Higher Education Review of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne

April 2016

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. The review took place from 18 to 21 April 2016 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Ian Giles
- Professor Helen Marshall
- Dr Mark Rawlinson
- Mr Lyes Bouakaz (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key findings

QAA's judgements about the University of Newcastle upon Tyne

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

- 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 the University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

- The comprehensive support, development and career opportunities for staff involved in learning and teaching, which has contributed to the improvement of learning, teaching and quality assurance (Expectations B3, B8).
- The design of key roles within academic units and the training of staff to fill these roles, which has strengthened the leadership of learning and teaching (Expectation B3).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to the University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

By September 2016:

- clarify the policy for the approval of new partnerships to ensure that the ultimate authority for approval is made clear (Expectation B10)
- revise the procedures for partner approval to ensure that conditions are met and the partner finally approved before a programme can commence (Expectation B10).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that the University of Newcastle upon Tyne is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The steps being taken to improve consistency and effectiveness in the use of management information within annual monitoring reports (Expectation B8).

Theme: Student Employability

Employability is at the centre of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne's thinking and is a core criterion in the approval of new degree programmes. The Graduate Skills Framework was developed with input from employers and students to define a set of skills that, when added to a degree, will give students the skills needed in life beyond university. Students acquire subject-specific academic and professional skills as part of their degree programme, and have the opportunity to develop other transferable skills through opportunities offered

by the Careers Service. Systematic and detailed consideration of Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education data takes place each year, with analysis undertaken at all levels of the institution, and outcomes used to enhance employability initiatives at provider level. The University continues to be committed to improving its employability offer to students and has a Placements Project underway, which will roll out in 2016-17 and do much to further underpin its employability strategy.

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

About the University of Newcastle upon Tyne

The vision of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne (the University), as set out in the Vision 2021 document, is to be a world-class civic university with a global reputation for academic excellence. Its mission is to be a research-intensive university, delivering teaching and facilitating learning of the highest quality, and making a significant contribution to the development of civil society. Interaction with civil society, regionally, nationally and internationally, focuses on three large-scale Societal Challenge Themes: Ageing, Social Renewal and Sustainability. The University's learning and teaching philosophy is based on the concept of education for life, providing knowledge relevant and useful to life and the world around us. Graduate employability is a key strand of this aspiration.

The University was established with full degree awarding powers by Act of Parliament in 1963; however, its genesis can be traced to the origin of a School of Medicine in 1834. From the 1960s onwards the University established its city-centre campus in Newcastle, and in recent years it has also established a joint venture and three branch campuses: INTO Newcastle University, a joint venture with INTO University Partnerships; Newcastle University International Singapore (NUIS); and NUMed Malaysia Campus in EduCity, Johor. Most recently, in 2015, Newcastle University London (NU London) was established.

Academically, the University is organised into three faculties (Humanities and Social Sciences; Medical Sciences; and Science, Agriculture and Engineering), comprising 24 academic schools and 12 research institutes (collectively known as academic units), and 37 research centres.

A number of significant changes have taken place since the QAA Institutional Audit in 2009. In readiness for the new tuition fees regime the University carried out extensive consultation in relation to the core expectations of the student experience at the University, and to establish the minimum level of provision that all undergraduate students could expect to receive. This resulted in the development of the Newcastle Offer, which was implemented across the University in 2012.

A new Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy was introduced in 2013. This takes account of a number of revised and new strategies relating to internationalisation, information technology and student recruitment. It gives additional emphasis to the themes of the relationship between research and teaching, employability, student engagement and technology-enhanced learning.

The University has invested significantly in developing its estate since 2009 to support learning and teaching. Examples of developments include the opening of the King's Gate Building in 2010, which houses the majority of the University's professional support services, allowing the consolidation of the provision of support for all facets of the student lifecycle. A Digital Campus programme has put in place technology and governance to enable staff and students to improve the way in which they use technology. New library provision has provided 500 additional study spaces.

International activities take place across the University, focused on internationalisation at home (skills, exchange programmes and student placements, and curriculum development) and abroad (recruitment, transnational education, alumni and capacity building). A major element of this activity is the delivery and strategic growth of the University's interest in developing different types of transnational education.

In light of the University's strategic approach to internationalisation and diversification, and strengthening of international student recruitment, including the development of branch campuses, a key challenge for the University is ensuring and maintaining the comparability of academic standards and quality of learning opportunities where University degree programmes are delivered away from Newcastle. The University addresses this by ensuring that all such provision is subject to its institutional framework for managing academic quality and standards.

In common with other higher education providers, the University has considered how to make appropriate provision for the impact of the removal of the cap on student recruitment by the UK government from 2015-16 in a context where the strategic aim is to increase overall student numbers by three per cent per year. Market profile, popularity and increased numbers of high quality students from diverse backgrounds also bring some challenges.

The University is responding to increased demand for study space, higher demand on professional services, and greater need for, and use of, technology, and recognises the need to maintain appropriate student-staff ratios to accommodate what will potentially be greater diversity in the student profile and mode of study.

The nature and scale of activity in managing higher education with others has changed significantly since the 2009 Institutional Audit. The University has 34 educational partners, and 3,013 students are registered on programmes that are the subject of an educational partnership (including those studying at branch campuses); there are 237 students on exchanges.

The University has responded effectively to the recommendations from the Institutional Audit in 2009. The University provided an update on the action plans of previous reviews for the mid-cycle report produced in May 2012. The report concluded that the University was making good progress.

The University has taken significant steps to address the advisable recommendation in the Institutional Audit of 2009 to 'strengthen its oversight of collaborative provision'. However, there are two recommendations arising from this current review that relate to a similar area and which indicate that the clarity of policy and procedures needs to be addressed.

The University has further developed the features of good practice identified in previous reports and is able to demonstrate that it has sought to share and develop these positive features of its provision.

Explanation of the findings about the University of Newcastle upon Tyne

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

Explanation of the findings about the University of Newcastle upon Tyne

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1   The University has an academic regulatory framework that secures threshold academic standards through the programme approval, review and assessment processes that require alignment with *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and Subject Benchmark Statements. The FHEQ is also considered in the periodic review process. The University uses a credit framework that sets out the number of credits for each award, is aligned to the national framework for England, and uses some guidance from the Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (NICATS) project work.

1.2   The FHEQ and subject benchmarks are used in programme design and alignment, with award levels as stated within Programme Specifications and checked through the programme approval process by external advisers.

1.3   The University's academic framework and its course approval and review policies and procedures allow the Expectation to be met.

1.4   The review team considered a range of documentation, including programme approval and review documentation for on-campus and collaborative provision. The team met senior staff, academic staff who had been involved in the design, approval and review of programmes, and staff at partner institutions.

1.5   All programmes leading to awards of the University are positioned against the appropriate level of the FHEQ and relevant national credit frameworks. This is ensured through the University programme approval and review process in terms of the level of study, duration of programmes, number of modules and credit framework. External advisers review alignment with external reference points as part of their role in programme approval and review.

1.6   Programme specifications demonstrate alignment with the appropriate levels of the FHEQ and also reflect relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. A standard template is provided for programme specifications. Programme approval and review documentation also demonstrates that external benchmarks are actively used in these processes.

1.7   As part of the assessment process, external examiners are asked to confirm that programmes meet the requirements of the FHEQ and other external reference points. They also confirm that the programme and module learning outcomes have been achieved, as well as commenting on the comparability of standards with other providers. External examiners' reports demonstrate that this has occurred.

1.8   The University also aligns many of its programmes with the requirements of professional bodies. Where programmes are validated overseas they may also be aligned with the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) in the country concerned.

1.9   Members of staff whom the review team met demonstrated awareness of the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. The review team found that, based on the evidence provided and from meetings with staff, due account is taken of the national qualification and credit frameworks in setting and maintaining academic standards, and that there are policies and processes in place that ensure that appropriate alignment occurs. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.10   The University has comprehensive regulations and procedures in place for its undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research provision. These are laid out in the Academic Regulations and the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes. They are revised annually by the University Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (ULTSEC), reported to Senate and published prior to the start of each new academic year. Briefing notes are issued on major changes to the regulations. Some variation to the regulations may be permitted for individual programmes, subject to approval. This academic framework covers organisational structures and is mapped against the Quality Code.

