



Higher Education Review of Manchester Metropolitan University

April 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Manchester Metropolitan University. The review took place from 11 to 15 April 2016 and was conducted by a team of five reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Alan Bilsborough
- Dr Frank Haddleton
- Ms Barbara Howell
- Mr Mark Langley
- Miss Natalie-Dawn Hodgson (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Manchester Metropolitan University

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Manchester Metropolitan University.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Manchester Metropolitan University.

- The comprehensive range of high-quality information available to students prior to enrolment that effectively supports their transition through the recruitment, selection and admission processes (Expectation B2).
- The integrated range of services provided by the University to support successful student development and achievement (Expectation B4).
- The variety of approaches promoting employability which underpin students' professional development (Expectation B4).
- The innovative and effective use of management information to continually monitor and improve the University's programmes and units (Expectation B8).
- The University's reflective approach to enhancing postgraduate research opportunities for professional development and academic study, and to promoting an inclusive research student community (Expectation B11).
- The structures in place to evaluate and develop enhancement activities to incrementally improve student learning opportunities (Enhancement).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Manchester Metropolitan University.

By July 2016:

- strengthen the arrangements for monitoring the receipt and completeness of external examiners' reports for collaborative provision (Expectation B7)
- clarify the lines of responsibility for the sign-off of published information (Expectation C).

By September 2016:

- implement consistent mechanisms for effective communication to students regarding their studies (Expectation B5)
- ensure information about appeals and complaints is consistently conveyed to staff and students (Expectation B9)
- strengthen oversight of formal processes for the ongoing monitoring of academic activities of collaborative and academic partners (Expectation B10).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The actions being taken to introduce a process for the periodic review of all research degree programmes (Expectation A3.3).

Theme: Student Employability

The University has a strategic approach to student employability which is encompassed within the Employability, Employment and Enterprise Strategy. The University also has key performance indicators for student employability within the Corporate Strategy 2012-2017, including a target of 70 per cent of students in graduate-level employment or study.

The University's curriculum frameworks make explicit reference to employability skills and graduate learning outcomes within the design of the programme. Unit specifications articulate the employability skills that a student engages in within assessment. Some units are linked to employers and the University works in partnership with employers to deliver these units.

Within faculties there are Career Employability Advisors who work alongside the Faculty Employability Champions to encourage new initiatives, support staff development and share good practice. Careers support is provided to students from the moment they arrive at the University to graduation and beyond. Careers support is provided to students through careers information and guidance, and employer engagement through careers fairs, information sessions, employer-led networking cafés and skills workshops. There is also an employability hub which provides a single source of information on employability and employments.

Employers met by the team commented very positively on the preparedness of students for the workplace and the quality of graduates.

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

About Manchester Metropolitan University

The University's origins can be traced back to the early nineteenth century as a centre of Technology, Art and Design, which was formed from Manchester Mechanics' Institution (founded in 1824) and Manchester School of Design (1838). Subsequently, schools of Commerce (1889), Education (1878) and Domestic Science (1880) were added along with colleges at Didsbury, Crewe, Alsager and the former Domestic and Trades College (1911), latterly Hollings College. The institution became Manchester Polytechnic in 1970 and was designated a university with its own degree awarding powers in 1992.

The University comprises seven faculties based at the Manchester Campus and a Cheshire Faculty and Campus located at Crewe. The University has been consolidating its Manchester estate to a single campus on Oxford Road to encourage the sharing of subject-specific and pedagogic expertise. The University has around 37,000 students studying on over 800 courses. A significant proportion of these are over 21 years of age. The majority of students study single honours degrees with only a small proportion studying for combined honours. The University has around 900 students studying on postgraduate

research programmes and plans to grow numbers over the period of the new Strategic Framework.

The University has 49 local and international collaborative partners with approximately 4,000 students registered with the University. UK-based partner colleges deliver the majority of the University's foundation degree provision.

The University's mission statement is 'to be the UK's leading University for World-Class Professionals'. The current Corporate Strategy 2012-2017 identifies five strands and key performance indicators in student experience, research, innovation, internationalism and institutional sustainability. The University is currently developing a new Strategic Framework (2016-17 to 2021-22) with the aspiration to become the best modern university in the UK. Priorities for the future strategy include: delivering an outstanding educational experience for students; growing the institutional research base; expanding partnerships with business; developing the postgraduate portfolio; and building international partnerships.

A new Vice-Chancellor was appointed in June 2015 and to strengthen the academic leadership of the University the senior team has been restructured and the University is in the process of appointing new Pro Vice-Chancellor positions to strategically lead key areas. To strengthen the academic management of the University, the separate Executive and Directorate Groups have been combined to create a University Executive Group.

The University has identified a number of key challenges and priorities for the future. It is working to further improve retention and progression as a priority through the support of students. The University plans to grow postgraduate taught and research student numbers and its part-time and externally funded portfolio, and increase its share of international students as a means of achieving a more balanced portfolio of provision. Further priorities include increasing the number of international partnerships to raise the profile of the University, and the development of split-site and distance-learning PhDs to attract a wider applicant base.

The 2009 Institutional Audit by QAA concluded that confidence could reasonably be placed in the soundness of management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The University completed a mid-cycle follow-up report in 2012. Since that date the University has undertaken a major review of the support for student employability which resulted in the Employment, Employability and Enterprise Strategy and continued work on the Enhancing Quality and Assessment for Learning (EQAL) Initiative, which is designed to enhance the student experience through the curriculum, teaching, infrastructure and the learning environment. Another significant development has been the Continuous Monitoring and Improvement project which has introduced a real-time, online data dashboard for the continuous monitoring of taught programmes.

Explanation of the findings about Manchester Metropolitan University

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

1 Judgement: The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The Regulations for the Academic Awards of and Related Matters of the University define titling and naming conventions, credit requirements, FHEQ levels, characteristics, outcomes and purposes of all University qualifications. Programme approval and review test alignment to *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and, in the case of postgraduate programmes where benchmark statements may not be available, relevant Qualifications Characteristic Statements. Programme specifications outline learning outcomes, educational aims and graduate outcomes. The assessment regulations and Curriculum Frameworks establish the volume and weighting of study.

1.2 The design of the University's processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.3 The review team tested the Expectation by a review of reports and minutes from the approval of new awards, Regulations for Academic Awards of the University, Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate programmes, external examiners' reports, Curriculum Frameworks and Programme Specifications. The team also met with staff and students.

1.4 The Regulations for the Academic Awards of the University provide a definitive list of awards offered by the University, including credit thresholds, FHEQ level and titling conventions. The assessment regulations in conjunction with the three Curriculum

Frameworks, for undergraduate, taught postgraduate and flexible programmes of study, provide a set of definitive principles and structures that govern the design and approval of all programmes.

1.5 Programme specifications developed during programme design provide the definitive record for a particular award. Programme specifications reviewed by the team confirm that there is explicit reference to the FHEQ level and evidence of appropriate engagement with relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics, and professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements where appropriate. Students whom the team met confirmed the availability of programme specifications on the virtual learning environment (VLE) and found them to contain the units to be studied, contact hours, and information about how they are taught and assessed.

1.6 The staff whom the review team met confirmed that they were fully aware of external reference points and their use in the design and delivery of programmes. There is also evidence of careful consideration of alignment of the learning outcomes to the relevant FHEQ level and Subject Benchmark Statements as part of the programme approval process.

1.7 External examiner reports provide confirmation of ongoing alignment with external reference points to maintain the academic standards of awards.

1.8 The review team finds that the University, through its regulations, assessment regulations and curriculum frameworks, ensures that academic standards are secured at the appropriate level and with external oversight. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated risk level is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.9 The responsibilities of the Board of Governors and functions with delegated responsibility to the Academic Board are described in the Constitutional Provisions and Committee Handbook. Academic Board has ultimate responsibility for the oversight and approval of Regulations and Frameworks, and of academic standards, through oversight of the Annual Report on Quality and Standards. The Academic Quality and Standards Committee, the Student Experience Committee and the Research Degrees Committee then consider their respective regulations, policies and codes of practice and make recommendations to Academic Board. Local-level oversight of academic standards is through external examining, Assessment Boards, Faculty Academic Quality and Standards Committees (FAQSCs) and Faculty Student Experience Committees (FSECs) for the effective and consistent application of assessment regulations, external examiner appointments and programme approval, monitoring and review.

1.10 Following a recommendation from the QAA Institutional Audit in 2009, the University has revised committee terms of reference to incorporate a quorum of 50 per cent membership attendance which is monitored annually at the end of the year.

1.11 The University has three Curriculum Frameworks, one for undergraduate programmes, including the integrated master's; one for postgraduate taught programmes incorporating taught doctoral programmes; and the Flexible Curriculum Framework for short, flexible, employer-based accredited provision or international activity. (See also section A1.)

1.12 The University assessment regulations for taught and postgraduate research programmes set clear criteria for their respective qualification outcomes. All taught programmes align to the assessment regulations unless variation or exception is granted by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee on behalf of Academic Board. Assessment regulations for taught programmes are reviewed annually to take account of best practice within the sector and matters raised by the external examiners, staff and other stakeholders, with recommendations considered by Academic Board.

1.13 The committee structure, curriculum frameworks and regulations would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.14 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the Expectation through a review of the terms of reference of key committees, the Schedule of Delegated Authority, the Committee Handbook, minutes and agenda items from Academic Board and its subcommittees (Academic Quality and Standards Committee, Student Experience Committee and Research Degrees Committee), minutes from Faculty Student Experience Committees, Programme Committee minutes, the Review of Programme Committees, Annual Reports on Quality and Standards, Assessment Policies and Assessment Boards, external panel representation and external examiner reports. The team also met staff.

1.15 The responsibilities of Academic Board are set out in the University's Articles of Governance. Academic Board considers and advises on matters relating to awarding taught and research degrees and to help it carry out its duties, the Board delegates responsibility

for some matters relating to quality management to its committees, as well as to Boards of Examiners and Programme Committees.

1.16 The Research Degree Committee and the Student Experience Committee have delegated responsibility from Academic Board for the oversight of the operation of strategies, policies, systems, procedures and codes of practice relating to research degrees and the strategic enhancement of the student experience.

1.17 Academic Quality and Standards Committee takes oversight of quality assurance matters. Each year the Centre for Academic and Quality Enhancement provides a report relating to aspects of quality and standards including detail of work undertaken in the previous year, noting that it will be submitted to Academic Board for approval. Minutes of Academic Board confirmed thorough discussion of the Academic Quality and Standards Annual report and appropriate oversight.

1.18 The Faculty Academic Quality and Standards Committee undertake detailed local-level oversight of the health of faculty provision (including collaborative provision, where applicable) on behalf of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee. The Faculty Student Experience Committees have delegated responsibility for procedural matters, their enactment, and implementation, monitoring and advice.

1.19 Through a review of the minutes of Academic Quality and Standards Committee, the team confirmed scrutiny of termly and annual reports from Faculty Academic Quality and Standards Committees. Similarly, the Student Experience Committee considers ongoing matters and annual reports from the Faculty Student Experience Committees.

1.20 Programme Committees reporting to Faculty Student Experience Committee take oversight of matters relating to the operation, delivery and standards of the programme, and to the overall experience of students on the programme. A review of the Programme Committees took place in spring 2014, with outcomes evaluated in May 2015 at Student Experience Committee. Programme Committee minutes reviewed by the team were found to be comprehensive with a verbal report from programme leads to the most recent Faculty Student Experience Committee.

1.21 The team confirmed that the University has clear guidance on the use of external representation on review panels and also makes use of external examiner reports for ongoing compliance with assessment processes and standards. The University has clear guidance for management, verification, marking and moderation of assessment and also of the operation of Assessment Boards (see also Expectation A3.3). Review of the assessment regulations takes place annually with careful consideration of recommendations at Academic Board.

1.22 The team considers that the University has effective structures in place to secure academic standards across its portfolio of academic provision. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.23 Programme and unit specifications based on standard templates act as a definitive reference document for programme content and delivery. Programme specifications are publicly available with unit-level information provided to the students via the VLE or other methods of delivery where the VLE is not available.

1.24 Major or minor amendments to programmes follow set institutional procedures with mechanisms managed using a risk-based approach. Programme modifications are tracked throughout the approval cycle with cumulative effects of changes monitored by the chairs of Faculty Academic Quality and Standards Committee.

