experience and dedication to their subject.

87 All staff teaching on the higher education programmes at the College have relevant academic and professional expertise at the right level. The number of staff is small and thus there is a dependence on some staff, including senior managers, for some areas of expertise, which has the potential to be problematic if there is long term staff sickness or a resignation from a key post. To date the College has managed instances of long-term sick leave effectively and is aware of this potential issue putting in place contingency plans for such eventualities and allowing for successful succession planning.

**All higher education teaching staff have relevant engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline (through, for example, membership of subject associations, learned societies and professional bodies)**

88 There are a limited number of relevant professional and subject associations, due to the relative newness of the discipline. 50 per cent of academic staff are members of one or more relevant subject associations, and 50 per cent are Fellows or Senior Fellows of the Higher Education Academy.

89 The College has made a commitment to invest in continuing professional development of its staff. All members of the academic team are encouraged and supported both practically and financially to engage with subject, professional and other relevant associations. There is evidence that all teaching staff take advantage of this policy. One of the objectives of the Current Academic Operational Plan is to increase the number of Higher Education Academy fellowships.

90 The College is an institutional member of several relevant professional and subject bodies, including the Association for Professional Development in Early Years, the British Association for Early Childhood Education, and the European Early Childhood Education Research Association.

91 All the teaching staff at the College are engaged with the pedagogic development of their discipline. This takes many forms externally, including attendance at conference, undertaking higher degrees and practical experience, which is shared with colleagues within the College.

**All higher education teaching staff have relevant knowledge and understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline area and such knowledge and understanding directly inform and enhance their teaching**

92 64 per cent of staff have published within the area of the College's activity, and 91 per cent can demonstrate professional engagement with their discipline area. All job descriptions require academic staff to engage with the research community. As indicated all academic staff have higher degrees or are working towards them. In 2016-17 all members of



the academic team were supported to attend at least one conference relevant to their teaching and research. The aim being to ensure that their teaching reflects current research, industry developments and regulatory requirements. All staff development is recorded in a central log.

93 The College has a number of significant consultancy activities, with a portfolio of clients from the early years sector. The establishment of the Research Consultancy and Trading department has resulted in a more coordinated approach to the development of research and consultancy and a greater emphasis on the linkage to teaching activity.

94 The College has been promoting more research and advanced scholarship amongst its teaching staff. All teaching staff have protected time for such activity and have been recently surveyed by the Research, Consultancy and Trading Department for their potential research projects. This contributes to the annual Staff Development Review. There has also been an annual Research and Scholarly Activity Conference which is well attended and shares understanding of current and potential research projects. It is acknowledged that the College is in the early stages of such developments but there is a clear policy to encourage and ensure that research and advanced scholarship informs the teaching on the programmes.

**All higher education teaching staff have relevant staff development and appraisal opportunities aimed at enabling them to develop and enhance their professional competence and scholarship**

95 The Staff Development Log indicates that all staff have engaged in staff development activities in support of their professional competence and scholarship. A proportion of the staffing budget, currently 2.6 per cent is allocated to staff development activities and is managed by the Head of Human Resources. In addition, the Vice Principal manages a budget for staff attending academic conferences and applying for Fellowship of the HEA.

96 All staff have an annual Staff Development Review. This review between the member of staff and their line manager discusses progress on agreed previous years objectives, with any successes and concerns. A development plan is produced with clear objectives, including any continuing professional development (CPD) needs.

97 Staff development reviews are informed by the outcomes from teaching observations. Senior members of staff observe all lecturers at least once a year, and a development report is then completed. Objectives raised during the process may become objectives in the Staff Development Review. Following the observations, reports highlighting strengths and areas for development are produced and discussed at lecturing meetings so that good practice can be shared, and any deficiencies can be addressed.

98 The College has a clear policy in place to make sure all teaching staff have relevant staff development opportunities. The appraisal process is undertaken through the Staff Development Review, and development needs, when recognised, are acted upon with appropriate support. This process is effective for both individuals and for groups of staff, such as the Leadership programme for senior staff.