1.11   The University Senate retains oversight of academic standards and quality through its committee structures, with elements of responsibility devolved to faculties and academic units. The implementation of the regulatory framework is set out in the Quality and Standards Handbook.

1.12   A qualification credit framework is used to manage credit volumes. This framework sets minimum credit values and allows extra credit volumes where, for example, professional body requirements specify. Credit can only be awarded at one level for each module. Award, progression and Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning criteria are set out in the Academic Regulations. These are differentiated between foundation undergraduate and postgraduate awards and include degree classification algorithms.

1.13   Grade descriptors and assessment criteria exist at the level of the subject academic unit within faculties and these align to common scales for taught programmes. Assessment strategy and methods are considered carefully at programme approval stage. Criteria for research degrees are set out in the University Handbook for Research Students and take account of the QAA qualification descriptor for doctoral degrees. The outcomes of the assessment process are reviewed at academic unit level by the Board of Studies, by way of the Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) process. Additionally, external examiners provide comment and feedback on learning outcomes, the methods of assessment and output standards.

1.14   The University has a comprehensive set of procedures and academic regulations in place that allow the Expectation to be met. It also has a committee structure that provides oversight of quality and standards for both its on-campus and its partner provision.

1.15   The review team considered a range of documents relating to the academic framework and regulations, as well as minutes of the relevant committees, in particular those assigned responsibility for ensuring implementation of policies and practice. The review team tested its findings through discussions with staff and students.

1.16   The committee structure underpins and supports the delivery of, and engagement with, the procedures and regulations. Senate has overarching responsibility for quality and standards, but gives authorised delegation to ULTSEC and a number of other committees, including the Educational Partnership Subcommittee (EPSC), and Postgraduate Research

Subcommittee of ULTSEC Research Committee. There is a flow chart illustrating the reporting lines for Senate's standing committees and governance structure.

1.17   Faculty Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committees (FLTSECs) for undergraduate and taught postgraduate areas provide operational oversight of quality assurance at a local level. There are lines of delegation to faculties through the committee structure, with reports on actions taken by faculties being made to a range of senior committees, such as Senate, and ULTSEC. The governance framework, and the regulations, policies and procedures supporting it, are designed to ensure that the University can discharge its responsibility for setting and maintaining academic standards. Although programmes may request a variation from the regulations, the review team was informed that this would often relate to PSRB accreditation; such requests, following initial approval at faculty level, have to be approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) and reported to Senate. Additionally, programmes may also specify higher levels of credit volume than those specified by the University Credit Framework where PSRB requirements apply. Consideration of the minutes of Senate and other committees confirmed that responsibilities are being fulfilled.

1.18   The University programme approval and review processes serve to ensure that faculties and academic units are adhering to the academic regulations. Assessment outcomes of taught provision are reviewed at academic unit level by the Board of Studies and the outcomes are fed into the AMR process. External examiner reports also consider adherence to the academic regulations in respect of alignment to learning outcomes and level and comment on the operation of assessment, including confirmation that the regulations have been applied appropriately by those involved in assessment and at the boards. External examiners report that they are generally satisfied that the regulations secure standards and are being followed.

1.19   The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework (QAEF) is used to assure research degree programmes and the annual report process ensures that the academic regulations are applied appropriately.

1.20   Staff who met the review team are conversant with the academic regulations, the committee structure, and the framework for management and oversight of quality assurance and standards.

1.21   The review team found that the University has in place a governance framework with clearly articulated lines of delegation and responsibility. Its academic regulations are accessible, comprehensive and reviewed regularly, with changes being communicated to staff and students. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.22   Programme specifications that are approved as part of the course design and approval process are the definitive course record. These are constructed at individual programme level or for a group of similar programmes with distinctive pathways but a similar set of learning outcomes. Each programme specification addresses *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England Wales and Norther Ireland* (FHEQ), subject benchmarks, learning outcomes, and teaching and assessment strategy and methods. Additionally, they reference University regulations through a web-based link so that information on programme structure and module credit values can be accessed alongside the programme specification. Following approval, the specification becomes the principal reference point for course delivery, monitoring, review and assessment.

1.23   Programme specifications are maintained by academic units, with an annual exercise on updating that is administered by faculty learning and teaching support teams, with changes to programme specifications requiring approval by the chair of the relevant FLTSEC. The Learning and Teaching Development Service (LTDS) maintains and updates the templates and guidance for programme specifications. There are module outlines for all modules, which are also approved as part of the initial programme approval process. Programme handbooks and module handbooks are provided to all students and prepared against a common template. All research degree programmes have a designated list of information to be provided to students as part of their induction into the programme.

1.24   On successful completion taught students are issued with a transcript showing their achievements and including a Statement of Qualification and a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR).

1.25   The academic framework and the University's policies would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.26   The review team considered a range of programme specifications, module outlines, and student and module handbooks. It also reviewed the related approval and review processes. The team met a number of academic staff and students, both on-campus and at partners.

1.27   The University provides guidance on the minimum content of programme specifications in its guidance on the programme documentation for validation and revalidation contained in the Quality and Standards Handbook. Programme specifications contain a range of information about the award, including aims, intended learning outcomes, and alignment with the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and any PSRB requirements. They provide general detail about assessment, as well as learning and teaching. Educational partners are also expected to produce programme specifications. Module descriptors provide specific detail about the curriculum, learning outcomes and assessment, as well as level and credits. Academic Units are required to review the accuracy of programme specifications each year. The University uses its Learning and Teaching Review (LTR) process to ensure the currency of the programme specification.

1.28 The University sets out a comprehensive list of information that it requires to be published and made available for research students. This includes a definitive list of all research degrees offered, which is listed in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), as well as information relating to the intended learning outcomes of the programme, methods of teaching and learning, assessment and the curriculum, including skills training and the research element of the individual project.

1.29 The review team found that the University's policies and procedures provide for a definitive record of its approved programmes. There is a clear process for revision of the definitive record and responsibility for maintaining the currency of programme records is ensured. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

1.30   The University has a Policy on the Approval of New Programmes which is designed to ensure that approval processes set and maintain appropriate standards.

1.31   The policy, by requiring external confirmation of alignment with the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, credit arrangements as defined by the QCF, and the academic framework of the University, allows the Expectation to be met.

1.32   The team read the relevant policies and the documentation of process, and spoke to staff and students of the University.

1.33   The approval paperwork assures that new programmes are aligned with the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, credit arrangements as defined by the QCF, and the academic framework of the University. An external adviser confirms that requirements match the FHEQ qualification descriptor, and that programme learning outcomes are appropriate.

1.34   Programme Specification templates require demonstration that learning outcomes are appropriate for the final level of the programme, and are cross-referenced to relevant Subject Benchmark Statement/s. The maintenance of programme specifications (now annually checked by FLTS teams) is assured in an effective way by LTR.

1.35   The Code of Practice for Research Postgraduate Degrees requires that postgraduate research programmes may only be offered where the University can demonstrate the availability of appropriate supervision and facilities.

1.36   Programmes, once approved, are subject to annual monitoring and periodic review (see Expectation B8 for a full explanation of these processes).

1.37   The University has an effective approval process, supported by appropriate use of external reference points and comprehensive documentation, including the programme specification, which is widely recognised as the authoritative record. Oversight is effective, and staff involved in the process are well briefed. For these reasons the Expectation is met and the 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 criteria for the award of credit, progression requirements, the award of a qualification, and the basis for deciding degree classifications are detailed in the University Regulations. These apply to all taught programmes and establish that credit and qualifications are only awarded on achievement of the stated learning outcomes.

1.39   The criteria and requirements for the award of credits and qualifications as set out in the University Regulations would allow the expectation to be met.

1.40   The review team examined detailed documents relating to the University's process for awarding credit and qualifications, including the University Regulations, examples of programme and module approvals and external examiners' reports. Meetings with staff involved in monitoring quality and standards at the University confirmed that practice was implemented securely through these processes.

1.41   Learning outcomes are defined at programme and module level and are approved during programme approval. The process requires that academic staff involved in designing programmes refer to the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and Qualification Characteristic Statements. Programme regulations, programme specifications and module outline forms establish the assessment methods through which students are able to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes. Defined marking criteria are also provided and students are assessed against them.