1.25 The University's approach to meeting this Expectation, and its arrangements for providing, using and maintaining programme specifications, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.26 The review team tested the Expectation through consideration of a sample of programme specifications, unit specifications and proformas, student handbooks, Programme Handbook Policy and Guidelines, approval and modification documentation, Regulations for Academic Awards, and meetings with staff and students.

1.27 Programme Handbook Policy and Guidelines outline the requirements of students' handbooks for all taught programmes. For research degrees, the Research Student Handbook applies.

1.28 Programme specifications are clear and comprehensive and readily available through the VLE. The content of programme specifications is subject to thorough scrutiny during the approval process. Changes to programmes are handled in accordance with the University's processes for minor and major modifications and protocols are in place for considering the cumulative effect of minor modifications on approved provision.

1.29 Course handbooks or unit-level handbooks, which draw on information contained within programme specifications, are the main source of information for students on learning outcomes and assessment information. Students whom the team met confirmed that they have access to programme specifications and programme or unit-level handbooks as appropriate and found them to be helpful and clear.

1.30 Certificates and transcripts of the University's awards are produced centrally following notification from Faculty Student and Academic Services with guidance on their content found within the Regulations for Academic Awards.

1.31 The review team finds that the University has effective processes for developing, approving and reviewing definitive programme award documentation, and concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.32 The University has consistent and rigorous processes for the approval of all programmes that result in an award of the University, thus ensuring the setting and alignment of academic standards to UK threshold standards. These procedures are described in guidance provided by the Centre for Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement and Strategic Planning & Management Information department, and are informed by three curriculum frameworks which are used to define the criteria for the approval of programmes which are consistent with the FHEQ.

1.33 Any new award of the University is approved through Academic Board prior to the development of the programme curriculum and the programme approval event. Taught programme approval is achieved through the University's Programme Approval, Review and Major Modification (PARM) process, typically culminating in a faculty-based event. However, more streamlined University Standing Panels can alternatively be used for the approval of new awards, where they are offered within a low-risk cognate programme. The programme approval period is typically six years, but a number of collaborative programmes have received a shortened period in recent years.

1.34 Recommendations from the approval event, including confirmation of compliance with all conditions set by the panel, are submitted to the Head of the Centre for Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement for confirmation and reporting to the University's Academic Quality and Standards Committee, via the Annual Quality and Standards Report. Academic Board are subsequently informed of outcomes through the annual report on quality and standards.

1.35 New research degree titles are approved through consideration by the Research Degrees Committee and Academic Board, which focuses on the business case for the programme rather than exploring the University's ability to deliver it. Where research degrees have a taught component, the approval and review process is identical to that for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes but managed by the Graduate School rather than the Centre for Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement.

1.36 The review team examined these processes by detailed documentary study, including validation documents and reports, and discussion with members of relevant committees and staff responsible for programme development and approval, for both taught and research programmes. Processes ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with the University's own academic frameworks and regulations.

1.37 The team found the procedures appropriate and robust in ensuring that academic standards are set in accordance with internal and external frameworks, and that they operate consistently across the University. Proposals were appropriately specified in the context of the University's frameworks, and validation reports demonstrated alignment with qualifications descriptors and Subject Benchmark Statements. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.38 The University's processes for programme approval, monitoring and review ensure congruence between achieved learning outcomes and the award of credit and qualifications so that institutional and national threshold standards are met. Learning outcomes are set during programme design and approval while alignment with the FHEQ is evaluated during programme approval and review. Unit specifications outline learning outcomes and associated assessment while programme specifications incorporate interim and final learning outcomes and graduate outcomes. Compliance with the University's curriculum frameworks ensures that the number and level of learning outcomes match pedagogic and regulatory requirements, with alignment externally scrutinised during Programme Approval and Review. Assessments are designed to enable students to demonstrate achieved learning outcomes, with the Institutional Codes of Practice (ICP) for Assessment of Students and associated resources providing definitive guidance on the relationship between intended learning outcomes and assessments which conform to internal and external threshold standards. Students receive assessment briefs detailing the learning outcomes for their assessments, with the conduct of assessment governed by the assessment regulations.

1.39 Programmes typically incorporate a wide range of assessment design to motivate students and promote skills development, and to accommodate students with disabilities with minimal changes. The matrix of University Standard Descriptors provides a consistent, explicit framework for marking assignments, with marks also subject to internal and external moderation in accord with the Institutional Procedures for Verification, Marking and Moderation, confirming that the descriptors are used effectively. Student achievement is confirmed by Assessment Boards governed by the Assessment Regulations, so ensuring compliance with the requirements for each award. The principles and thresholds in the University's APL policy ensure that existing credit must align with the programme, stage or unit learning outcomes of the target award.

1.40 The University's policies and procedures would enable Expectation A3.2 to be met through thorough processes and guidance for the design, implementation and review of programmes that detail intended learning outcomes, and which match with the relevant levels of the FHEQ. The University's ICP for the Assessment of Students, the curriculum frameworks and Standard Descriptors provide a sound framework for programme and assessment design and evaluation, reinforced and guided by appropriate independent externality.

1.41 The team considered a wide range of documentation including: procedures for programme approval, monitoring and review, minutes of programme approval and programme review panels, guidance on unit and programme specifications and examples of these, assessment briefs, ICP for the Assessment of Students, Institutional Procedures for Verification, Marking & Moderation, University standard descriptors, and external assessor and external examiner reports. The team met teaching and administrative staff associated

with programme design and assessment, and with students, and spoke to external examiners.

1.42 The process works effectively in practice. Unit and programme specifications are well designed, clear and explicit in intended learning outcomes. External assessors and external examiners provide authoritative critical scrutiny and supportive commentary on programme design and judgements of assessment performance. There is external scrutiny of proposals at critical points during programme approval and re-approval. Internal and external moderation ensure that the University's assessment framework is used appropriately between these events. The inclusion of students as members of Programme Approval Panels facilitates a student perspective on assessment design and alignment.

1.43 Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.44 The University has robust procedures for programme review which allow for systematic consideration of the academic standards of existing programmes. Both faculty-based panels (for provision assessed to be of medium to high risk to the University, including collaborative provision and complex provision) and University Standing Panels (for low-risk provision) are used to establish whether a programme is continuing to meet UK threshold standards, through discussions based on Course Development Plans.

1.45 On an ongoing basis, the Continuous Monitoring and Improvement (CMI) dashboard and the Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) that emerge from the process evaluate the achievement of standards. External examiners have access to the CMI dashboard to draw conclusions on academic standards, and links to their reports are provided there. Typically, collaborative partners use their own monitoring information based on University requirements, alongside University-generated information such as external examiners' reports, in place of the CMI dashboard.

1.46 Postgraduate research degrees undergo a more traditional form of annual monitoring, in the form of an Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report considered by the Research Degrees Committee. The procedures and arrangements for the periodic review of taught research programmes are the same as those for the University's standard taught provision. However, overarching responsibility for the processes lies with the Graduate School rather than the Centre for Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement (CASQE). The University is currently exploring the introduction of a periodic review process for traditional research programmes, for implementation in September 2017. Although the Research Degrees Committee has considered a proposal to introduce such a process, this has yet to be approved by the University's Academic Board. The review team therefore **affirms** that actions are being taken to introduce a process for the periodic review of all research degrees.

1.47 The University's Academic Board are assured that UK threshold academic standards are achieved and that its academic standards are being maintained through the annual reports from the Academic Quality and Standards Committee.

1.48 The review team considered a wide range of monitoring and review documents, and met staff with varying levels of responsibility and involvement in the monitoring and review of academic standards at programme, faculty and University level. The University's processes address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the University are being maintained.

1.49 On the basis of this, the team concludes that the University's programme monitoring and review procedures address both UK threshold academic standards and those of the institution itself. There is an appropriate and consistent focus on the maintenance of academic standards, with an emphasis on external reference points. The review team found appropriate levels of analysis of data at faculty and University level, and the requirements of

the process in relation to action planning are duly observed. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.50 The University makes consistent use of external expertise, including that of external assessors and examiners, members of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and employers, in setting and maintaining academic standards. External developments, such as those relating to the Quality Code, are disseminated internally through CASQE. Subject expert external assessors (typically two for Programme Approval and one for Review and Modification), nominated through faculties, are involved in Programme Approvals and Reviews, and some Programme Modification, focusing on threshold academic standards, congruence with the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. External assessors also serve on University Standing Panels for multidisciplinary reviews and provide non-subject-specific judgements.

1.51 External examiners report on programmes benchmarked against UK threshold standards, and on the maintenance of academic standards. In addition, subject external examiners are consulted on the implications for threshold standards of any significant programme modifications, and provide comments during Programme Review. Award external examiners provide non-subject-specific judgements including alignment to the FHEQ and conformity with the Assessment Regulations. Subject and award external examiners' comments contribute to the Annual Review of Assessment Regulations.

1.52 PSRB participation in Programme Approvals and Reviews and, where appropriate, provision of PSRB standards descriptors and regulations provides further external expertise, contributing to setting and maintaining academic standards. Employers also contribute to programmes through placement provision, internships, work-based learning and industry briefs, provide feedback to Programme Review via the Course Development Plan, and work with academic staff to meet PSRB requirements. Placement providers support curricular development through feedback on professional practice; their roles and responsibilities for maintaining appropriate standards during student placements are communicated through the ICP for Placement and Work-Based Learning and by Placement Coordinators and Faculty Teams.

1.53 The University's policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met. External assessor independence and impartiality are assured through the requirement that they must have had no prior formal involvement with the University for the preceding five years, as well as meeting appropriate standards of experience and expertise. Safeguards, including a prohibition on reciprocal marking, are also in place to assure the independence of subject and award external examiners.

1.54 To test the Expectation, the team considered a range of policies and procedures, as well as programme approval, review and modification guides, external examiner handbooks, forms and templates, and records of programme approval and review events. The team met academic and administrative staff and employers, and held discussions with external examiners.

1.55 The process works well in practice. Institutional processes secure the appointment, independence and impartiality of suitably experienced external assessors and examiners. During Programme Approval, Review and Major Modification events, external assessors evaluate proposed threshold academic standards and their alignment with FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. External examiners' reports indicate that they provide impartial commentary on the management, performance and assessment of programmes benchmarked against UK and institutional threshold standards, both through their scrutiny of assessment and their participation in Programme Modification and Review events. Reports seen by the team were suitably detailed and balanced, and included commendations, issues of concern and proposals for improvements at departmental and institutional levels. Equally, the documentation indicated that externals' comments were considered seriously and responded to appropriately by programme teams. Outcomes seen by the team included approval, conditional approval and subsequent programme withdrawal when teams were unable to meet Panel conditions. In this last case, externals were expressly consulted over whether conditions had been met to their satisfaction, and over the final decision.

1.56 PSRB participation makes an important contribution to almost 60 programmes with a professional element, while employers' views inform the design, practice and assessment of many vocationally relevant assignments within a wide range of programmes, an involvement deepened and strengthened by the University's strategic emphasis on employability.

1.57 The review team found that the University has policies and procedures in place to ensure that independent and authoritative externality is central to its processes for programme design, approval, modification and review, and to the evaluation of student achievement in meeting intended learning outcomes. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.59 All Expectations in this area are met, and the level of risk is low in each case.

1.60 The University aligns its qualifications with the FHEQ, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and Qualifications Characteristic Statements, and establishes the appropriate programme outcomes and volume of study for its awards. There are effective structures in place to secure academic standards across its portfolio of academic provision and appropriate arrangements in place for providing, using and maintaining definitive programme information. The University has consistent and rigorous processes for the approval of all programmes that result in an award of the University, thus ensuring the setting and alignment of academic standards to UK threshold standards. There are robust procedures for programme review which allow for systematic consideration of the academic standards of existing programmes. External and independent expertise is central to the University's processes for programme design, approval, modification and review, and to the evaluation of student achievement in meeting intended learning outcomes.

1.61 There is one affirmation relating to Expectation A3.3 which concerns the actions being taken to introduce periodic reviews of research degrees.