**Staff with key programme management responsibilities have experience of curriculum development and assessment design**

99 All staff with programme management responsibilities have recent experience of curriculum development and assessment design. This has involved the development of degree programmes with the validating university, including the writing of new modules and designing appropriate assessment. They have also been involved with designing and

validating programmes in other higher education institutions, external examining and the development of specialist Early Years awards.

100 The scale of the College means that all members of staff are contributing to programme management at some level. All experienced lecturers act as Module Leaders and as such are responsible for designing assessment exercises and criteria. New lecturers are not normally given such responsibilities to begin with but are mentored by a more experienced colleague prior to taking on module leadership.

101 All staff with key management responsibilities have experience of curriculum development and assessment design. However, this is in the context of a small College with only three staff having key programme responsibilities, although there is evidence of the active engagement of all teaching staff in some aspects of programme management.

**Staff with key programme management responsibilities have engagement with the activities of providers of higher education in other organisations (through, for example, involvement as external examiners, validation panel members, or external reviewers)**

102 All the key programme managers are engaged with the activities of other higher education providers. This has involved acting as external advisor for the validation of degrees, external reviewing of degree programmes, external examining, and delivering presentations at specialist conferences for higher education conferences.

## **D The environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes**

### **Criterion D1**

The teaching and learning infrastructure of an organisation granted taught degree awarding powers, including its student support and administrative support arrangements, is effective and monitored.

**The effectiveness of learning and teaching activities is monitored in relation to stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes**

103 The College relies on clear and robust internal quality assurance processes, supplemented by oversight from the awarding body, to provide effective oversight of its single degree programme and its own Norland Diploma. Academic objectives are captured in the Strategic Plan and the intended learning outcomes for the degree in the programme specification. The Teaching and Learning Policy is supported by strategies and approaches to learning and teaching that enables the approach to be implemented within the student learning experience through schemes of work and assessment methods devised by each module team.

104 Regular and effective teaching observations are conducted by the Vice-Principal and the Programme Leaders, the outcomes of which are incorporated into the Personal Development Plans of individual staff and may be discussed in general terms at team meetings. Students provide feedback for each module through a survey that features in the module review, which is considered in a critical manner by the module team. The results from the reviews of individual modules feed into the Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) process overseen by the Programme Committee and approved by Academic Board, both of which include student representatives. After approval by the Academic Board the AMR report is sent to the awarding body. Students in subsequent cohorts are informed of the agreed actions by including them in the next iteration of the module handbook.

The effectiveness of teaching and learning was confirmed by the awarding body in the 2015 Partnership Review and the 2016 programme periodic review. The October 2017 QAA HER(AP) identified 'the College-wide meticulous approach to annual monitoring which leads to comprehensive enhancement plans' as good practice.

### **Students are informed of the outcomes of assessments in a timely manner**

105 The policy and processes for assessment and feedback are sound and consistently applied, including providing constructive feedback to students within twenty days through the VLE. In the NSS, students confirm that feedback is prompt, detailed and helpful. Current students met during the scrutiny confirmed that the feedback they receive is timely, constructive and contains helpful advice on how to improve

### **Constructive and developmental feedback is given to students on their performance**

106 The College's Assessment and Feedback policy requires assessment to be 'constructive and developmental' promoting deep learning and helping learners to evaluate and enhance their personal performance and development. To complement the narrative feedback and summary marks, the College introduced a coding system whereby comments are highlighted in different colours such as green for strengths and where assessment criteria have been met, or yellow to identify how the student can improve the quality of the work or deepen their analysis. In 2016 the external examiner raised an issue concerning the consistency of the feedback from different markers. This has been addressed by modifying the form used to provide feedback to students and at the 2018 Examination and Award boards the external examiner commented favourably on the feedback provided to students.

### **Feedback from students, staff (and where relevant) employers and other institutional stakeholders is obtained and evaluated, and clear mechanisms exist to provide feedback to all such constituencies**

107 The College operates effective, systematic, multi-evidence processes to collect feedback from stakeholders within and beyond the institution. The stakeholders consulted include students, staff, past students and employers. Student views are considered systematically using the approach specified in the Student Engagement Policy. This Policy includes provision for a Student Engagement Facilitator, regular meetings of the Staff Student Liaison Committee, and student membership of committees. In addition, 'You said/ We did' emails help to keep students informed. Responses to student feedback are reported in the module handbooks for the next cohort.