1.42   Senate has devolved the responsibility to decide whether to award credit and/or a qualification to Boards of Examiners, using processes approved by ULTSEC. Every Board of Examiners includes at least one external examiner as a full member of the Board. In their reports external examiners are asked to confirm whether the standards are appropriately aligned with the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements and that academic standards are comparable with those of similar programmes in other UK higher education institutions. The external examiners sign the degree results lists. The University has processes in place to make reasonable adjustments for students with protected characteristics when necessary, provided these take into account the need to maintain prescribed standards.

1.43   The review team concluded that the University's approval process is designed to ensure that appropriate consideration is given to relevant external reference points and that credit and qualifications are awarded to individual students only where the appropriate learning outcomes have been achieved. The Boards of Examiners act to ensure that processes and standards are upheld consistently across the University for all awards made and external examiners act to ensure that academic standards meet UK expectations. Consequently, the review team concluded 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   AMR is designed to demonstrate that programmes are delivered in accordance with the approved programme specification, and that they remain academically current. The equivalent process for postgraduate research programmes is the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework for Research Degree Programmes (QAEF).

1.45   Periodic review is undertaken in a two-stage process. The first stage is designed to check compliance with University policies. The second stage includes a visit by a review team, with external and student members. There is oversight of both processes at faculty and University level, through FLTSEC and Taught Programmes Subcommittee.

1.46   Periodic review is undertaken in a two-stage process. During the first stage, LTR is designed to check compliance with University policies. The second stage consists of a visit by a review team, with external and student members, to challenge the academic unit's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis). There is oversight of both processes at faculty and University level, through FLTSEC and Taught Programmes Subcommittee.

1.47   The purpose of AMR is clearly defined as ensuring that programmes are delivered in accordance with what was approved. The required evidence base includes statistical information about student achievement, as well as external examiner reports, to permit the consideration of academic standards. These arrangements allow the expectation to be met.

1.48   The team read the relevant policies and the documentation of process, and spoke to staff and students of the University.

1.49   The process for annual monitoring specifies the appropriate management information. The range of information considered by the AMR process - which includes external examiners' reports, student evaluations, PSRB reports, and data on retention, progression and achievement - is appropriate, but the review team found that the use of quantitative information in AMR was variable (see also paragraph 2.131).

1.50   Programme specifications are annually reviewed by Boards of Studies and monitored by FLTS teams, including the mapping of learning outcomes to modules.

1.51   The Policy and Procedure for External Examiners of Taught Programmes sets out the responsibilities of FLTSECs in ensuring that action is taken in response to reports.

1.52   AMR and QAEF are subject to comprehensive oversight at faculty and institutional levels, through FLTSEC or Graduate School Committees reporting to the Taught Programmes Subcommittee and Postgraduate Research Subcommittee of ULTSEC. This is effective in ensuring compliance with monitoring and other policies, the identification of issues across faculties or the University, and in identifying good practice.

1.53   The design and update of monitoring and review procedures, together with the comprehensive oversight of the reports, allows the Expectation to be met, and the 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

1.54   The University uses external and/or independent expertise in a number of processes relating to the setting and maintenance of its academic standards as elaborated in the online Quality and Standards Handbook. These include programme approval; annual external examiners' reports; the involvement of PSRBs when required; annual programme and module review; and periodic programme review.

1.55   The University's processes set out in the Quality and Standards Handbook allow the expectation to be met.

1.56   The review team considered the range of documents provided by the University, including examples of programme approvals, LTR reports, and external examiner reports and the annual reports on them. Meetings with staff of the University with responsibility for quality and standards confirmed that appropriate use of external advice is being consistently used at key stages of setting and reviewing standards across the University's provision.

1.57   At the programme approval stage, the University makes use of both external (to the University) and internal (external to the academic unit proposing the programme) independent expertise. External advisers are nominated by the academic unit proposing the new programme, and considered for approval by the relevant ULTSEC chair in line with University-wide criteria for the appointment of external advisers. External advisers submit a written report using a standard University template that requires them to affirm alignment of the proposed programme with the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. As part of the approval process programme teams are required to address any issues or concerns raised by the external adviser.

1.58   Once approved, each programme is required to have at least one external examiner who serves on the Board of Examiners. External examiners are invited to comment on academic standards as part of the annual reporting process. Each faculty provides an annual summary of their external examiners' reports to the Taught Programme Subcommittee of ULTSEC, which acts as further assurance that external expertise has been used.

1.59   LTR teams carrying out periodic review include at least one external subject specialist who is able to consider and comment on academic standards. Periodic reviews of research degrees undertaken through the QAEF also require the review team to include an external adviser.

1.60   The review team confirms that the University makes appropriate use of external and independent expertise in setting and maintaining academic standards. This enables the University to be assured that its provision meets UK threshold academic standards and that its academic standards are appropriately set and maintained. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.61   In reaching its judgement about the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the University, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.62   All of the Expectations in this area are met, with a low level of associated risk in each case.

1.63   The University matches programme outcomes and volumes of study to appropriate levels in the FHEQ and takes account of relevant Subject and Qualification Benchmark Statements. Appropriate procedures and systems maintain, review and update definitive information. Consistent and appropriate academic and regulatory frameworks are used at all times and for all levels of award. Externality is achieved through involving appropriate expert authorities in programme approval and periodic monitoring, thereby ensuring the validity and relevance of higher education provision.

1.64   There are no recommendations, affirmations or good practice directly associated with this section. However, the affirmation made under Expectation B8 is relevant to Expectation 3.3 in this section because it relates to the steps taken by the University to improve the consistency and effectiveness of management information used in annual monitoring reports.

1.65   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 Programme design takes place in the context of a Programme Approval Process that sets out the requirements of the University, both strategic and academic. These requirements are aligned with the Quality Code, FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and PSRB requirements. The policy and process are published in the Quality and Standards Handbook.

2.2 Until the academic year 2015-16 the process consisted of two stages, the second of which, the testing of a fully developed academic proposal involving an external adviser, was carried out at a faculty-level Programme Approval Committee, which includes representation from another faculty. A review of the process resulted in the separation of this first stage into a testing of the strategic case before approval for the preparation of a business case and, subsequently, the academic case.

2.3 Responsibility for the Programme Approval process lies with ULTSEC, which monitors the operation of the policy through regular reports. ULTSEC operates with the delegated authority of Senate, and provides Senate with a consolidated annual report.

2.4 The design of the new programme is articulated through a defined set of documents that set out the programme specification, programme regulations, module outlines, how the programme takes into account the needs of students, and the requirements of the Equality Strategy.

2.5 The Programme Approval Committee includes an external adviser, who is appointed according to University criteria, and a member from another faculty. The committee can set conditions for approval in its recommendations to ULTSEC.

2.6 In response to the Institutional Audit (2009) an Educational Partnerships Subcommittee of ULTSEC was established, with responsibility for partner approval and review.

2.7 The Policy for the Approval of New Programmes, which is designed to ensure that each new programme meets the University's expectations for academic standards and quality of learning experiences, allows the Expectation to be met.

2.8 The team read the policies and documentation of several programme approval processes, and talked to students and staff about their roles in the process, and about the programmes that they study and teach.

2.9 The documentation reviewed by the team demonstrates a thorough and consistent approach to testing proposed programmes and setting conditions for approval. The programme specification template is effective in requiring alignment of module and programme outcomes, skills and assessment. This is an effective element in the approval

process, assuring the University that student development and achievement is enabled and supported by the proposed programme.

2.10   The new strategic approval stage of the new Programme Approval is effective in promoting reflection on the match of the programme with the University's mission and goals, and with faculty planning, including resources.

2.11   The template for external adviser reports ensures that comments are focused on standards and learning opportunities. Programme approval documentation provides a clear record of how standards and quality issues raised by the external adviser are either resolved in the Programme Approval event or included in the action plan deriving from the conditions that must be met for approval to be granted.

2.12   The University is proactive in supporting academic staff engaged in programme development with guidance about the process and training in the practice of design and development. In one faculty this took the form of workshops on elements of learning design, such as programme specifications and learning outcomes. The Newcastle Teaching Award (see paragraph 2.40) also addresses module and programme design. Staff are encouraged to develop their expertise in learning design and in quality assurance by participating in approval processes in other institutions.