1.62 The review team concludes that the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards at the University **meet** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 The University aims to develop programmes that are responsive to external drivers and the needs of employers, industry and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, and collaborates with practitioners, industry advisory panel members and service users to inform this development. In support of this, the University is currently reviewing its portfolio of programmes, commencing with the review of postgraduate taught provision in 2015 and 2016, with a review of the undergraduate portfolio due in 2016.

2.2 Proposals for new programmes, including programmes to be delivered by collaborative partners, are considered by Faculty Executive Groups, prior to strategic approval by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Academic Board. In advance of this, there is consideration by a range of University-level support functions including marketing, finance, legal, academic quality and registry of the business case.

2.3 The University makes clear the criteria against which programme proposals are assessed in the programme approval process. A planning meeting identifies the timelines, responsibilities and resources for programme design and development. The process is informed by a wide range of University strategies and institutional codes of practice, in addition to external frameworks, benchmarks and requirements and the views of employers. Guidance and support from the Centre for Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement (CASQE) and the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) aid in their interpretation and adoption.

2.4 A programme approval event considers the proposal, and makes recommendations to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee, with the outcome reported to Academic Board. The event is typically faculty-based, with an independent chair, independent student membership and subject-specific external membership. However, it is also possible for new award titles to be considered within a wider programme review event, in which case approval could be undertaken either by the faculty-based panel or through a University Standing Panel. In both cases, Academic Board are informed of outcomes through the annual report on quality and standards.

2.5 The approval of programmes delivered by collaborative partners follows a strengthened version of the approval process, with the event typically hosted by the collaborative partner.

2.6 The review team reviewed these procedures by documentary study of arrangements and discussion with staff involved. It found compliance by programme teams with the University's requirements for programme design, development and approval. External input to both programme design and approval is achieved at both faculty and University level, and there is evidence of student and employer input to programme design. The review team found that the roles and responsibilities of those involved are clearly

specified, and that detailed guidance is provided. Staff who met the team spoke positively about the effectiveness of the process.

2.7 The review team found that the University has effective procedures for programme design, development and validation and concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.8 The University's strategic approach to recruitment, selection and admission has been realised in the centralisation of the Recruitment and Admissions Service to provide a more responsive, customer-focused and proactive service, and for the setting of entry criteria for all taught programmes. The success of this service has been recognised through student feedback, three consecutive nominations for the Times Higher Education Outstanding Admission Team of the year and receipt of the HEIST awards for best Student Recruitment and Admissions campaign in 2012, 2013 and 2014.

2.9 The University intends to fully consolidate the service to include postgraduate research, as currently applications for research and professional development programmes are considered by subject expert academics and suitable applicants are then interviewed. For programmes with specific recruitment requirements, the central services work with the Faculty Admissions Tutor and enhanced application requirements are clearly highlighted to students on the course information page for those courses with additional entry requirements.

2.10 The University Recruitment Admissions Policy, reviewed by Academic Board in 2014, sets out the principles, processes and responsibilities for recruiting, selecting and admitting students to all programmes including those from Collaborative Programmes. The policy sets out the principles of fair admission and the criteria on which prospective students are judged.

2.11 The process of recruitment, admissions and selection is overseen by the Director of Recruitment and Admissions, who is responsible for reporting to the Registrar and Academic Board with updates on recruitment and to University Executive Group, Faculty Executive Groups, specialist Faculty admissions groups and admissions tutors.

2.12 An annual planning process takes place with each faculty completing a Faculty Strategic Plan. Target intake numbers are set through negotiations between the DVC, Deans/Provost, Strategic Planning and Management Information and the Director of Recruitment and Admissions. The University has also developed a clear recruitment cycle for undergraduate applications with a 'student journey' approach which documents the different stages throughout the year when tailored communications should be sent out to prospective students.

2.13 A range of materials are available to prospective students including the online prospectus and website which includes information about entry standards, units, fees, bursaries and scholarships, and programmes. The website contains information on the next open days and a link through which prospective students can book a place. Prospective students can take advantage of open days, and applicants can attend visit days and meet staff and students on their prospective courses. The visit days also give applicants the opportunity to attend a subject presentation. The visit days are built into the undergraduate recruitment cycle and undergraduate contact points document. Both activities are specifically designed to convert applicants into students.

2.14 The complaints procedure for undergraduate and postgraduate entry is documented within the recruitment and admissions policy and is available on the website; the policy explains procedures for both appeals and complaints about admissions. The policy also documents the opportunity to receive feedback on unsuccessful applications, with responses provided in the evidence base demonstrating that feedback is effective.

2.15 The University makes an explicit commitment to widening participation (WP), and has a large number of students enrolled from WP backgrounds. The University has made a significant investment in assisting students from WP backgrounds into higher education. The University also provides a range of bursaries for students who are high achievers and care leavers, and research studentships. The University is a member of the Greater Manchester Higher project, which works alongside their own programme of 'aspiration-raising' activities in targeted primary and secondary schools.

2.16 The University's policies and procedures would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.17 The team tested the Expectation by considering the information supplied in documents including the online prospectus, course brochures, the visit day overview and Step enrolment guides, the Collaborative Student Handbook, Recruitment and Admissions Policy/Procedures, Academic Board minutes, the Annual Report on Quality and Standards, Faculty Strategic Plans for recruitment and outcome letters, and student surveys. The team also met students and staff from across the University to confirm the findings.

2.18 Staff confirmed that there is a close working relationship between the centre and the faculties with the centralised service. Each faculty has an assigned member of staff from the recruitment and admissions team, whose role requires them to work closely within the faculty and update and inform the faculty and central team as appropriate. This structure is also formally documented within the faculty structure as the recruitment and admissions team attend regular faculty executive group meetings.

2.19 Professional services support the recruitment and admissions team by providing tailored information and support for students with additional needs. This ensures that additional support, particularly for students with disabilities, is in place for the start of the academic year. The team met students from across the institution and they were very clear that the information they received from the University prior to enrolment presented a realistic picture of what to expect from studying at the University. This has a positive impact in that students felt prepared to undertake their studies and excited to enrol at the University. The Students' Union also commented favourably on the University's approach to the Competition and Markets Authority's guidance, which has recently been issued. The team noted the extensive documentation which is available to students applying to study at the University, including Your Visa, Your Responsibility, Money matters, Enrolment guides and welcome information. The comprehensive range of high-quality information available to students prior to enrolment that effectively supports their transition through the recruitment, selection and admission processes is **good practice**.

2.20 Overall, the University provides comprehensive information for prospective students throughout the admissions process to support applications, and there are clear policies and procedures in place. The review team concludes that the University meets the Expectation and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.21 The University's Commitment and Equality and Diversity Policy aims to provide students with accessible and inclusive learning and teaching. The University's Strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment defines the expectations around the design and management of learning, teaching and assessment, developing the good practice highlighted in the 2009 Institutional Audit report. This corresponds with the Framework to Support Academic Practice and Excellence; the Employability, Employment and Enterprise Strategy; the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy; and the Internationalisation Strategy. The complex interaction between these documents enables an enhancement-driven focus on learning and teaching.

2.22 Responsibility for generating and reviewing learning and teaching policies, procedures and practices rests with the Academic Quality and Standards Committee. Final approval rests with Academic Board, which also receives reports on National Student Survey results, retention and progression data, and information on staff engagement with continuing professional development. Thus, the Board makes informed decisions about learning and teaching priorities, which the Deans of Faculty and Provost of the Cheshire Campus subsequently oversee. Faculty Academic Quality and Standards Committees oversee the implementation of learning and teaching policies at faculty level and Associate Deans oversee and shape learning and teaching within a discipline-specific context.

2.23 Programme Leaders have responsibility for learning and teaching on their courses, including oversight of units and overall learning and teaching approaches. Programme leadership resources drive programme quality and development and staff across the University confirmed their positive impact. Programme approval and programme specifications benchmark programme-level learning and teaching practices at inception. The CMI process provides sound analysis that progresses programme oversight through to faculty level and then institutional level, ensuring the development of learning and teaching.

2.24 The University's policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.25 To test the Expectation, the review team considered the Strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment and its interaction with other policies and procedures. It explored the impact of these in discussions with staff and students.

2.26 The University aims to provide all students with accessible and inclusive learning and teaching. Its Inclusive Curriculum Project promotes a comprehensive teaching and learning environment. Professional services staff provide essential support to academic teams on inclusive curriculum planning. The University prioritises student progression, regarding this as a key measure of learning and teaching excellence. Initiatives to support student progression include language and maths support, skills workshops and individual sessions with Student Support Officers.

2.27 Learning and teaching activities cover a broad range of approaches. Many programmes have a professional focus, placing emphasis on informal or vocational learning.

Significant engagement with industry, employers and PSRBs underpins programme delivery with professional practice. Many programmes have professional learning outcomes embedded within their curriculum and many students undertake specialist placements.

2.28 The Framework to Support Academic Practice and Excellence outlines the institutional approach to teaching, observations, mentoring and continuing professional development. The University aims to enhance teaching of new staff through observation and for established staff through observation by managers and peer review. Staff new to teaching must complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and the University expects staff with teaching experience to apply for Higher Education Academy fellowship. The University's own Professional Standards Framework is an internal professional development route to HEA recognition.

2.29 To encourage students to develop the required skills, programmes draw on staff research and professional practice. The University aims to recruit appropriately qualified academic staff with subject-relevant qualifications and appropriately qualified professional services staff. Although it has a policy of increasing the proportion of new staff with PhDs to academic posts, the University recognises the need for staff for some of its programmes to be more focused on practice.

2.30 For collaborative provision, where University staff do not deliver the classes, partners must provide staff profiles to the link tutor. The relevant Head of Department signs them off prior to consideration at the Faculty Academic Quality and Standards Committee. At this point the staff member attains Recognised Tutor Status. This can also happen through programme approval, review and modification.

2.31 The University expects all staff to be lifelong learners, so offers access to professional development. The focus is on subject currency and increasing the percentage of staff with PhDs and other professional qualifications. Associate Deans identify staff development needs in relation to learning and teaching. Each faculty has an allocated representative who provides dedicated support for learning and teaching developments. The annual Professional Development Review process encourages self-reflection and evaluation of professional practice and identifies staff development priorities. Students affirm that the quality of teaching is excellent and teaching awards acknowledge those tutors who students believe have made a significant contribution to their learning.

2.32 The Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching provides enhanced support for learning, teaching and academic continuing professional development. The University also runs workshops on teaching and learning essentials throughout the academic year and activities include training in student-facing areas, such as Counselling, Student Hubs and the Disability Service.

2.33 The University offers a wide range of accredited short courses to support staff continuing professional development, some of which targets specific members of staff, such as Programme Leaders. University and collaborative partner staff can take the PgCert/MA in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. Collaborative partner staff who do not hold a required qualification must undertake a teaching qualification within one year. For those students appointed as graduate teaching assistants, the University operates a scheme of guidance and mentoring. An Annual Staff Development Report details training activity undertaken by University staff.

2.34 The University has developed and updated its learning environment through investment and estate plans and has done so in collaboration with students and academic and professional services staff. The Estates Masterplan provides strategic oversight of the specialist learning and teaching needs of subject areas and the specific workshop and specialist resources required to support skills development. Student feedback informs the

deployment of resources, such as longer opening hours for some workshop resources. Students are positive about the benefit of the resources, for instance the television studios.

2.35 Staff emphasise ongoing critical self-evaluation through the tutorial system, which encourages students to monitor their progress. During summer, tutors offer support for students re-sitting assessments. Each faculty specifies arrangements for students to access personal and academic tutors, but there are standard templates to record tutorial outcomes. Designated Student Experience Support Tutors in each faculty work with Student Support Officers to provide accessible course-related advice and support with the aim of improving retention and success.

2.36 Programme teams consider the effectiveness of learning and teaching through team meetings, programme committee meetings, Continuous Improvement Plans and Programme Review as well as external examiner reports or PSRB comments on learning and teaching. The University's Targeted Programme Improvement aims to address learning and teaching issues and improve student satisfaction in-year. A team of independent reviewers carry out this process which staff consider highly effective.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.38 The University Commitment, co-developed with the Students' Union, outlines a set of shared threshold standards that underpin student development and achievement. Several strategies and frameworks underpin the commitment. The Strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment defines the student life cycle from induction to employment and emphasises the need to provide personalised academic support, leading-edge facilities and learning opportunities. The University's Employment, Employability and Enterprise Strategy focuses on student employability by embedding enterprise and entrepreneurship within programmes.