108 Staff are represented on all governing and management bodies where they are effective contributors, and there are regular staff team meetings (weekly and monthly), departmental meetings and working groups. The Principal and the Vice-Principal operate an 'open door' policy so that staff and students have ready access to the Executive. All suggestions are taken forward for evaluation and action through established mechanisms such as action and operational plans, the SLT or Academic Board meetings or, where feasible, simply implemented by the Principal. A 'Suggestions Box' enables anonymous feedback, which is considered at the monthly meeting of the SLT.

109 The College engages continuously with external stakeholders through its bespoke employment agency for past students and potential employers, the Norland Agency. The external stakeholders communicate views to the College through placement reports on students and Newly Qualified Nanny (NQN) appraisals from employers. The placement and NQN teams promote active engagement with employers through regular placement visits and discussion with employers about expectations and progress and this intelligence feeds into the College's quality processes.

**Students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way, and account is taken of different students' needs**

110 Students are effectively supported throughout their application, enrolment and transition to higher education. Prospective students receive helpful information, advice and support through the College website, open days, and direct contact. Applicants in receipt of an offer are enrolled onto a closed social media site to facilitate relationship building and information exchange. Applicants are supported through the enquiry and application process by the Admissions Officer, a post created in 2016, after feedback from students, to provide a single point of contact for applicants. On acceptance students receive enrolment information and an invitation to an induction programme during Welcome Week. Feedback on these processes is sought and if required appropriate changes made.

111 The effective support is initiated at an early stage by the Student Support Officer (SSO) who makes contact directly with those students who disclose support needs in their UCAS application and/or medical health questionnaires. Following a discussion between the SSO and the student an individual learning plan is created, and/or any other support mechanism needed identified. Feedback from students indicated that they were appreciative of the support that they had received. The agreed learning plans are shared with the academic team and any students in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) are directed to appropriate support, which is surveyed annually to ensure that it remains current.

**Available learning support materials are adequate to support students in the achievement of the stated purposes of their study programmes**

112 The requirements of the Teaching and Learning Policy are delivered through an effective physical and virtual infrastructure. There are robust internal mechanisms in place to monitor the quality of this infrastructure through the academic governance arrangements informed by appropriate quality procedures and processes and the programme review processes. The College is externally accountable to its degree awarding body by an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and module review through the annual cycle, and examination and progression Boards chaired by the University.

113 The facilities and activities available include; a new Learning Resource Centre; state of the art equipment in a newly refurbished building; comprehensive support and advisory services including personal tutoring, counselling and dedicated support staff. The library and information services are managed by a full-time Learning Resources Manager. Learning resource needs are identified through module reviews, module boards, programme committees, assessment scrutiny panels and incorporated into the Academic Operational Plan. All lecture notes and resources are made available to students through the VLE prior to lectures.

114 Dissatisfaction with learning resources emerged when the College entered the NSS for the first time in 2016. The issue was identified as a problem with the IT infrastructure. which was being addressed in several ways including the move to the new teaching building in Upper Oldfield Park, a higher connection speed and implementation of recommendations from a review undertaken by an external IT consultancy. The most recent 2018 NSS results show a minor improvement in student satisfaction, although it should be acknowledged that the students completing this survey had had little opportunity to appreciate the changes introduced.

115 The October 2017 HER (AP) concluded that 'the strategic and systematic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities resulting in a highly effective learning environment' was a feature of good practice.

**The effectiveness of any student and staff advisory and counselling services is monitored, and any resource needs arising are considered**

116 Once enrolled, a student can access effective academic and pastoral support from identified sources, including a personal tutor, a student counsellor, the SSO and an outsourced company that supports students in receipt of DSA. The progress of students is rigorously monitored by tutors at regular staff meetings using a traffic light system, as defined in the Improving Progress policy, to highlight and support students at academic risk. Regular feedback on student progression is obtained from Student Engagement Representatives (SERs) as student support is a standing item at the weekly staff meeting.