2.13   Both Faculty Learning and Teaching Support Teams, and the LTDS, provide support to programme development teams, and there are contributions of expertise from staff from across the University, including the Planning Office, Marketing, the International Office, Newcastle University IT Service, the library, the Faculty Estates Coordinator and Timetabling. Additional advice is provided by the Disability Support Team, and staff are supported in meeting the requirement for parity of treatment of students through workshops provided by the Student Wellbeing Service and the Staff Development Unit. The checklist for Accessible Programme Design assists programme developers in creating inclusive curricula and assessment diets.

2.14   A further development of the approval process from 2015-16 is consultation with students in the development stage, which should be evidenced in the approval documentation. The team did not meet a student who had been involved in programme approval.

2.15   The University has an effective procedure for the approval of the withdrawal of a programme with arrangements for teach-out. There are clear policies about making major or minor changes to programmes. There are rules that distinguish module changes to be made at academic unit level, and those which require faculty-level approval. There is a 'major change' process, for which a full approval event may be required. Academic units must demonstrate consultation with students as part of the approval process.

2.16   The University has an effective procedure for the approval of the withdrawal of a programme. The Expectation is met, and the risk is low, because the process is structured for consistency, the development of staff expertise is an institutional priority, and the documentation is effective in supporting the goals of the policy.

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

2.17   The University Recruitment and Admissions Committee is responsible for the strategic oversight of recruitment and admissions activities. It is supported in its work by two subcommittees, an Undergraduate Recruitment and Admissions Monitoring Committee and a Postgraduate Recruitment and Admissions Monitoring Committee. University Recruitment and Admissions Committee monitors and evaluates the University's Student Recruitment Strategy, developed to reflect the core objectives of the Vision 2021.

2.18   The Admissions Policy is available publicly on the University website. It states the responsibilities for the various aspects of the admissions process and sets out the University's general admissions procedures. Specific programme information, including entry requirements, is published in the prospectuses.

2.19   The central Marketing and Student Recruitment Directorate works with faculties and academic units to support outreach, marketing, recruitment, selection, admission and conversion activities. It supports admissions tutors within academic units by providing advice on strategy, administrative aspects and policies.

2.20   The International Recruitment Team within the Directorate manages partnerships with recruitment agents and sponsoring organisations worldwide, and monitors performance of its agents annually as contracts are renewed. There is an English Language Policy for applicants, which is reviewed annually.

2.21   Staff involved in recruitment activities, both in faculties and in central services, have access to training, support and guidance. Briefings are provided to administrative staff and admissions tutors, the latter of whom are appointed within academic units to lead on recruitment activities in their subject areas. One-to-one meetings between key staff across the University are used to reinforce the understanding of the roles and responsibilities involved in recruitment, selection and admission.

2.22   As part of its widening participation activities, the University has developed the Teachers' Toolkit, a database of resources for schools containing a listing of recruitment events and other opportunities. The PARTNERS programme provides a supported entry route, through which eligible applicants can apply for a conditional offer that combines slightly lower entry grades together with successful completion of an academic assessed summer school. The University also leads the Realising Opportunities collaboration of 15 institutions, promoting fair access to research-intensive universities.

2.23   There is an Admissions Complaints and Appeals Procedure, which sets out how an applicant may lodge a complaint regarding any part of the admissions process or appeal against an admissions decision. It details in which cases appeals will be considered, and states the deadlines for lodging complaints and appeals.

2.24   The University's procedures and policies for the recruitment, selection and admission of students allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the

effectiveness of their operation by considering supporting documentation provided by the University and meeting with a range of its staff and students.

2.25   The University runs pre-application open day events for prospective students, which are organised by the central marketing teams in collaboration with faculties and academic units. Academic units organise post-application open day events for undergraduate applicants. Staff in academic units confirmed that they have access to a wide range of support from their colleagues both at faculty level and in Marketing and Student Recruitment Directorate and receive thorough guidance and regular updates on the admissions policies and procedures.

2.26   Admissions policies are reviewed annually by the University Recruitment and Admissions Committee. Taught students offered a place at the University receive a survey on the admissions process, whether or not they accept the offer. The Committee also considers the Equality and Diversity Annual Monitoring Report, which is approved by Diversity Committee. The University is monitoring progression and retention data on undergraduate students, to evaluate the impact of its recruitment, selection and admissions procedures on student success.

2.27   Students met by the review team were satisfied with their experiences of applying to study at the University, particularly praising the opportunity to meet with academic staff upon request prior to making their application. Unsuccessful applicants are offered an alternative where possible. Undergraduate rejection decisions are recorded in codified form, and both undergraduate and postgraduate applicants may request limited feedback by email.

2.28   The Annual Report on Complaints and Appeals provided to ULTSEC includes details of the complaints and appeals received regarding admissions. The review team noted that the Admissions, Complaints and Appeals Procedure does not provide applicants with an indication of the University's timescale for responding to and addressing complaints and appeals, the presence of which could assist applicants with making decisions regarding their applications.

2.29   The University has appropriate policies and procedures in place for recruitment, selection and admission that enable the selection of suitable students while supporting the University in achieving its vision. The committee structure ensures that policies are regularly reviewed, taking into account data from a range of evaluation and research. The review team finds that the Expectation is met and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.30   The Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy informs all learning and teaching policies and procedures across the institution, and underpins all learning and teaching activity. The ULTSEC is responsible to Senate for ensuring the effective implementation of the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) has executive responsibility for the implementation of the approach to learning and teaching and is supported by the Deans of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies and Associate Deans at faculty level, and by Directors of Excellence in Learning and Teaching, Degree Programme Directors and module leaders at subject level. The roles and responsibilities in relation to the student experience of other academic staff are defined in the Quality and Standards Handbook; these include senior and personal tutors.

2.31   The review team examined these arrangements and considered that they are fit for purpose and allow the Expectation to be met. The review team considered a range of documents relating to the University's policies and processes for reviewing and enhancing teaching practices. The review team found evidence that these processes are used systematically across the University and heard from staff and students how the commitment to teaching articulated in the Strategy is implemented in practice.

2.32   The University education portfolio encompasses taught, professional and research programmes, delivered in Newcastle as well as at three branch campuses (two international and one UK-based), in partnership with other providers, by e-learning as well as face to face.

2.33   The University's Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy is developed and updated in partnership with students. The Strategy is available publicly via the University website. Annual priorities are set based on the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy as part of an annual action plan by the ULTSEC. This strategic approach is reviewed using a wide range of data and metrics, and progress of its implementation is monitored regularly. There is a Flexible and Distributed Learning Policy, which is currently being reviewed, that provides guidance for those proposing new programmes involving distance learning.

2.34   The Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy emphasises the synergy between educational provision and research to their mutual benefit. This is also reflected in quality management processes, where the academic programme is informed by subject-specific and educational scholarship. The links between education and research are considered during the LTR process.

2.35   The Newcastle Undergraduate Offer aims to provide students with the opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills for life, learning and work. Work is underway to establish a Newcastle Offer for taught postgraduate students. The Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes sets out the University's approach to the provision of learning opportunities for all of its research students.

2.36   Students are provided with information about learning opportunities via degree programme handbooks. The Graduate Skills Framework lists the skills and competencies students develop while studying. Opportunities are provided in the form of optional modules in career development and supernumerary modules (including the University-Wide Language Programme), peer assessment (implemented at discipline level), opportunities for peer mentoring, the research scholarships and expeditions scheme, and industrial work placements offered through the Careers Service. All undergraduate programmes are mapped to this Skills Framework.

2.37   For programmes offered through a partnership arrangement a Student Lifecycle Table, completed as part of the approval process, sets out how appropriate support will be provided and by whom. Through the LTR process and Review of Partnership and International Campus Provision (RPICP) visit the University maintains oversight of the effectiveness of learning and teaching at its branch campuses.

2.38   Innovation Fund awards, for projects that support the student learning experience in innovative ways, are made available by the ULTSEC. Ten projects received funding in 2014-15.

2.39   The University is committed to Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) and this is overseen by the eLearning and Student Information Subcommittee. The LTDS and the Newcastle University IT Service identifies, develops and evaluates innovative TEL tools to provide students with a supportive learning environment using a number of commercially available platforms and bespoke developments. There is a virtual learning environment (VLE) threshold standard to ensure that a minimum level of materials is available online for all parts of the curriculum, adherence to which is checked during the LTR. A central lecture capture service (ReCap) was introduced in 2007, and a policy is in place for its use. The Students' Union indicated its support for the move to an opt-out policy for lecture capture. An electronic sharing service that incorporates the Graduate Skills Framework, and for research degree students the Researcher Development Framework, allows students to review and reflect on their education and skills development.