2.39 The Framework for Supporting Disabled Students outlines the University's commitment to providing an inclusive learning environment for all students with disabilities. The Equality and Diversity Strategy demonstrates how the University fulfils its public sector equality duties and outlines a proactive approach that promotes an inclusive culture and values diversity. The Recruitment and Admissions Policy, Strategy for Widening Participation and Access Agreement all reflect a commitment to diversity. The Equality Impact Assessment assesses the impact of current and proposed policies and procedures on all of its students.

2.40 Academic Board agrees the strategies, frameworks and policies surrounding student development and achievement. The University Executive Group has oversight of student support services and resources and Faculty Executive Groups have curriculum-level oversight. Both interact with Academic Board and its committees. On behalf of Academic Board, the Academic Quality and Standards Committee and Student Experience Committee consider all issues relating to the monitoring and enhancement of the student experience.

2.41 The Support Services team has drawn up a Student Support Framework in consultation with academic staff and the Students' Union. This consolidates current practice and aims to draw the different types and levels of institutional support together. The Framework aims to integrate learning and practice and to promote employability initiatives. Students appreciate the University's approach to support and recognise the depth of guidance they receive.

2.42 The University's policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.43 The team considered a range of policies and procedures and their accompanying templates. They looked at the implementation of these policies through minutes and student feedback and data. They spoke with staff and students about the impact of the approaches.

2.44 The Induction Steering Group draws together academic and professional services staff to coordinate induction. All students receive an induction package of dedicated information, advice and support covering application and the transition to University life. Faculty-specific activities and additional dedicated resources and support for international students add further induction content, as does the Peer Mentoring Programme. Students confirm the information is useful and accessible. Returning students also receive programme-level start-of-year briefings. The Students' Union carries out an Induction Survey and students consider the process engaging and thorough.

2.45 The Disability Service works with prospective and current staff and students. Disability Advisers create Personal Learning Plans for incoming students, recommending any reasonable adjustments, and share these with staff through the Faculty Student Life Office. Departmental Disability Coordinators advise academic staff and termly meetings at faculty and University level to consider all disability-related issues. The take-up of support by applicants that have disclosed a disability on application but not at enrolment is followed up on a maximum of three occasions, striking a balance between being supportive without being intrusive. All University computers feature assistive technology software and a Peer Mentoring Scheme assists the transition to University life for first-year disabled students. The approach to disability aligns with key strategies and is highly supportive and considered.

2.46 The Student Hubs provide students with access to first-level information, advice and guidance on a wide range of matters. The University has achieved the Customer Service Excellence standard for its Student Hubs and students are clear about where to access information should they require it. Additionally, students can access impartial advice and information from the Union Advice Centre and all teaching staff offer dedicated office hours for drop-in sessions or booked tutorials to discuss academic, pastoral or professional matters. Students confirm that access to advice and information is excellent.

2.47 The University has developed its institutional approach to personal tutoring that involves personalised timetabling, support and guidance through Student Hubs. The University's Personal Tutoring Protocol and accompanying Personal Tutoring Management Plan define a system that involves faculty-based academic staff, personal tutors and Student Experience Support Tutors. Staff aim to offer undergraduate students five tutorials in the first year of study, which students affirm, but they also state that by the second year they tend to use personal tutors less frequently. Given that the newly implemented Student Support Framework centres on the personal tutor system to refer students to a range of services, the University might wish to consider how it maintains tutorial contact after the first year of study. However, personal tutoring and support systems ensure that students receive appropriate academic support that promotes reflective practice.

2.48 Student Support Officers provide expert guidance and advice on study skills and pastoral support signposting to internal or external sources of support where appropriate. At faculty level, Student Experience Support Tutors offer students assistance to develop and enhance their core academic skills. Along with Student Support Officers, they provide accessible, course-related advice and targeted interventions in such areas as retention and success alongside expert guidance on matters relating to assessment and employability. Student Support Officers provide an annual report to Faculty Student Experience Committees highlighting trends and the impact of improvement actions. Postgraduate research students have access to the Graduate School Clinic.

2.49 Professionally qualified technical experts offer a range of workshop and practical activity to develop professional knowledge and skills. Student Support Services offer a Disability Service and a Counselling, Health and Well-being Service. The Union Advice Centre offers a complementary range of specialist student-centred advice on academic, funding, housing, health and financial issues. Collaborative partners provide support for their own students, but there is dialogue between the partner and University support staff.

2.50 The University has invested in learning and teaching spaces, resources and its digital infrastructure. A 9 per cent rise in National Student Survey (NSS) results for resources over the last four years indicates the success of this approach. For example, the consolidated library service now provides better access to a wide range of learning resources and facilities. The Library Commitment centres on accessibility and responsiveness for all users and the Library has Customer Service Excellence accreditation. There has also been considerable investment in developing the stock of e-books and

encouraging students to adapt from hard to electronic copy. Library staff provide support for all librarians at UK-based collaborative partners through regular meetings and support to international collaborative partners through alternative means.

2.51 Library staff collect student feedback in paper format, online and personally through attendance at Programme Committees. Staff summarise feedback on the library website and use 'You Said We Did' posters to inform students of responses to feedback. Issues raised by the National Student Survey or the Internal Student Survey enter the institutional Student Surveys Enhancement Plan. Library staff have agreed with academic staff on the standard referencing styles for undergraduate programmes to provide consistent advice and they offer specific study skills workshops across a broad range of topics. All students can access an online referencing guide and individual training. The library provision is highly responsive.

2.52 The University has committed to an incremental roll-out of enhanced classroom technology across all campuses. Students' Union officers supported the trialling of the VLE and value the introduction of the personalised online assessment information. The University introduced its VLE in 2011, including a mobile app that the vast majority of students have downloaded. The VLE provides personalised information such as assessment schedules, reading lists, timetables and grades and is a chief point of communication. The Student Experience Committee defines the content of unit and programme areas on the VLE and Heads of Department check that the content online is correct. Academic staff use the online facilities supported by faculty-based Technology Enhanced Learning Advisors, while the Learning Innovation Team promotes best practice through the use of templates, checklists and targeted training. IT Services provide 24-hour support for staff and students. The integrated range of services provided by the University to support successful student development and achievement is **good practice**.

2.53 The Strategic Planning process, approved by the Board of Governors, sets targets for key performance indicators, for which senior faculty staff and professional services managers are accountable. Professional Development Review makes academic staff aware of these objectives. The Estates Masterplan underpins student development and achievement through the ongoing transformation of the estate and the learning environment. The process of approving resource expenditure mirrors the management hierarchy. The NSS response and students who met the review team confirm that resources are excellent and fit for purpose.

2.54 For collaborative partners, the process of partner approval and due diligence ensures that sufficient resources are in place to support students. Partner Review and Programme Review for collaborative partners feed into the CMI and monitor resources at the partner once the partnership is running.

2.55 The Careers and Employability Service provides information, advice and guidance to students, staff, employers and graduates (up to three years following graduation). The Service observes the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services standards. The Careers and Employability Service works in conjunction with academic staff, who very often have highly specific employability knowledge within their subject areas. Any student enrolled on a University programme, either on campus or through a collaborative partnership, has access to the online careers services, including job vacancies and resources. Students on campus have access to personal support, such as interview training and careers advice. For postgraduate students there are one-day Career Development workshops, including advice on job hunting, writing CVs and application forms, and interview techniques.

2.56 At curriculum level, programmes engage with employers who describe the students as highly motivated and capable. Employers regard their contact with the University as

reciprocal and progressive. Employers not only provide placement and research opportunities, but also take part in Networking Cafes and many other career events. Furthermore, Employability Champions in each faculty facilitate dialogue between academic staff, employers and the Careers and Employability Service. Students are very clear that employability is embedded throughout their programmes and that the relationship with employers and PSRBs enhances their studies. The review team consider that the variety of approaches promoting employability which underpin students' professional development represent **good practice**.

2.57 The University enables students to achieve their full academic, personal and professional potential through its programmes and central student support services. A focus on improving student retention, progression and success has resulted in substantial investment in support and resources for the last five years. Developing and enhancing the services and resources remains a key priority.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.59 The University and the Students' Union undertook a review in 2012-13 to consider how the relationship between the Union and the University could be strengthened, culminating in joint working on the Higher Education Review. The University and Students' Union review went through the formal committee structure of the University, including the Board of Governors and Academic Board. The review document helped to outline areas where the University and Union could work closely together for the benefit of University students. Engagement between the University and Union is now organised through quarterly meetings held between UEG and the Union Executive and Officers with alternate chairing between the VC and the President of the Union. Elected Student Union officers are also members of committees across the governance structure within the University.

2.60 The University also undertook a review in 2011-12 of the student charter and a new University commitment, Our Student Commitment; both were developed in partnership with the Union. The review of the Commitment is now a standing item on the final meeting of Academic Board each year. The University has also recently developed a Student Engagement Policy, which sets out 'how the University supports students to engage fully with their studies, what the University expects of students in relation to engagement with their course, how it will monitor that engagement, and what it will do where students are not engaging'.

2.61 Work on student representation has created new channels for student feedback, including the termly Student Voice reports which the Union provide to the University from responses collected from their 'student shout outs'. The reports collate key themes for consideration by the committees of Academic Board. The Students' Union and University work in partnership to deliver the student representation system, but the Union maintains a level of independence from the University to ensure student autonomy. The Union works closely with faculty staff, CELT and CASQE to deliver training and support to course representatives across the University. Recent developments within the student representative structure include the first course rep conference which the Students' Union held in October 2015.

2.62 Students and student representatives are able to provide feedback to the University through staff-student liaison committees (SSLCs). SSLCs provide an opportunity for early resolution of issues, and those that cannot be resolved are referred to the Programme Committee. Student representatives are members of Programme Committees which are supported by the course rep support role, a role funded by the Students' Union from a grant increase they received from the University which helps the Union to develop its work on student representation. Course rep support staff also sit on the Faculty Student Experience Committees and the Faculty Academic Quality and Standards Committee, alongside an elected Student Union officer. Any feedback from students which is resolved is also fed back to the SSLC.

2.63 Research students are invited to attend alternate research degrees committees but this is being reviewed in light of sector best practice, as the University looks to review and enhance their governance structures. The Graduate School Forum also provides an opportunity for research student reps to meet on a regular basis. Research students are informed of actions taken through published newsletters and the Graduate School website.

2.64 Within collaborative provision the University operates the same model of student representation as at the University, with a student representative structure, SSLCs and Programme Committees in place.

2.65 The University make systematic use of the student feedback they receive from internal and external surveys including their own Internal Student Survey (ISS), the National Student Survey, the International Student Barometer, until 2015 the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey. The ISS is routinely undertaken twice a year and the results are considered at the Student Experience Committee where trends and commonalities across the survey data are discussed. For postgraduate taught programmes, survey outcomes are also communicated to student reps at Programme Committees.

2.66 The ISS is undertaken twice a year and gathers feedback at both unit and programme levels. All taught programmes (undergraduate and postgraduate) are entered into the survey, and the results are discussed and analysed by the Student Experience Committee.

2.67 The University-level Student Experience Committee considers policies, procedures, reports and initiatives, and reviews progress made through the Student Surveys Enhancement Plan.

2.68 The wide range of student support services within the University also gather feedback from students to make improvements to the services. The services use a number of ways to gather feedback including surveys, access to NSS and ISS qualitative comments and focus groups. The services use 'you said, we did' to inform students of the changes that have been made in light of their feedback. The services also take a strategic approach by embedding KPIs within their work plans related to student engagement and feedback.

2.69 Elected Student Officers play an active role in Student Appeal Panels and are part of the discussion and decision-making process. The University has recently trialled the involvement of independent student members on approval and review events. This initiative was delivered in partnership with the Students' Union, who helped with recruitment and delivery of training for students.

2.70 The University's policies and procedures would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.71 The review team considered a range of documentation supplied by the University, with confirmation obtained through meetings held with students and University teaching and support staff.