117 The College has its own in-house employment agency that also provides CPD courses. Once in employment, alumni continue to have access through the Norland Agency to academic staff and consultants for assistance with any aspect of early years practice that they may need. The Norland Agency encourages employers to include a CPD budget for graduates in their standard contracts of employment. Finally, every student and qualified Norlander is expected to act in a manner that justifies trust and confidence and is fully detailed in the Norland Code of Professional Responsibilities. This continuing service, incorporating rights and responsibilities, is comprehensive and a significant strength of the College and is free to alumni.

118 Staff have access to an Employee Assistance Programme that provides work/life support services and the College's Occupational Health consultant.

**Administrative support systems are able to monitor student progression and performance accurately, and provide timely and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs**

119 In 2015-16, the awarding body informed the College that it would no longer be able to access the University's student record system, which until then had been used to store student achievement data. Consequently, the College has invested in a new student record system that includes assessment grades; retention, progression and achievement data; and a record of all meetings with students and actions agreed. A new position of Data and Information Manager has also been established. While these represent a significant financial investment by the College, marks are transferred manually from the VLE to the student record system and examination boards are used to confirm the accuracy of data entered, with occasional data correction, which indicates that the full functionality of the system is yet to be implemented.

120 The College is exploring mechanisms for the secure production of certificates for the Norland Diploma, which will also enable the secure production of degree certificates.

**Effective and confidential mechanisms are in place to deal with all complaints regarding academic and non-academic matters**

121 The College has a Students' Complaints Procedure, a Formal Complaints Procedure (for non-academic matters) and an Application Appeals and Complaints Procedure that are all aligned with the UK Quality Code. Currently, the top-level process is conducted by the validating University. The College is proud of the fact that no appeals or complaints have been lodged in over five years and that no student has applied directly to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

### **Staff involved with supporting the delivery of the organisation's higher education provision are given adequate opportunities for professional development**

122 The College has a clear and detailed Staff Development Review and CPD Policy supported by a framework for initiating and implementing staff CPD in an organised and structured manner that is consistently applied. Job descriptions require staff to take responsibility for their own personal development to meet personal objectives. Staff development needs are identified at induction, through probation and through annual Staff Development Review. On an annual basis all staff participate in the Staff Development Review process that includes an opportunity to discuss staff CPD. Staff can request any CPD that will enhance their career: such requests are looked upon favourably provided the CPD contributes to enhancing the student experience and aligns with the College's strategic objectives. The CPD budget is reviewed each year and has increased significantly over the last five years. In 2014 the College gained a Silver Investors in People award and the report identified the Personal Development Plan and linked discussion on future career development as good practice.

### **Information that the organisation produces concerning its higher education provision is accurate and complete**

123 The definitive Delegation Protocol is effective and appropriate to the small-scale of the provider's higher education. The protocol indicates that the Principal is the authority to approve all externally published information and, in her absence, the Vice-Principal; except for social media communications made on behalf of the College that are authorised by the Head of External Communications/Consultancy Manager. The Vice-Principal is responsible for final approval of Programme and Module Handbooks and other academic documents prepared by the Programme Leader and other staff. The Data Manager is responsible for ensuring the accuracy, completeness and version control of the documents on the web.

### **Equal opportunities policies are in place and implemented effectively**

124 There is a clear and effective Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy that addresses the legislation related to inclusion and diversity identified in the Equality Act 2010. The College is aware of the challenges it faces in recruiting a more diverse student population as the workforce in the sector in which the College operates is almost exclusively female. In addition, the historical demographic of the student population attracted to Norland College has been restricted in terms of socio-economic background and ethnicity. To counter this, it has established a Widening Participation Group to promote equal opportunities and diversity during student recruitment and to investigate how the College might support students from minority backgrounds. There is a Widening Participation Strategy and action plan supported by a bursary and flexible payment schemes. The College anticipates using resources flowing from the charitable foundation being established to provide additional financial support (scholarships and bursaries) for students from low income families and care leavers.

125 The actions taken so far have resulted in recruiting some males, the first of which graduated in 2018. The College is monitoring carefully how they fare in gaining employment. The College has also had some recent success in recruiting students from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

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