2.40   Academic staff are recruited to one of three career pathways: Teaching and Research; Teaching and Scholarship; or Research and Innovation. As a condition of their two-year probationary period newly appointed academic staff are required to undertake either the 40 credit, Level 7 Newcastle Teaching Award, or for staff in the Faculty of Medical Sciences the 60 credit Certificate of Medical Education. Both of these are accredited against the UK Professional Standards Framework. Staff who complete the Newcastle Teaching Award can opt to take a further 20 credit module to achieve the award of a Level 7 Certificate in Advanced Studies in Academic Practice. The University also has a continuing professional development scheme that is mapped to the UK Professional Standards Framework at descriptor Levels 1 and 2. In addition, there is a range of targeted development opportunities offered by the LTDS, Staff Development Unit and by faculties. The review team heard from academic staff that teaching is now recognised through the reward system when applying for promotion.

2.41   The University also supports more experienced staff (including Directors of Excellence in Learning and Teaching, Degree Programme Directors, chairs and secretaries of Boards of Examiners) in a number of ways. Firstly, they can apply directly to the Higher Education Academy for recognition at descriptor Levels 3 and 4 or to be considered for the award of a National Teaching Fellowship. Currently, the University has 24 Senior (D3) and four Principal (D4) Fellows of the Higher Education Academy. The review team also heard about the year-long Faculty Futures Initiative, a senior leadership development programme aimed at this group of staff, which is aiding succession planning within the University. The

design of key roles within academic units and the training of staff to fill these roles, which has strengthened the leadership of learning and teaching, is **good practice**.

2.42   Academic staff based in Singapore participate in the Certificate in Advanced Studies in Academic Practice, traveling to Newcastle for the initial sessions, after which they are supported by the Singapore-based Faculty Programme Liaison Officer. Formal training for Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia (NUMed) staff is provided through the Certificate in Medical Education, delivered through distance learning and some 'flying faculty'. At Newcastle University London all teaching is delivered by London-based staff who hold University contracts and have access to the same development opportunities as staff based in Newcastle.

2.43   The staff Performance and Development Review scheme encourages staff to participate in a dialogue with peers supported by a Peer Dialogue Policy and to engage with the wide range of continuing professional development opportunities available. The Peer Dialogue Policy requires academic units to have in place a process that reports to the FLTSEC. The branch campuses are also expected to engage in this process.

2.44   The Policy on Postgraduates Who Teach ensures that students have sufficient training to a minimum standard before they are permitted to teach, demonstrate or assess work. Training is delivered through the Introduction to Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, a two-day interactive workshop organised and managed by the Staff Development Unit in order to meet the University's minimum training requirements for part-time and postgraduate teachers.

2.45   Staff workshops on providing support to students with specific learning difficulties are run by the Student Wellbeing Service. The University offers a number of opportunities for the enhancement of practice in learning and teaching, including for support staff. These include internal and external conferences, away days, forums, newsletters and action groups.

2.46   Students report a high level of satisfaction with teaching quality, including at Newcastle University London. The Students' Union runs a Teaching Excellence Awards scheme which is supported by the University. Students can nominate staff for an award and more than a 1,000 nominations have been received since 2012.

2.47   The comprehensive support, development and career opportunities for staff involved in learning and teaching, which has contributed to the improvement of learning, teaching and quality assurance, is **good practice**.

2.48   The review team concludes that the University systematically reviews and enhances its approaches to teaching practices that are fit for the purpose of delivering a high quality learning experience. Therefore, 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

2.49   The University aims to provide a fully rounded and formative student experience. The Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy and its key performance indicators are key reference points for academic units and professional services. Detailed planning takes place at faculty level, in liaison with academic units, and at professional service level.

2.50   Institutional oversight of student development and achievement is undertaken by ULTSEC and the Student Experience Subcommittee. Both bodies have appropriate membership, including Faculty Deans and relevant heads of service, and scrutinise annual reports from the services contributing to the support of student development and achievement. The Directors of Academic Services and Newcastle University IT Service report to the Registrar, who is a member of Executive Board. Both Directors are members of ULTSEC and attend faculty and academic unit committees.

2.51   New programme approval procedures ensure that student development and achievement is enabled and supported. Development and achievement of students on taught programmes is monitored and reviewed through the AMR and LTR processes, where review teams consider student recruitment, induction, support and retention, and achievement; learning resources; and employability. AMR, LTR and the QAEF are all subject to faculty and University oversight.

2.52   An Equality Strategy and Action Plan (2014-2016) is in place to ensure equity of opportunity and support. Responsibility for ensuring that the University complies with equal opportunities legislation is the responsibility of Diversity Committee (a subcommittee of Executive Board). At a strategic level, a Dean of Diversity, appointed in September 2015, oversees the implementation of equality and diversity strategy.

2.53   The annual Performance Development Review provides an opportunity to review and evaluate staff performance, including in relation to student development and achievement, when appropriate training and continuing professional development opportunities can be identified and implemented. The effectiveness of the University's provision is evaluated through a range of mechanisms, including student feedback surveys, the AMR process, and the LTR process. Localised mechanisms also operate.

2.54   The review team consider that the processes in place enable the expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of these processes the reviewers undertook extensive documentary analysis and met students as well as academic and professional support staff.

2.55   ULTSEC monitors the effectiveness of the University's approach to supporting student development and achievement in a number of ways, based on the routine collection and analysis of student feedback through external and internal surveys. Boards of Studies, FLTSECs and ULTSEC also consider data from the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey. Annual impact reports from student-facing services, informed by focus groups and website usage metrics as well as survey results, are considered by the Student Experience Subcommittee of ULTSEC.

2.56   An action plan to support the effective implementation of the strategy is periodically reviewed by ULTSEC to ensure that it maintains its relevance and validity, and an annual report is submitted to Senate and Council on the implementation of the Learning, Teaching

and Student Experience Strategy, associated risks and key performance indicators (including student satisfaction, progression and achievement, and graduate employability).

2.57   New programmes are approved subject to the consideration of opportunities for student personal development, aligned to the Graduate Skills Framework. This information is also provided to students on the module outline forms.

2.58   As well as feedback from surveys, students contribute in the evaluation of the effectiveness of student development and achievement through student involvement in quality management processes and research projects. One project has led to a review of coherency of academic skills support. The expectation that students take responsibility for their own development is presented in the Student Charter.

2.59   A Checklist for Accessible Programme Design is produced by the Disability Support Team to support staff in designing inclusive curricula. Policies are in place for Student Mental Health and Student Maternity and Student Parents. Initiatives and activities run by the University and Students' Union provide support to students from diverse backgrounds.

2.60   All staff are provided with a digital Diversity Induction The University has membership of Athena SWAN for promoting gender equality, a bronze award at University level and 12 departmental awards (four silver and eight bronze). Recruitment data is also monitored for diversity. An annual monitoring report is considered at ULTSEC.

2.61   An approved Student Lifecycle Table, identifying each institution's responsibilities around enabling student development and achievement, must be in place for each programme delivered through a partnership.

2.62   A dedicated pre-arrival website features information concerning registration, the expectations placed on students (the Student Charter), and links to subject-specific induction. This includes information that applies to students based overseas or studying via distance learning. Pre-sessional and in-sessional English language support is provided by INTO Newcastle University, which caters for international students enrolled on any degree programme at Newcastle University whose first language is not English. Induction is coordinated at academic unit level and involves a wide variety of academic and professional services staff and the Students' Union. Faculties are required to provide research students with an appropriate induction programme within three months of registration.

2.63   Personal tutors also provide support with induction and transitions. In addition, at least one school employs a Transition Officer to support undergraduate students during their transition to university, and which the University identified as model practice to disseminate across the University.

2.64   Students can access information about development opportunities via the Student Services Portal on the website. This information is reviewed annually in a process involving student input. Information is also provided at open days and on pre-application web pages. Degree programme handbooks also contain information on developmental opportunities.

2.65   An Interaction Team provides centralised support to all stages of the student lifecycle including pre-application. All of its services can be accessed by students from a single location. The Student Services Directorate works with the Students' Union in providing a number of services.