2.72 The team met student representatives who commented positively on their experience as student representatives. Also, Elected Student Officers commented favourably on their involvement with student appeals panels and how their views were taken into account when making the final decision. Student representatives felt they were supported by staff within faculties and had received training for their role from the Union. They stated that from their experience of SSLCs, they felt that the University listens to their feedback and that they were confident about raising student issues on behalf of their peers.

2.73 The team met staff from across the University and was given examples of actions and responses to feedback received from students, including changing the opening hours of the Art building and changing the social learning space infrastructure. The team heard that there were a number of projects where the University had worked with the Students' Union, including the inclusive curriculum project. Each working group has an elected Student Union officer as part of the team.

2.74 The team tested some concerns expressed in the student submission when meeting with a variety of students from across the University. Students and student representatives concurred that changes to the regulations or other new developments within the University are sometimes communicated in the middle of a term, thus reducing the time students have to process the impact of the changes. Furthermore, the team spoke with external examiners who expressed similar concerns about the effective communication of changes in regulations to students. Students also commented that messages from programme and faculty staff are sometimes inconsistent and sometimes cause confusion among the student body. The team noted that there is no policy regarding the communication of information to students, although communication processes to disseminate information do exist within the University. **The team therefore recommends that by September 2016 the University implements consistent mechanisms for effective communication to students regarding their studies.**

2.75 Overall, the review team found that the University has invested in the student representative structure and implemented policies and procedures which enable students to engage in the assurance and enhancement of their studies at the University. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.76 The Strategy for Learning Teaching and Assessment (SLTA) sets out the principles influencing assessment in relation to learning and teaching, and the three Curriculum Frameworks provide definitive reference points for assessment structure and volume. The ICP for Assessment of Students (ICPAS) and its associated processes provide principles and management procedures for all taught programmes with guidance on aspects such as grading, moderation and feedback together with a set of University standard descriptors, while the assessment regulations set out explicit assessment requirements. The University's procedures and guidance on assessment for disabled students promote equality of opportunity.

2.77 Academic Board, responsible for approving the SLTA, ICPAS, Curriculum Frameworks and Assessment Regulations, maintains oversight of assessment activity through the Annual Report on Quality and Standards and student progression reports. Academic Board delegates authority for definitive decisions on student attainment, progression and award to Assessment Boards, with oversight at programme level by moderation and external examiner scrutiny.

2.78 Formal Agreements with Collaborative Partners state that the University is responsible for maintaining academic standards and that partnership activity must comply with University Assessment Regulations. Collaborative Partners are made aware of changes to assessment regulations through the Handbook for MMU and Partner Link Tutors. Collaborative Partners observe the same assessment regulations as the University, unless Academic Board approves an exemption in line with explicit protocols. Academic Board receives an overview of these in the Annual Report on Quality and Standards and the assessment regulations include a list of all approved variations and/or exemptions, revised annually.

2.79 The types, design and range of assessment are considered and mapped against the FHEQ at Programme Approval and re-evaluated at Programme Review. All programmes incorporate a spread of assessments to develop student motivation and relevant skills. Assessment design, informed by academic and professional practice, is undertaken by programme teams supported by Associate Deans and other key staff, in accordance with the Curriculum Frameworks, the ICPAS and the Assessment Regulations. Project-based learning, live briefs or other assessments preparing students for the workplace may be set by external partners or agencies who must be appropriately trained and their assessment moderated by programme teams.

2.80 Marking, moderation and feedback are viewed by the University as distinct stages of assessment, governed by separate processes. University Standard Descriptors provide the framework for interpretive marking criteria, with online guidance and staff development opportunities also available to programme teams. Summative marking is informed by the Procedure for Verification, Marking and Moderation of Assessments. Internal moderation of a sample of work across all grades is required for all assessments within all units: further moderation by external examiners provides an independent overview of the marking

process. The ICPAS provides threshold standards for feedback to students, including a four-week timescale for assessed coursework, and guidance and good practice are available to staff online.

2.81 Assessment Boards confirm students' achievement of ILOs. There have been major institutional initiatives in this area: the Enhancing Quality in Assessment and Learning (EQAL) initiative (2010-13) balanced the volume of summative assessment across the undergraduate curriculum. The Transforming Assessment and Feedback for Institutional Change (TRAFFIC) project (2011-14) developed new procedures for marking, moderation and feedback. In 2012, as part of EQAL, the University moved from Programme Examination boards to Tiered Assessment for the great majority of its provision, with Unit Results Boards and Progression and Awards Boards to improve consistency in applying Assessment Regulations, allowing broader consideration of students' academic performance and assuring more strongly consistency in applying standards and quality to University provision. Single-level boards remain for only a minority of externally validated collaborative programmes. Under the tiered structure, Unit Boards, including subject external examiners, consider student performance in individual and groups of units and evaluate subject-specific standards, while Progression and Award Boards, including award external examiners and acting with delegated powers from Academic Board, confirm student progression and awards, and consider non-subject-specific standards.

2.82 A revised accreditation of prior learning (APL) policy, with definitive principles and thresholds to ensure alignment with Programme and Unit ILOs, provides guidance on judgements of equivalence and required supporting evidence. The Policy indicates clear limits for the amount of APL credit, so safeguarding the University's academic standards. Academic Board receives an annual overview of APL activity through ARQS.

2.83 Following a pilot in 2014-15, the University has incorporated In-Year Assignment Recovery for all Level 4 programmes in the current year and plans to extend this to Level 3 from 2016-17. The aim is to support timely student progression by allowing earlier resubmission to reduce the burden of summer reassessment.

2.84 The design of the University's assessment procedures and systems would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.85 The team reviewed a wide range of documentation, including key Strategy, Code of Practice, Framework and Regulatory documents, many of which are noted above. It also examined selected unit and programme specifications, assessment briefs and feedback sheets, minutes of Assessment Boards, external examiners' reports and responses to these, minutes of reporting bodies and guidance to teaching staff, examiners and students. It met teaching and administrative staff responsible for assessment and students, and held discussions with external examiners.

2.86 Assessment other than language programmes is in English, unless explicit approval has been granted by Academic Board. The review team examined one programme, part of which was delivered in another European language, and was satisfied that appropriate arrangements were in place to safeguard academic standards.

2.87 The University has consistent protocols for approving variations from assessment regulations and a list is published annually; similarly, an annual overview is provided to Academic Board. A Working Group, including student representatives, reviews the Assessment Regulations for Taught Programmes annually, with outcomes taken forward through AQSC and Academic Board.

2.88 Students receive information on assignments via the VLE according to guidelines set out in a section of ICPAS. Students are informed of marking criteria through assignment

briefs with further clarification available from staff and through Faculty Results Surgeries. Summative work is managed through the VLE or Coursework Receiving System. Information is available to students at enrolment, via a link to the assessment regulations from each programme specification, through tailored communications, and through the online Regulations Hub.

2.89 Many programmes offer students formative opportunity and assistance through plagiarism-detection software prior to formal submission. Automated receipt of assessed work allows the University to monitor student involvement and facilitates early intervention when students are not engaging with assessment. There are clear protocols for formal examinations and for investigating possible academic misconduct, with information available to students at registration and online.

2.90 Timing of assessment is considered at programme design, and faculties are required to monitor assessment deadlines to avoid bunching of deadlines. The University has reviewed procedures for providing its students with feedback, introducing improvements through, for example, the EQAL and TRAFFIC initiatives, and the Procedure for Feedback on Assessed Work and associated guidance, which are reflected in improved student satisfaction scores. Nonetheless, students meeting the review team voiced strong concerns about bunching and the timeliness and quality of feedback they had received, and the student submission, while noting recent improvement, also recognised the need for further progress in this area, for instance with regard to grading criteria and changes to assessment regulations, as does the University.

2.91 As a consequence of programme design, some units incorporate an element of group assessment. Students have voiced concern about this and expressed a preference for individual assessment. While there is no formal policy on group work, through CELT the University provides teaching staff with detailed guidance on the design and assessment of group tasks. In several instances seen by the review team, collective assessment was a minor component, with individual assessment predominating, including for group activities. This suggests that the issue may sometimes be more one of perception than reality. The review team encourages the University to continue its efforts to minimise assessment bunching and to improve the promptness and quality of information, including feedback, to students.

2.92 An internal review following the introduction of the tiered examination board structure concluded that it had been broadly successful in meeting its aims. Nonetheless, concerns were expressed about the remits of and links between tier 1 and 2 boards, the roles of subject and award external examiners and the absence of external subject representation at tier 2. The review team shares some of these concerns and noted that external subject expertise is not currently available at Award Boards, and considers that decisions on student progression and the award of qualifications would be more robust if such expertise were available.

2.93 Overall, the review team found that the arrangements for assessment operate effectively: the Strategies, Codes of Practice and associated guidance form a robust and coherent framework for assessment, with appropriate reporting and oversight of processes and outcomes, and with appropriate externality. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.94 The University considers external examiners to have a key role in maintaining academic standards, monitoring performance and contributing to curriculum design and pedagogy. With the move to tiered Assessment Boards, existing external examiners were assigned subject external examiner roles, and new award external examiners were appointed.

2.95 External examiners' roles and responsibilities are set out in the ICP and Regulations for External Examining and in the External Examiner Handbook, supported by the assessment regulations, Curriculum Frameworks, the ICP for Student Assessment,

and Procedures for the Conduct of Assessment Boards. External examiners for taught research programmes are detailed in the ICP for Postgraduate Research Programmes with specific regulations for research degrees. At least one internal and one external examiner is appointed for each research student, with two externals for staff candidates. These systems and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.96 The review team examined a range of documentation, including the assessment regulations, the ICP on student assessment, the external examiners' handbook and associated documentation. The team also considered external examiners' reports and responses to these, held discussions with subject and award external examiners and met academic and administrative staff responsible for assessment, and students.

2.97 Acting on behalf of Academic Board, the Head of CASQE oversees external examiner nominations for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes, while the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) oversees those for MPhil/PhD and professional doctorate programmes. External examiners' reports on undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes are considered at programme, faculty and institutional levels to ensure any recommendations are reviewed and acted upon, while Research Degree reports are considered by RDC. The Annual Report on Quality & Standards considered by Academic Board contains information on external examiners. The University monitors external examiner appointments to taught programmes to ensure appropriate turnover, and to preclude reciprocal external examining. Receipt of externals' reports is monitored by Faculty Quality Officers and Research Degree staff while CASQE retains central oversight and follows up delayed reports.

2.98 All taught programmes leading to an award have at least one subject external examiner as a discipline specialist while award external examiners are experienced examiners who ensure the integrity and equity of the University's processes. Appointment follows consideration of nominations against standard selection criteria, with subject external examiners considered by Programme Committees and FAQSC, and award external examiners reviewed by FEGs, with all subject to Head of CASQE approval. Inexperienced external examiners must be mentored by experienced peers, with guidance available on suitable mentoring arrangements. Appointment is for a standard 13 terms, with a possible further three terms; any extension beyond that is subject to ASQC approval and requires a compelling case.

2.99 External examiners are supported by online training and induction in a variety of formats, including podcasts, and receive a Handbook. Additional induction for subject

external examiners may be provided within faculties and programmes. An annual forum for award external examiners provides information on policy updates and opportunity for dialogue with academic and Professional Services staff, with further updates provided as appropriate throughout the year.

2.100 Subject external examiners review assessments relating to specific units of study, while award external examiners formally endorse the Boards' recommendations for awards. The review team considers that Award Board decisions on progression and qualifications would be made more robust if external subject expertise were represented at award boards and encourages the University to facilitate this (see Expectation B6).

2.101 Each subject and award external examiner submits an annual report to assure external and internal academic standards and verify compliance with assessment regulations. These include commentary on alignment with Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ, achievement of intended learning outcomes and threshold standards, compliance with regulations, comparability with sector norms, currency of the curriculum, good practice and enhancement opportunities.

2.102 Subject external examiner reports are considered by Programme Committees including staff and student representatives, who provide a formal response within the report template. Award external examiner reports are received by Programme Committees for information, and considered and responded to by Chairs of Assessment Boards and FEGs. The benefits, as opposed to the complexities, of the dual nominating and reporting processes for external examiners were not evident to the review team, and the University may wish to consider whether there are advantages in combining the processes into one line of reporting.

2.103 Subject and award external examiners' reports, together with responses, are available to students and staff online, although the student submission reports that until recently access has been patchy, and that responsibility for publication has now shifted from Programme Leaders to Faculty Quality Enhancement Teams. Further online information clarifying the role of external examiners is available on the Student Hub.