2.66   There are three library sites and a new site recently opened, providing 500 additional study spaces. Undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research student satisfaction with the quality of learning resources has been high.

2.67   A number of academic support services are provided to students, including the Writing Development Centre, which provides students with opportunities for developing academic writing skills, and Maths Aid, a drop-in centre that provides guidance on numerical and mathematical skills to students from any discipline, with priority given to those in their first year. Key priorities of these services are the support of students in the transition from secondary to higher education, or from undergraduate to postgraduate study. English language support is available to all international students. The review team noted that the student submission to this review commented that the Maths Aid service has recently been reduced, and that the academic writing support is oversubscribed. The library also provides advice to staff on embedding academic literacy into programmes.

2.68   All taught students have a personal tutor as described by the University Framework for Personal Tutoring. Personal tutors are responsible for providing information about institutional support services to students, as well as for supporting their personal development planning activities and the associated sharing tool. Development and training opportunities are provided to staff involved in personal tutoring, including a Senior Tutors Discussion Forum. The Handbook for Research Students and Research Supervisors sets out the roles of the supervisory team in supporting research postgraduates. For students going on placement, work-based learning or study abroad, a student handbook (based on a standard template) is provided by the academic unit responsible, with details of all relevant University policies and the student responsibilities.

2.69   All undergraduates are assigned a peer mentor, as part of the Newcastle Offer. The scheme is governed by the Peer Mentoring Policy which requires peer mentors to complete training on the role.

2.70   Student employability is supported further by the Graduate Skills Framework, underpinned by the Career Development module, the Career Management modules and the Careers Service, offering a range of co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities. The development of information literacy features in the Graduate Skills Framework and is supported by opportunities within degree programmes and through communal University facilities. The University-Wide Language Programme allows students the possibility of learning more than 50 languages on an extracurricular basis.

2.71   The latest NSS results indicate that students' satisfaction with IT and library services remains high (91 per cent and 93 per cent respectively), and the latest Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) results demonstrate a strong performance in relation to the sector average for student satisfaction with learning resources.

2.72   Career Development and Career Management co-curricular modules are available, as well as the Developing Enterprise, Entrepreneurship and Employability module that allows students to work on live consultancy projects. The Careers Service also offers a number of centrally provided initiatives to support students with employability. Alumni are used in providing career and employability advice. Students view the Careers Service and its activities positively.

2.73   Sound procedures are in place to monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources effectively, to facilitate student development. The review team heard examples of how the University had responded to student feedback and enhanced arrangements to support student development. 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

2.74   There is a formal relationship between the University and the Students' Union, which is supported by the Partnership Committee and an Operational Group. The Union Education Officer is a member of Senate as well as the ULTSEC. The University and Students' Union have agreed a Student Representation Policy, which sets out the structure of student representation at all levels of the University.

2.75   The Student Experience Subcommittee maintains oversight of the institutional student representation arrangements, and uses a range of metrics to monitor the effectiveness of student engagement

2.76   Each school has one or more Student-Staff Committees, such that all taught programmes in the school are covered by a Committee. The University recommends that separate Student-Staff Committees exist for research programmes Student-Staff Committees report to Boards of Studies for the relevant programmes, at which reports from the committees and other feedback is considered and actions are taken, monitored and communicated to course representatives. An annual overview of Student-Staff Committee is produced by the Students' Union and discussed at the Student Experience Subcommittee.

2.77   The University offers a training programme for students and staff involved in academic representation. Transferable skills useful in performing the roles as well as specific training is offered. Handbooks are provided for Course Representatives, School Representatives and Student Chairs and Secretaries, and online training materials are also available.

2.78   The University has a Policy on Surveying and Responding to Student Opinion. Module evaluations are carried out systematically, and optional questions may be added to questionnaires for specific modules. This is done using question sets, some mandatory and some optional, for consistency. A similar evaluation for evaluating stages of programmes was piloted and will now be rolled out across the University.

2.79   Students are involved in a range of quality processes at the University, including in the design, monitoring and review of programmes. This is supported through the presence of student members on a wide range of committees. The Students' Union runs the Teaching Excellence Awards for staff, which are led by students. Students have the opportunity to recommend staff for the Vice-Chancellor's Awards.

2.80   The policies and procedures in place allow the Expectation to be met. To test the practical operation of the procedures, the review team met a range of staff and students at the University and considered policy documentation, records of committee meetings and student survey responses.

2.81   The relationship between the University and the Students' Union is valued by the University as well as by its students, who consider the Student Representation Policy agreed between the two parties to be one of the key aspects of student engagement at the University. Students met by the review team consider the University to be very receptive to the student voice.

2.82   Results from evaluations are discussed at the Student-Staff Committee and Board of Studies for the programme, and the results from these are considered in staff promotion decisions involving teaching. Student representatives are required to complete the online training courses, and also have access to training sessions. Students met by the review team are aware of who their course representatives are. Students receive feedback on actions taken through a range of channels, including internal communications from staff and student representatives and posts on social media. A 'You Said, We Did' scheme is in place to encourage students to submit their feedback by demonstrating how it is acted upon.

2.83   A project to analyse response rates across schools was undertaken with a view to using the results to develop and update guidance for staff. Results from evaluations and quality assurance activities, as well as summary data from student complaints and appeals, are shared with the Students' Union as part of its partnership with the University.

2.84   External examiner reports are also considered at Student-Staff Committee meetings along with the University's responses. Most students are not aware of who the external examiner is for their programme. In response, the University has commissioned an intern to produce a guide to external examining for students.

2.85   Students met by the review team confirmed their membership on a range of committees across all levels of the University, as well as their involvement in quality assurance processes including LTR and enhancement projects. For example, students acted as consultants in developing the refurbishment of the library.

2.86   The University significantly values the student voice, and has in place effective policies and structures to ensure that students' views are taken into account in a range of quality assurance processes as well as its day-to-day operation. The strength of the relationship between the University and the Students' Union emphasises the importance that is placed on student engagement and involvement. The review team finds that the Expectation is met and the 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

2.87   The University has a framework for assessment and feedback to facilitate and support student learning and achievement. The Assessment and Feedback Principles commit the University to ensuring that students are assessed formatively and summatively in a range of ways.

2.88   Feedback is understood as helping to clarify the student's current performance against module learning outcomes, criteria and standards. The Learning and Teaching Development Service website contains guidance on producing feedback, including case studies.

2.89   A series of policies set out the University's expectations of academic units in assessing their students. These include the Policy on Submission of Assessed Work, Examinations Policy, Policy on Assessment and Feedback, Moderation and Scaling Policy and a University penalty scale for late work, published in student handbooks.

2.90   A University Assessment Tariff provides guidance on the volume of assessment at modular level, through more specific Faculty Tariffs.

2.91   The University has an Academic Irregularities Procedure for dealing with unacceptable academic practice, which is communicated to students through handbooks, websites and the Students' Union Student Advice Centre. Summative assessed work is to be submitted through plagiarism-detection software from 2016-17.

2.92   The University has a Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy. Each Academic Unit has an Accredited Prior Learning statement; these will be replaced during the second semester of the 2015-16 academic year by a credit transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning statement. Statements will be subject to faculty approval and annual review by the Board of Studies. The LTDS provides support for those involved in the application of the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.

2.93   Assessment outcomes are reviewed by Boards of Studies through AMR, including a mandatory review of the operation of assessment feedback schedules, and by FLTSEC and ULTSEC. A subgroup of FLTSEC evaluates Boards of Studies responses to external examiner reports, and Taught Programmes Subcommittee considers University-wide themes arising from external examiner reports.

2.94   The Student Charter communicates the expectation that students take responsibility for their learning and demonstrate positive engagement with their assessment feedback.

2.95   The approach to assessment and feedback allows the Expectation to be met.

2.96   The team read policies on assessment and related areas and the documentation arising from review procedures, and talked to students and staff about their experience of assessment and feedback processes.

2.97   Programme Approval processes require that the external adviser confirms that the approach to assessment will ensure that learning outcomes will be tested. Approval requires that it can be demonstrated that assessment tasks are aligned with learning outcomes, that assessment criteria are clear, and that assessment and feedback are coherently designed across the programme, not just the module. External examiners are required to confirm that this is the case. Students told the team that their assessments match learning outcomes, and that expectations are clear.