2.104 External examiners' reports are considered during the CMI process and Programme Review; all review and modification proposals require subject external examiner consultation to determine whether they impact on threshold standards. Institutional-level analysis of all externals' reports identifies themes, issues and good practice to be included in the Annual Report on Quality and Standards and may be referred to other groups and units as appropriate. Serious issues raised by external examiners require an early response from the Programme Team with possible upward escalation. For sensitive issues, external examiners may also report in confidence to the Vice-Chancellor.

2.105 The University's external examining arrangements apply in full to programmes delivered by a collaborative partner and in cases of franchised arrangements, the same external examiner has oversight of both internal and external provision. From a review of external examiner reports the team noted that in the majority of cases, external examiners make explicit comment on partnership activity; however, in a small number of cases the section of the report specific to collaborative provision was incomplete. In some cases the tracking section of the report for monitoring its circulation and receipt of responses was not completed. The team accordingly **recommends** that by July 2016 the University strengthens the arrangements for monitoring the receipt and completeness of external examiners' reports for collaborative provision.

2.106 Overall, the review team considers the processes for external examining to work effectively in practice. The obligations and responsibilities of external examiners are clearly set out, and they are well supported in discharging these through a range of information and

guidance provided through a variety of means. The University's policies, regulations and codes of practice ensure that assessment processes involve appropriate externality.

2.107 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, reflecting a minor omission in the oversight of some external examiner reports for collaborative provision.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.108 The University's programme review and modification procedures provide proportionate and risk-based consideration of programme health and curriculum currency. The 'Enhancing Quality and Assessment for Learning' (EQAL) initiative provided the University with an opportunity to review its monitoring of taught programmes. As part of this initiative, the Continuous Monitoring and Improvement (CMI) dashboard was developed to replace a more traditional annual monitoring approach. The dashboard provides unit and programme teams with a wide range of quantitative and qualitative real-time data relating to the attainment, achievement and satisfaction of the student cohort to identify trends or concerns.

2.109 The CMI dashboard informs the development of a rolling programme-level Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP), which is approved by the relevant Programme Committee and also considered by Faculty Executive Groups. Faculty Executive Groups review both the CMI data and the resultant Course Improvement Plans and monitor actions at up to three points during the year. The Annual Report on Quality and Standards then includes a summary of the main issues from reports submitted by Faculties, for consideration by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee.

2.110 The CMI dashboard initiative is a responsive, effective approach to programme monitoring which also supports institutional leadership and management. The development is an innovative step forward in supporting monitoring and improvement, and the innovative and effective use of management information to continually monitor and improve the University's programmes and units is **good practice**.

2.111 Collaborative programmes do not use the CMI dashboard, but instead develop an equivalent range of data to inform the preparation of Continuous Improvement Plans. The University has a long-term aim to develop the CMI dashboard to include collaborative programmes. Some partners are allowed to use their own formal monitoring processes, subject to the approval of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee.

2.112 The University periodically reviews its programmes on a sexennial basis, using a Course Development Plan (CDP) as the focus of the submission to the review panel. One of two possible methods are employed, University Standing Panels and Faculty Review Panels, with the Head of the Centre for Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement making a judgement on which method is appropriate on a case-by-case basis. The majority of events are managed by Faculties, whereas University Standing Panels are a means of managing uncontentious changes to programmes, and are considered by the University to be an effective and proportionate means of reviewing programmes in good health. Both panels use external assessors, although Faculty-based review panels use independent, subject-specific external assessors to safeguard impartiality whereas University Standing Panels maintain a pool of external experts appointed on a five-year basis. Where University Standing Panels are employed, subject expertise is assured using external examiner scrutiny of the subject documentation, including Unit Specifications. The external examiner report and the programme team's response are forwarded to panel members prior to the event. However, the continuing independence of the pool of external assessors could potentially be jeopardised if called upon too often.

2.113 The periodic review of programmes delivered by collaborative partners follows a strengthened version of the standard review process. The event is typically hosted by the collaborative partner unless the programme is franchised, in which case a faculty-based event for both the University-delivered and franchised programmes is held at the University, with partner staff in contact via video-conferencing. Oversight of Programme Review and Monitoring outcomes takes place through the Annual Report on Quality and Standards, which is considered by Academic Board, allowing it to maintain strategic oversight over the processes for, and outcomes of, programme monitoring and review.

2.114 The University provides extensive development opportunities for staff involved in programme monitoring and review, which supplement a range of guidance and resources for staff and students.

2.115 The University has introduced a Targeted Programme Improvement (TPI) process to focus on supporting programmes which it considers to be in need of improvement. It provides focused support, through a range of University services, working with the programme or department to develop an agreed improvement plan. Although it has proved to be very effective, the need for the TPI process is gradually reducing with the more effective use of the CMI dashboard.

2.116 The review team examined all elements of the University's programme monitoring and review processes in documentary study and discussion with those involved, and found them well designed and understood, and operationally effective. The University uses its unit and programme monitoring data well, and ensures the required consideration of matters reported and issues raised at each subsequent level.

2.117 The review team concludes that the procedures for annual monitoring and review are appropriate, and that policies are in place to ensure effective implementation. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.118 University procedures for appeals and student complaints address individual issues in a fair and timely manner. The procedures align with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's Good Practice Framework. The University operates distinct Postgraduate Research Complaints and Appeals, with both postgraduate and undergraduate processes centring on informal processes followed by formal ones. For collaborative partnerships, a legal agreement details the provider's responsibility for handling complaints and appeals. The processes are fair and transparent.

2.119 Academic Board approves all relevant policies including academic appeals, student complaints, admissions complaints and residential complaints. These are available on the website and in most cases through programme handbooks. In meetings with students it was apparent that most would go to the Student Hub to make a complaint, where there are clear and simple leaflets providing an overview of the process. Students can also use the Student Union Advice service. At both, staff are fully trained to deal with complaints and appeals procedures and there are 10 trained mediators to support meetings at the informal stage. The Research Student Complaints and Appeals Procedures emphasises early informal resolution through dialogue and mediation. The Graduate School Clinic supports this approach and students can arrange a confidential meeting with the Head of the Graduate School and/or the Graduate School Manager, within 48 hours of making contact, to seek resolution. The University's Counselling Service provides additional support in relation to Appeals or Complaints for postgraduate research students.

2.120 The University's recent revision of its appeals and complaints processes is largely clear, but the team found some anomalies. The Regulations for the Academic Awards of the Manchester Metropolitan University explicitly indicate the implications of an academic appeals process for students at collaborative partners, but not for its own students. Programme handbooks variably do or do not provide links to appeals and complaints policies, although the programme handbook template suggests it is preferable to provide a single link to the regulations to ensure clarity and currency. Furthermore, in the appeals process for one collaborative partner, which oversees the first stage of the appeals process for its students, the text could be clearer about the provider's responsibility once that stage is completed. The team therefore **recommends** that by September 2016 the University ensures information about appeals and complaints is consistently conveyed to staff and students.

2.121 The review team considered that the University's policies and procedures would allow it to meet the Expectation, notwithstanding the recommendation to convey information about complaints and appeals consistently.

2.122 The team tested the Expectation by reading the complaints and appeals policies and tested the effectiveness of these processes in discussion with teaching and support staff and students.

2.123 The Graduate School and Student Case Management Department manages the Academic Appeals and Student Complaints procedures. Elected Student Officers sit on

Student Appeal Panels. The University ensures the impartiality of staff making decisions and entrusts senior staff to review outcomes independently if appropriate.

2.124 The Graduate School and Student Case Management department also reviews the complaints and appeals processes. Historically Academic Board has received an Annual Report on the Operation of the Academic Appeals Procedure for Taught Programmes of study and the Research Degrees Committee has received the Postgraduate Research Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report about postgraduate complaints and appeals. Following recent revisions, Academic Board will receive a single annual report covering Academic Appeals and Stage Two and Three Student Complaints for taught and postgraduate research programmes.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.126 The Framework for Strategic Partnerships (due for review in 2015-16) reflects the current focus on developing a smaller number of strategic partnerships.

2.127 The University has strengthened its approach to the management of Collaborative provision as set out in the Institutional Codes of Practice for collaborative provision (ICPs) and policies as approved by Academic Board that underpin partnership activity. The Institutional Code of Practice describes the development, approval and management of partnership activity. Partnerships categorised as collaborative provision include franchises, external validations, postgraduate research joint supervision, and dual, multiple, joint or jointly delivered awards and Academic Partnerships which include articulation and off-site delivery arrangements.

2.128 The Collaborative Provision Strategy Group, established in 2014, is expected to drive, monitor and review the University's partnership activity. The Collaborative Provision Strategy Group report to the University Executive Group. The relationship between the Collaborative Provision Strategy Group and Academic Board is to be reviewed in 2015-16 to make clear the reporting lines. Responsibility for the Quality and Standards of collaborative provision and Academic Partnerships rests within a new Academic Collaborative Team within the Centre for Academic and Quality Enhancement (CASQE).

2.129 All Collaborative Provision and Academic Partnership arrangements are governed by formal written agreements (revised in 2014-15) signed by authorised representatives of the partner and the University. Procedures for the termination of a partnership prior to the completion date contained within the agreements are set out in the Non-Renewal and Termination of Collaborative Provision Procedures. Planned closures are managed by Link Tutors.

2.130 The University maintains and makes publicly available a version of its Register of Collaborative Provision and Academic Partnerships and internally a more extensive register available to its core staff.

2.131 The approval and review of programmes follow similar principles to those in place for on-site provision with consideration of provision made through the Programme Approval, Review and Modification and University Collaborative Provision and Partnership approval processes.

2.132 There is a two-stage due diligence process, with stage one addressing financial, legal and regulatory matters and stage two making an assessment of physical, staffing and learning resources. Once approved, the partnerships are subject to a Collaborative Partnership Review which normally takes place every six years or in the case of a new partner, after two years. All taught provision delivered by a partner is subject to the University's Procedures for Continuous Monitoring and Improvement with outcomes reported through the committee structure.

2.133 The University has introduced a Cause for Concern investigation procedure which is triggered through student feedback, external examiners or formal complaints on poor results and may result in an early review.

2.134 Every programme has a University and partner Link Tutor. The role of the Link Tutor is set out in the Handbook for Manchester Met and Partner Link Tutors and additional support is provided online, via a newsletter and through briefing sessions.

2.135 All taught collaborative provision programmes comply with the University Assessment Regulations and Procedures for Conduct of Assessment Boards, with joint awards requiring agreed regulations. All programmes must also comply with the University Recruitment and Admissions Policy and the Policy for the Accreditation of Prior Learning. Articulations agreements are reviewed through Programme, Approval, Review and Modification, and Articulation Monitoring Reports introduced in 2014-15 provide an opportunity for programme teams to comment on student performance.

2.136 The Employability, Employment and Enterprise Strategy Group oversees delivery of the Employability, Employment and Enterprise Strategy which sets out placement priorities. The development, approval and management of placement activity are coordinated at faculty level by Placement Teams, which comprise Professional Services staff and academic coordinators. Placement experiences are supported by student and provider guidance, evaluation documentation and visits.

2.137 Assessment of students undergoing placement and work-based learning is conducted in accordance with the University assessment regulations. Where non-University staff are responsible for the assessment of students, steps are taken to prepare them for the role. The successful completion of a 12-month placement is referenced in the Award Certificate through the designation of 'Sandwich' in the title award.

2.138 The University has bilateral student exchange agreements with 129 universities that hold an Erasmus Charter. In 2015-16 the University adopted a new Institutional Code of Practice for Student Exchange to establish a clear institutional framework for the quality assurance of such activity, with a dedicated team now in place to lead on policy and practice for international student exchange.

2.139 The arrangements for managing higher education with others would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.140 The team tested the Expectation by a review of the Collaborative Partnership Register, Institutional Codes of Practice for Collaborative Provision and Academic Partnerships, Frameworks for Strategic Partnerships, policies, Minutes of the Collaborative Partnership Strategy Group, Academic Board and of Academic Quality and Standards Committee, Annual Reports on Quality Standards, Partnership Review Reports, external examiner reports, formal agreements, Due Diligence Reports, Terms of Reference of Committees, assessment regulations, and the ICPs for Placement and Work-based Learning and Student Exchange. The team also met staff, employers and students.