2.98   Module Approval requires that assessment is linked to learning outcomes (knowledge and skills), and this is periodically reviewed by the first stage of LTR, which also assesses mapping of assessment to the Graduate Skills Framework.

2.99   The University has common marking scales which are implemented locally to help students understand what is required to achieve a given mark in a particular piece of work. Detailed assessment criteria are published by Academic Units and commented on by external examiners. Students reported that the criteria are clear. LTR checks assessment criteria, and their availability to students.

2.100   The University Principles of Assessment and Feedback set out expectations for the quality and timeliness of assessment feedback. Through AMR the faculties have an effective means of evaluating data on compliance, with expectations for assessment feedback turnaround times.

2.101   The University recognises that the timeliness of feedback remains an issue, and students reported variation in the time in which work is returned. The team heard that in some academic units feed-forward to subsequent assignments was guaranteed by using trained postgraduate research students to evaluate student work.

2.102   The University has been effective in focusing attention on assessment and feedback. ULTSEC's away day on assessment and feedback in 2015 was followed up with a focus on assessment and feedback at the 2016 Annual Learning and Teaching Conference. There are regular opportunities to address assessment and feedback practice and enhancements through a regional Learning and Teaching Conference, the Directors of Excellence in Learning and Teaching forum, the Newcastle University Technology Enhanced Learning Advocates, the Newcastle Educators group, LTDS webinars and a Learning and Teaching Forum. ULTSEC also funded projects on enhancing engagement with assessment feedback. AMR and LTR provide formal opportunities to reflect on assessment and feedback practices, particularly turnaround times, and effective practice is disseminated through the Case Studies Database.

2.103   Academic staff met by the review team recognise the support that they receive in their roles in assessment of students by the Newcastle Teaching Award, which directs new staff to policies and procedures. The Checklist for Accessible Programme Design supports programme developers to create inclusive assessment, which is also addressed by the Newcastle Teaching Award. Updates to policies and procedures are channelled annually through FLTSECs and disseminated within Academic Units. External assessors, including placement supervisors, are trained according to guidance provided by the Work-based and Placement Learning Policy, and there is a checklist to confirm that this has been acknowledged. Administrative staff who are involved in assessment are trained, as are Chairs and Secretaries of Boards of Studies and Directors of Degree Programmes.

2.104   The University supports students in learning good academic practice through induction, library workshops, referencing guidelines, and skills modules delivered by Academic Units. There is also a 'Right-Cite' web resource, and a Writing Development Centre. Provision for research students is made in the form of induction, a training programme and a learning agreement which stipulates good academic practice. Criteria for

research degrees, acknowledging the Quality Code qualification descriptor, are made available in the University Handbook.

2.105   The University identifies the development of students' 'assessment literacy' as a significant dimension of the effectiveness of assessment and feedback. Staff met by the team spoke of developing a shared sense of academic judgement with students through the Student Charter and activities such as peer assessment and personal tutoring. Staff and students recognised the value of formative assessments in developing learning. ULTSEC has funded 10 projects on engagement with assessment feedback.

2.106   There are effective measures to support student academic development. Students met by the team have personal tutors, and can get further advice about the feedback on their assessments. Personal tutors in academic units are led by a senior tutor, who in turn belongs to a University forum.

2.107   The University has developed a range of appropriate policies to ensure equitable and reliable processes of assessment and feedback, and programme approval and review procedures ensure the validity of assessment. A positive and inclusive approach to developing student and staff awareness of the purposes of assessment and feedback is evident through policies, training, support and monitoring. For these reasons the expectation is met and the 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

2.108   The External Examiners of Taught Programmes Policy encompasses all the University's taught provision and is readily available through the online Quality and Standards Handbook. The policy is aligned with *Chapter B7* of the Quality Code. In addition to campus-based provision the policy includes a minimum standard for the external examination of programmes that are the subject of an educational partnership, including the University's expectations for external examiners visiting partner institutions and branch campuses. The role and responsibilities of the external examiner for taught provision are defined in this policy. The University Regulations, the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes, and the Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees set out the requirements for the external examination of research degrees. There are arrangements in place in the case of the absence of an external examiner at the Board of Examiners.

2.109   A clear set of policies and procedures pertaining to the appointment, role and support for external examiners, and the way in which their reports are used to monitor standards and quality of learning opportunities, allows the Expectation to be met. The review team tested this Expectation by reviewing minutes of relevant committees and examination boards, University regulations, policies and procedures, and copies of external examiner reports and responses, and by talking to staff and students.

2.110   Clearly defined procedures are in place for the appointment of external examiners using criteria that align with national criteria. Nominations are considered by the Board of Studies and passed to the LTDS to check for reciprocal appointments. Approval of nominations resides with the chairs of FLTSECs, acting through powers delegated from Senate. An annual summary report of nominations is prepared by LTDS and submitted to TPSC, acting on behalf of ULTSEC. Appointments are generally for four years, with a fifth year permitted in exceptional circumstances. Appointments can be terminated by the University where necessary. Records of all external examiner appointments are maintained, including where extensions are granted, in a secure online database.

2.111   The University has a clear understanding of the expectations for its external examiners. Each new examiner receives a letter of appointment from the University that provides links to The University Policy and Procedures for External Examiners of Taught Programmes; the University's General Regulations, relevant Examination Conventions and Academic Appeals Procedure for Students; Guidance for Boards of Examiners; the University's Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy; and information for Candidates with Special Requirements in Exams. All examiners are supported by an online Handbook for External Examiners that contains institution-level information and which is updated annually. This is augmented by a briefing and induction and programme-specific information provided by the Board of Studies. The additional information includes external examiner reports and Board of Studies responses from the previous two years; the relevant Degree Programme Handbook; and any procedures relating to professional issues, for example Fitness to Practise. The annual external examiners' report template asks external examiners to confirm that this information was provided to them.

2.112   The University is responsible for the appointment of external examiners in all of its partnership arrangements. The working of partnership arrangements for external examiners is consistent with University procedures and expectations: external examiners visit partner institutions annually to attend examination boards and meet staff and students.

2.113   Examiners are provided with draft assessments for comment and approval and are required to consider the consistency and accuracy of marking standards for a programme of study. Examiners are not permitted to change the mark of any student, although they may propose a level of moderation or re-marking to be undertaken by the internal markers as set out in the Code of Practice. Examiners are full members of Boards of Examiners and are expected to attend meetings to scrutinise and endorse outcomes.

2.114   Internally, acting as an external examiner for other institutions and feedback from external examiner reports can be used as evidence of meeting the criteria for academic promotion.

2.115   The University has detailed procedures for receiving, studying, analysing and responding to external examiner reports at all institutional levels. The Board of Studies for the programme ensures that a written response addressing any issues is provided to the external examiner. Responses are provided using a standard template and considered at faculty level. As the Board of Studies has student members, the report is shared with them. In addition, students have access to external examiner reports through the virtual learning environment, and within handbooks, programme committee minutes, and annual monitoring and evaluation reports. The report is also received at Student-Staff Committee. Names, positions and institutions of external examiners are included in programme handbooks, but students are advised not to contact external examiners directly.

2.116   Emerging themes are identified by senior officers, and a summary report is submitted to Taught Programme Subcommittee, which is responsible for considering University-wide themes and trends arising from external examiners' reports, and for proposing to ULTSEC actions that need to be taken. Taught Programme Subcommittee's consideration of faculty summary reports feeds into the preparation, by the LTDS, of University overviews of undergraduate and taught postgraduate external examiners' reports. Following consideration by ULTSEC they are circulated for information, published on the website, and sent to all external examiners.

2.117   As well as annual reports, external examiners must submit a final overview at the end of their appointment. Reports are completed on a standard template. Examiners may also submit a confidential letter to the Vice-Chancellor of the University.

2.118   External examiners are made aware, through the handbook and the policy, of their right to use the QAA concerns scheme.

2.119   The University has sound procedures in place and is making scrupulous use of external examiners. In addition to the systematic and robust use of external examiners it is also evident that the University is making use of feedback from examiners to inform its teaching practice. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.120   The University undertakes annual monitoring and periodic review of its programmes to ensure that they remain fit for purpose, as well as to support the enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

2.121   The policies and procedures for monitoring and reviewing programmes are communicated to staff in the Quality and Standards Handbook.