2.141 In 2013 the University undertook a review of its partnership activity focused on partnerships with FE colleges (FE Review) and partnerships with all other providers (Non FE Review). Staff the team met clearly articulated the University's intention to focus on developing a smaller number of strategic partnerships. The University maintains an online searchable database of its collaborative provision and the register is updated as part of the partnership or programme approval process.

2.142 The Collaborative Partnership Strategy Committee reports directly to the University Executive Group on matters of a strategic nature. From a review of minutes of those

meetings, the team confirmed the committee met its stated intention. Following a restructure in 2015, responsibility for assuring academic standards and quality rests with the Academic Collaboration Team within the Centre for Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement with oversight at Academic Quality and Standards Committee. Minutes of Academic Quality and Standards Committee show extensive discussion and debate of both existing and new partnerships.

2.143 Collaborative provision arrangements are assessed for viability and strategic fit of the partnership through the Collaborative Partnership Strategy Group, with final approval referred to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee.

2.144 Approval and review of collaborative programmes follow the same principles as internal provision with the addition of a pre-visit and approval visit with an external member of the team to take oversight of the premises, support and due diligence. The team also confirmed the use of a Cause for Concern process and evidence of its robust implementation.

2.145 Legally binding agreements are in place for all partnerships, with appropriate signatories, and set out in detail the rights and obligations of the respective parties and processes should those partnerships be terminated.

2.146 Collaborative provision activities comply with the University assessment regulations and Procedures for Conduct of Assessment Boards, and this is also set out in their legally binding agreements.

2.147 External examiners are appointed to collaborative provision, and in the case of franchised arrangements, the same external examiner has oversight of both internal and external provision. From a review of external examiner reports the team noted that in the majority of cases, external examiners make explicit comment on partnership activity; however, in a small number of cases the section of the report specific to collaborative provision was incomplete (see Expectation B7).

2.148 The effectiveness of sound quality management of the collaborative provisions further rests with the Link Tutor as set out in the Institutional Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision and Academic Partnerships. Link Tutors are supported in their role by the Centre for Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement, with staff development through the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching. Guidance on the role can also be found in the comprehensive Handbook for MMU and Partner Link Tutors.

2.149 The University expects partners to provide a comparable experience and would expect all partnerships to have a student representative system and provide feedback through the partner institution programme committees, and also through face-to-face contact with the Link Tutor. Similarly, Link Tutors are responsible for noting student issues, including those associated with the timeliness of feedback. Staff-student liaison committees also take place.

2.150 If a programme has been identified as at risk or the Link Tutor has a concern, for example around the provision or staffing changes, those changes or concerns are fed back verbally to either the Academic Collaborations Manager or Head of Department who will in turn inform the Dean. A reliance on informal communications and the various mechanisms for providing feedback via the Link Tutor is considered by the team to be a weakness in the oversight of operations. Taken in conjunction with incomplete sections of some of the external examiner forms relating to the collaborative provision, there is a risk that concerns or weaknesses may not be noted in a timely manner. The team therefore **recommends** that by September 2016 the University strengthens oversight of formal

processes for the ongoing monitoring of academic activities of collaborative and academic partners.

2.151 The University has a number of articulation agreements and those agreements are governed by an Articulation Policy and strengthen approval procedures. The University also delivers programmes to academic partners off-site either in the UK or overseas. The process for the approval of these arrangements has also been strengthened and can be found on the CASQE website.

2.152 The Employability, Employment and Enterprise Strategy (E3) sets out the importance of placement opportunities to gain employment. To support the delivery of the strategy, the University has set up an E3 Strategy Steering Group. The team also confirmed a revised Institutional Code of Practice for Placement and Work-based Learning for the effective oversight of placement and work-based learning activity.

2.153 Placements are coordinated at a faculty level and students are provided with a range of documents to guide them through the process. Assessment of placements is in accordance with University Assessment Regulations, policies and procedures.

2.154 The team confirmed that students on placements have set objectives and reviews take place every three months. Tutors visit and employers complete an end-of-visit report. Employers spoke positively about working with the University on the Agency Life programme where students spend one day a week for six weeks on an intern programme.

2.155 Overall, the review team found that the University has strengthened its processes for managing collaborative provision since the last review. The approval of programmes follows a similar process to that of internal programmes and is robust, and the management of collaborative provision is also intact. The team made one recommendation in relation to strengthening communications via the Link Tutor role. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate, reflecting that while processes are broadly adequate, there are some weaknesses in the operation of the formal oversight mechanisms.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.156 The University offers a range of master's and doctoral degrees by research, together with Professional Doctorates in Education (EdD) and in Health. There are also two collaborative PhD programmes: one is with the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM), and the University also participates in a joint doctorate with Vrije University Amsterdam and the Katholieke University of Leuven, funded by Erasmus Mundus.

2.157 There are currently some 850 postgraduate research students, with most registered for the MPhil and PhD. Increasing research student numbers and improving conferment rates are priorities identified in the University's current and planned Strategic Frameworks. New initiatives for further growth include split-site PhDs with key partners, and a distance learning PhD.

2.158 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) has oversight of research degree provision and will be supported by a PVC for Research and Knowledge Exchange. The Research Strategy Committee (RSC) oversees strategy and policy development, while the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) ensures postgraduate standards and quality are maintained and students' interests are secured. The Graduate School complements faculty support and promotes best practice. All research degree programmes adhere to the Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Programmes (ICP PGR) and relevant Regulations, and accord with the RCUK (2013) Policy and Guidelines on the Governance of Good Research Conduct.

2.159 These policies and procedures would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.160 The review team examined a range of documentation, including the Regulations for Research Degrees, the ICP PGR, minutes of relevant committees, and online resources and information. The team met senior staff with management responsibilities for postgraduate research provision and for the Graduate School, academic staff who had experience as research supervisors, internal examiners and independent chairs, and students on different research programmes and modes of study.

2.161 Postgraduate research applications are reviewed in the relevant department and interviewees seen by two staff other than the proposed supervisors. Faculty and departmental inductions introduce the research teams, discipline resources and technical support, and are supported by the Graduate School's more general, University-wide induction programme running throughout the year, with an online version to support distance learning and part-time students.

2.162 Improved physical infrastructure for research students is identified as a University priority; the Cheshire Graduate School, with offices for full-time and part-time students, research training areas and a PGR common room, is one instance of such provision, with further improvement elsewhere a priority for future capital development.

2.163 The University PGR Development Programme provides a range of skills development activities at all levels, mapped to the RCUK Vitae Researcher Development

Framework. Since many students are part-time or work at a distance, the Programme combines face-to-face and online development. Training needs are identified through supervision meetings and, from next year, via a Training Needs Analysis mapped to the Vitae Framework. Many activities are designed to promote students' communication and engagement skills, and the first cohort of the University's significantly enhanced GTA scheme commenced in the current year. GTA teaching works around PhD study requirements, with teaching support for the student embedded in departmental teaching activity, while the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) supports all research students who teach.

2.164 A dedicated Research Support Librarian assists students with workshops and online provision. The Graduate School offers a triage clinic for urgent academic and personal issues, supportive interviews, and guidance to other student support services, including the Union Advice Centre. Seed-corn grants are available for new researchers to fund small projects and promote capability to attract external funding, and for MPhil and PhD candidates to develop relevant research skills. There is a new strategic PGR Scholarships policy to maximise external studentship funds, complemented by increased internal funding for the University's research excellence areas.

2.165 The University has taken steps to promote a cohesive research student community. Induction builds links to supportive faculty events and structures such as seminars, a monthly forum, reading groups, writing and teaching workshops, conferences and other networking events organised by students, the University and the NW Universities Regional Consortium. There is also a student-led blog and other online networks. Duplicate Graduate School workshops and parallel seminars contribute to parity of experience for students at the Cheshire and Manchester campuses. Research students met by the review team expressed a high level of satisfaction with the support they received. The University's reflective approach to enhancing postgraduate research opportunities for professional development and academic study, and to promoting an inclusive research student community, is **good practice**.

2.166 Research student supervision is by experienced teams (which may include external members), approved by the Head of Faculty Research Degrees and RDC, with oversight by either the Departmental RD Coordinator or Head of Faculty Research Degrees to ensure no conflict of interest. The ICP PGR and Research Student Handbook sets out the responsibilities of the team, the student and the independent reviewer for Annual Review. Research students give feedback on their supervision at Annual Review, and by contact with their Department's RD Coordinator and Head of Faculty Research Degrees, with upward escalation if necessary. There are staff training and development opportunities for potential supervisors, some of which are required before supervision can occur.

2.167 Research students met by the review team spoke very positively of their interactions with supervisors and the guidance and support they received. They were appreciative of the timings of planned meetings and confident that they would obtain prompt and positive responses to any requests for additional meetings.

2.168 MPhil/PhD students complete a 12 to 18-month progression stage with a report and a viva with two independent staff; this is currently being extended to all doctoral pathways. Staff completing PhDs are supported by a reduction in their teaching load and fees paid for Level 8 awards. PRES results are used to identify other support, for example for part-time PGRs, to promote timely completion, with the University developing a more nuanced data analysis of PGR progression by incorporating transfers between modes of study. Regular supervisory meetings are formally recorded and copies held by Faculty RDAs.

2.169 Each research student's Annual Review is led by an independent reviewer, with the resulting report and recommendations reviewed through Faculty Research Degree Annual Review (RDAR), with actions included in Faculty Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report returns. These are then incorporated, together with external benchmark data, in the Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report, reviewed by RDC and submitted to Academic Board with recommended action plans. A proposal to introduce periodic (five-yearly) reviews of research degrees has been approved by RDC and will be introduced from September 2017 (see Expectation A3.3).

2.170 Student feedback on their experience is both informal and formal: postgraduate research student representatives currently attend relevant faculty and alternate RDC meetings, but this is under review in light of sector best practice. The review team would encourage the University to facilitate PGR representatives' attendance for open business at all faculty and RDC meetings. Representatives also participate in the Graduate School Student Forum, and have led on initiatives to improve the research student experience, such as sharing models of practice-focused research in Education. PRES results and associated action plans agreed by RDC and Academic Board are publicised on the Graduate School website and emailed directly to students.

2.171 Assessment and associated criteria in the PGR Degree Regulations are mapped to QAA qualification descriptors for research degrees. Guidance for students is available on the Graduate School website and in the Research Student Handbook; they receive targeted guidance prior to their viva examination. The student submission reports that the 2015 PRES survey indicated that research students were generally satisfied with their understanding of assessment tasks and requirements, a view confirmed by the students met by the review team.

2.172 At least one internal and one external examiner are appointed for each research student, with two externals if the student is a staff member. RDC approves all examiners and the Graduate School monitors appointments so that no examiner is appointed more than three times in any five-year period. The independent viva Chair reports on the viva if an appeal or complaint is subsequently forthcoming. The Graduate School reviews viva feedback and receives external reports which may, if necessary, be considered by RDC. There are distinct complaints and appeals procedures for PGR students.

2.173 Concurrent with its decision to increase research student numbers, the University has taken careful steps to enhance the quality of research students' experience and to identify and adopt internal and external good practice. It has made good use of digital and other means to build a sense of community among research students and promote their rapport with staff, has created supportive structures, and has effective monitoring, reporting and review processes in place. Evidence from the student submission and research students who met the review team indicated high levels of satisfaction with provision and support.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.176 All of the 11 Expectations in this area have been met, with ten Expectations considered to be low risk and one Expectation considered to be moderate risk. The moderate risk relate to some weaknesses in the operation of the formal mechanisms of oversight.

2.177 There are five instances of good practice in this area. For Expectation B2 there is a comprehensive range of high-quality information available to students prior to their enrolment. For Expectation B4, the University provides an integrated range of services that support successful student development and achievement. This includes support for students with disabilities, student induction and transition, Student Hubs, library services, and study skills and pastoral support. The University's approach to the promotion of employability is a second area of good practice within Expectation B4. For Expectation B8, the use of management information is used effectively and innovatively to continually monitor and improve the University's provision. In Expectation B11, the University takes a reflective approach to enhancing the professional development and academic study of its research students and promotes an inclusive research student community.

2.178 There are four recommendations for this judgement area. The recommendation for Expectation B7 concerns some incomplete reports and gaps in the tracking of external examiner reports for collaborative provision. For Expectation B5, the recommendation relates to implementing more effective mechanisms to communicate information to students where there are changes that affect their studies. In relation to Expectation B9, the recommendation relates to conveying consistent information on appeals and complaints to staff and students. Finally, the recommendation in Expectation B10 concerns a more formal process of oversight in the ongoing monitoring of collaborative and academic partners.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The University provides a wide range of information about its higher education provision, accessible in paper-based and electronic formats. The information is intended for a range of audiences including prospective and current students, graduates, staff, collaborative partners, employers, stakeholders and the general public.

3.2 General information about the University is available on its website, including information about the University's strategic plan, and the governance and management of the University. There are dedicated web pages for more specific information about academic provision, regulations and support for students and staff. Programme information is also provided through the prospectus which is available online and in hard copy.

3.3 The University has an online platform (VLE) which enables students to access information online. The VLE is a source of important information for students to support their learning, including access to the Student Charter, online programme handbooks, unit handbooks and links to student support services. Programme handbooks and unit handbooks are uploaded at the start of the academic year. To ensure consistency, the University has created Programme Handbook Policy and Guidelines which contain assistance on what should be contained within programme handbooks, including signposts to services and academic regulations.

3.4 The live prospectus web pages are a major source of information, providing information on programme structure and content; outlining entry requirements and admissions information; and providing an overview of learning resources, accommodation, facilities and the Students' Union. For prospective postgraduate students there are distinct web pages; the information covers the courses available, how to apply and details of scholarship opportunities.

3.5 The website also includes a specific section for international students, including living and studying in the UK and the availability of additional support including scholarships.

3.6 The University produces a comprehensive range of information that would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.7 The review team reviewed a wide range of published documentation and information related to the academic provision, in addition to exploring the VLE and the University's website. The team also met students and academic and professional support staff from across the University.

3.8 Information for current students includes a comprehensive range of online and printed resources, as well as induction information. Programme handbooks provide an important reference point for regulations (for example, appeals and complaints, citation, referencing and plagiarism), student support and advice.

3.9 The team found that the University provides clear, detailed and accessible information on the programmes it offers, the support and resources it makes available to students, and what it in turn expects of students. The University's website is well designed and organised. Published information includes clear descriptions of the University's mission, values and strategies.

3.10 The team also reviewed the procedure for signing off public documents with senior staff and managers responsible for public information content. Changes to public documents are signed off by the Director of Marketing, Communications and Development before being passed to the Registrar and then in some areas to the VC. There is no formal policy which documents the sign-off of public information and the lines of responsibility, and some staff seemed unsure about the exact process. The review team therefore **recommends** that by July 2016 the University clarifies the lines of responsibility for the sign-off of published information.

3.11 The review team met a range of students, including students on a collaborative programme, who commented favourably on their experience with regard to the information provided in the recruitment, selection and admission process. Students confirmed that the information provided prior to applying was accurate, provided an appropriate level of detail and reflected their subsequent experience as a student. They commented that the documentation prepared them for University study and created a sense of excitement at the prospect of becoming a student at the University. The positive impact of the information provided to students prior to their enrolment is noted as good practice under Expectation B2. The VLE and other online resources are also considered helpful by students as they provide access to a wide range of information and learning resources.

3.12 Information on quality assurance is provided to staff and collaborative partners through the CASQE website. Formal partnership agreements with collaborative partners define responsibilities for published information, and partner information is monitored to confirm the accuracy and completeness of the information. The University is currently undergoing an analysis of wider published information for partnerships. The Link Tutor role also plays a vital part in ensuring that the programme and unit information developed by collaborative partners is accurate as they maintain oversight of the documentation produced. Students studying on collaborative provision are provided with a handbook, which can be accessed online or provided in hard copy. The handbook contains a range of information such as assessment regulations, policies and procedures.

3.13 Overall, the review team found that the University produces comprehensive and detailed information that is fit for purpose. The team made one recommendation in this area relating to clarifying the procedure for signing off published information. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, reflecting a minor omission in procedure.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.15 The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There is one recommendation which is to clarify the procedure for signing off published information. There are no affirmations. The area contributes to a feature of good practice under Expectation B2 regarding information provided to students prior to their enrolment.

3.16 The University provides a wide range of information about its higher education provision for a range of stakeholders. The information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy for prospective and current students, as well as those with responsibility for maintaining standards and assuring quality.

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

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 At a strategic level, enhancement is implicit in the relationship between several strategies, of which the main document is the Quality Enhancement Framework. Enhancement activity within the University draws on monitoring of programmes, external and internal feedback and several major initiatives to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. The appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor coincides with the University's need to refresh its mission and vision and this will be an opportunity to redefine the University's enhancement priorities.

4.2 Responsiveness of programmes to quality enhancement procedures is one principle of the Strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment. The University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy, Employment, Employability, and Enterprise Strategy, the Internationalisation Strategy and the Quality Enhancement Framework facilitate the enhancement of the student experience. The complex interaction between these documents outlines the University's approach to enhancement but there is no single document that defines how University strategies interact to generate an enhancement culture. The Corporate Strategy makes no direct reference to enhancement.

4.3 The Quality Enhancement Framework aims to create a rewarding student experience that increases graduate employment opportunities. The Framework regards enhancement as a quality mechanism that supports the University's academic vision by encouraging staff and student self-reflection. In particular, it focuses on improving learning and teaching, and identifying and embedding best practice in the sector and across the University.

4.4 The Academic Board and the University Executive Group lead strategic planning surrounding enhancement activity. Both are ultimately answerable to the Board of Governors, although the Articles of Government do not mention enhancement. Associate Deans promote enhancement activities across faculties. Action point notes of Faculty Executive Groups make passing reference to enhancement, but the programme teams engage with enhancement through the Continuous Monitoring and Improvement process. The Student Experience Committee considers the Student Survey's Enhancement Plan, although minutes do not address enhancement beyond this. Quality processes draw on feedback from external examiners, PSRBs and feedback from student surveys to identify enhancement actions. It is clear that enhancement is embedded in practice, but the interrelationship of the key documents and processes could be more explicitly defined.

4.5 More could be done to draw collaborative partners into the enhancement focus of the University. Collaborative partners whom the team met were unaware of how they contributed to the University's quality enhancement procedures. It is clear that Link Tutors and external examiners could be more proactive in formally highlighting good practice and feeding this back to the University for wider dissemination and implementation.

4.6 The University's policies and procedures would allow it to meet the Expectation.

4.7 The team considered a range of strategies and policies and considered how they define a unified approach to enhancement, by looking at the minutes of the meetings that

strategically plan or operationalise enhancement initiatives. The team also spoke with staff and students.

4.8 University projects and working processes demonstrate a commitment to enhancement. For example, the Enhancing Quality and Assessment for Learning (EQAL) initiative created a four-strand approach to enhancing the student learning experience. Actions initiated by the project resulted in a significant improvement in overall student satisfaction over four years. Students are extremely positive about the initiative and the increased demands on Students' Union sabbatical officers indicate the value placed on student engagement. All staff and facilities contribute to the culture of enhancement. Networking days enable staff to exchange good practice to develop approaches to enhancement, as do conferences where National Learning and Teaching Fellows often discuss their role in delivering innovation and supporting educational research.

4.9 The EQAL project initiated several other enhancement activities such as the Continuous Monitoring Improvement database and the development of the virtual learning environment, through which students receive personalised information which they value highly. The Employability, Employment and Enterprise Strategy emerged from a review of the University's support for student employability and employment and led to a range of projects such as the Jobs for Students (J4S), Futures and Volunteering Xchange. The proportion of University graduates entering professional employment or graduate-level study six months after graduation has increased by 11 per cent over two years.

4.10 To strengthen its support for learning and teaching, the University has given responsibility for enhanced support for learning, teaching and academic continuing professional development to the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching. This office shares good practice through faculties and across the institution with annual conferences for staff, indicating that strategies, groups and initiatives collectively promote enhancement. The Continuous Monitoring and Improvement scheme developed this work further, enabling the University to use data to inform and enhance the student experience. The structures in place to evaluate and develop enhancement activities to incrementally improve student learning opportunities represent **good practice**.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.13 The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. The team identifies one feature of good practice in this area relating to the structures in place to evaluate and develop enhancement initiatives, which demonstrates the University's commitment to incrementally enhancing student learning opportunities.

4.14 Enhancement activity within the University draws on monitoring of programmes, external and internal feedback and several major initiatives to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. While no single document defines how the University's strategies interact with regard to enhancement, enhancement is implicit in the relationship between several strategies, of which the main document is the Quality Enhancement Framework, and it is clear that enhancement is embedded in practice.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The University has a strategic approach to student employability which is encompassed within the recently developed Employability, Employment and Enterprise Strategy. The University also has key performance indicators relating to student employability within the Corporate Strategy 2012-2017, including a target of 70 per cent of students in graduate-level employment or study.

5.2 The MMU Futures award and its predecessor, MMU Professional Passport, is an employability initiative for all students studying at the University. The award is designed to reward and recognise extracurricular activities. The award supports students in the development of employability skills through workshops, short courses, activities, competitions and volunteering opportunities. Each activity carries a number of points which count towards the award, of which there are three levels: bronze, silver and gold. The award also enables students who are volunteering with the Students' Union to earn points towards the MMU Futures award. The University has also created a specialised Futures Global Award specifically for those students who have an interest in international issues.

5.3 The University's curriculum frameworks make explicit reference to employability skills and graduate learning outcomes in the design of the programme. Every unit specification articulates the employability skills within assessment and each programme includes personal development planning activities. Some units across the provision are linked to employers and the University works in partnership with employers to deliver units, for example Agency Life and Unit X. The Agency Life internship programme allows second-year students in the Department of Marketing to spend two terms working in an organisation and to work on a single project throughout their time there. Similarly, Unit X creates opportunities for students from the Manchester School of Art to collaborate and work on external projects. The creation of programme units like the ones noted enable students to have the opportunity to accrue real work experience while combining it with their University studies.

5.4 In 2015, there was a fundamental review of student services, including the careers and employability services. Investment in the Careers and Employability Service has enabled the creation of extra posts, a new programme to incentivise local small and medium-sized enterprises to offer internships, and the development of the MyCareerHub to support direct targeting of vacancies and employability information to students and graduates. The University has also established the role of Career Employability Advisers in faculties who work alongside the Faculty Employability Champions to encourage new initiatives, support staff development and share good practice.

5.5 The University has an employability hub which is available to students on its website and through the VLE. It provides a single source of information to students and graduates and comprises the job hub which complements the online vacancy service.

5.6 The Careers and Employability Service supports students in their career journey from the moment they arrive at the University to graduation and beyond. The activities of the Service are wide ranging and designed to prepare students and graduates for the demands of a competitive job market. The services offered to students include: careers information; careers guidance (online and face to face); employer engagement through careers fairs; information sessions; employer-led networking cafés; and skills workshops.

5.7 The employer-led networking cafés are an integral part of the Careers and Employability Service offer at the University and an example of the type of careers support

available to University students. A number of these cafés are held throughout the academic year focusing on either subject-specific or industry-related topics. A variety of employers are invited into the University, and students have the opportunity to develop their networking skills by meeting potential employers and learning more about the businesses and organisations. Likewise, employers can meet students and discuss how students can best prepare themselves prior to applying for jobs.

5.8 The University has good links with employers, some of whom the team met. The employers were very positive about the students they had employed or worked with through engagement with the University. They commented on the 'work-ready' nature of students and graduates, and the professional manner in which the students and graduates behaved.

5.9 The University uses employment data across the institution and each department has set targets to improve Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) results. This is monitored and reviewed as part of the Annual Planning Process by Faculty Executive Groups. Results of student surveys are also discussed at the Student Experience Committee. Additional funds have also been allocated to support additional placement, work-based learning resources and staffing. The University also analyses the data from the NSS, with recent NSS scores improving for the question about how well students feel their course has prepared them for entering the job market and seeking employment.

5.10 The review team finds that the University is dedicated to supporting its students and graduates in the development of employability skills and that it has initiatives and embedded employability in the curriculum to ensure this.

Glossary

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

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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