2.122   The University keeps these policies and procedures under review by the LTDS, which produces an annual summary of changes. The LTDS also has a role in disseminating and embedding effective practice identified by monitoring and review.

2.123   The purpose of AMR is clearly defined as ensuring that programmes are delivered in accordance with what was approved. The required evidence base includes statistical information about student achievement, as well as external examiner reports, to permit the consideration of the quality of learning opportunities.

2.124   Annual monitoring reports, and the associated action plans, are reviewed at faculty level and again by the Taught Programme Subcommittee of ULTSEC.

2.125   In response to a recommendation in the 2009 Institutional Audit report concerning the effectiveness of periodic review (the Internal Subject Review) as a means of implementing policies, the University established a policy for LTR. LTR is a two-stage process comprising a pre-visit check on compliance with University policies and processes and a review visit, which is developmental, and based on the University's SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of a broader base of evidence for self-evaluation.

2.126   In response to a further recommendation arising from Institutional Audit (2009), an Educational Partnerships Subcommittee of ULTSEC was established, with responsibility for partner approval and review, and oversight of outcomes of the annual and periodic review of programmes. The University established Review of Partnership and International Campus Provision (RPICP). This process assures implementation of the Newcastle Offer, comparability of facilities and resources, staff experience, including staff development, and communication of policies. Collaborative Provision is additionally reviewed by the LTR or QAEF of the relevant Academic Unit in Newcastle.

2.127   LTR considers external views and reference points, drawing on the evaluations of external examiners, employers and Industrial Advisory Boards, as well as subject benchmarks, the FHEQ, and PSRB requirements. Review teams for these processes include at least one external subject specialist, as well as a student from another academic unit.

2.128   The design of monitoring and review processes, and the oversight at faculty and University level, allow the Expectation to be met.

2.129   The team read the policies and documentation of monitoring and review processes. The team talked to academic and professional services staff, as well as to students who are

involved in or support quality assurance processes, or who are in oversight at faculty and institutional level, as well as to students studying the programmes so monitored.

2.130   Boards of studies are responsible for programme standards and delivery. The University has an annual monitoring process which is effective in ensuring that the Boards are in a position to know whether they are maintaining standards, delivering the appropriate learning opportunities, and seeking to enhance them. AMR is undertaken according to an institutional schedule of business, and this makes it a systematic way of monitoring the effectiveness of provision, and of student satisfaction and achievement, both for academic units and for the University. The University sets out expectations as to the evidence that should be considered in undertaking AMR. This includes assessment of a range of evaluations, including Student-Staff Committees, module questionnaires, NSS data, and external examiners' reports. The team found variable use of quantitative data in AMR reports it saw. However, the University has developed policies to identify the data appropriate for use in annual monitoring, including Degree Programme Statistics which are available through the MyWorkPlace portal. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to improve consistency and effectiveness in the use of management information within annual monitoring reports.

2.131   There is a thorough system for the annual monitoring of postgraduate research degree provision laid out in the QAEF. QAEF audit visits result in reports and action plans, which are in turn reviewed by Faculty Graduate School Committees and ultimately by the Postgraduate Research Subcommittee of ULTSEC.

2.132   The pre-visit checklists in the new LTR process are effective in delivering oversight of compliance with institutional policies.

2.133   Staff recognise the effectiveness of briefings on revisions to AMR expectations, and guidance and support in carrying out monitoring and review provided by the LTDS and by Faculty Learning and Teaching Support teams, in particular to Boards of Studies chairs and Directors of Degree Programmes, but also to staff and students involved in LTR. Training of staff in quality assurance themes is inclusive of those who work overseas, and includes workshops on fundamentals such as learning outcomes and programme specifications.

2.134   There is comprehensive student engagement in quality management, and all LTR, QAEF and RPICP review teams include a student from outside the subject area under review. In future, a Sabbatical Officer will serve if a student member cannot be identified.

2.135   Issues raised by Student-Staff Committees are considered by a Board of Studies with student membership as part of the AMR process. LTR requires evidence that a Board of Studies has closed the loop on issues raised by students. Student support services must also evidence their responses to student evaluations in their annual reports to ULTSEC and Student Experience Subcommittee.

2.136   Student evaluations are now collected online, with participation being informed by the Code of Practice on Dignity at Work and Study. It is intended that the current module evaluation procedures will be extended to stage evaluation, implemented from 2016.

2.137   Annual monitoring and periodic review are effective in supporting enhancement of the student learning opportunities by identifying potential improvements to programmes, as well as contributing to reflection on, and the dissemination of, good practice. The most recent revision of AMR addressed its fitness to support enhancement.

2.138   The expectation is met, and the risk is low, because the University has designed, and keeps under review, a set of processes for annual monitoring and periodic review that focus academic units on the programme specification and on evidence of the student

experience. There is also effective oversight for ensuring that action plans are completed, that the University is aware of issues across academic units, and that good practice is disseminated. Students are involved in quality assurance and, like staff, are briefed in the roles they undertake.

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

2.139   The University has an Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure and a Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure. The procedures, which are advertised on various areas of the website and signposted from student advice pages, identify the differences between complaints and appeals as well as the circumstances under which each will be considered.

2.140   Information about how to make a complaint or appeal is also provided in printed materials provided to students, including handbooks and the Student Charter. Handbooks for research students also refer to the procedures.

2.141   Students can obtain procedural guidance on submitting complaints and appeals from their personal tutor, supervisor or the Student Progress Service. Independent advice on appeals and complaints is available from the Student Advice Centre. The University's procedures allow students to submit queries, appeals and complaints in groups where an issue affects more than one student, such as group assessed work.

2.142   A range of support is provided for staff involved in complaints and appeals. This includes advice for staff who are the subject of a complaint as well as compulsory appeals procedure training for Chairs of Boards of Examiners and briefings for appeals adjudicators. Guidance is kept up to date with the introduction of new and updated procedures.

2.143   Appeals and complaints are considered by members of staff with no involvement in the case in question. These are then monitored by the Student Progress Service to ensure timeliness and to provide updates to the student. Outcomes are communicated to students in writing, including reasons for any decision made. Redacted versions of cases referred to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and their outcomes are shared with the Students' Union.

2.144   A report on student complaints and appeals is considered annually at ULTSEC, Senate, and Council. All of these include student members.

2.145   Partnership agreements contain specific details of procedures for students studying at the partner. The Principles for Educational Partnerships and Student Casework document sets out considerations for the discussion of procedures in preparation for Partner Approval.

2.146   The procedures for academic appeals and student complaints, and the associated processes, allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested their implementation and effectiveness by reviewing documentation including minutes from, and reports to, the ULTSEC and its subcommittees, and through discussion with staff and students at the University.

2.147   Students confirmed that they are either aware of, or would know how to find, the procedures for making an appeal or complaint. The procedures were considered exemplary by the OIA during a visit to the University in November 2014.

2.148   In 2014-15, the University reviewed its procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints to take into account external guidelines. The reviewed procedures

for complaints and appeals introduce clear stages, including guidance on escalating complaints and appeals and an informal resolution stage, supported by an internal but independent mediation service.

2.149   As part of the review, timescales for the University to respond have been reduced in accordance with the OIA Good Practice framework. To assist with monitoring progress, the University plans to introduce an electronic system for tracking complaints and appeals with the ability to monitor timeframes and statistics.

2.150   Students are involved in designing the policies through student membership on the ULTSEC and the Student Experience Subcommittee. This included student consultation on the introduction of the revised procedures.

2.151   Staff met by the review team indicated that they receive updates when the processes for academic appeals and student complaints are updated, and praised the formal training that appeal adjudicators receive. Some members of staff had opted to participate in optional training on unconscious bias.

2.152   The University develops and reviews its procedures for appeals and complaints with input from its students and from external advice and guidance, makes them accessible through a range of channels, operates them effectively, and has mechanisms in place to summarise, discuss and learn from them and their outcomes. Therefore, the review team finds that the Expectation is met and the 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

2.153 The University has revised its approach to managing higher education with others following a recommendation in the Institutional Audit (2009) and the development of its portfolio of provision.

2.154 The University adopts an approach that requires any partnership to contribute in some way to its strategies. The requirements are set out in Strategic Approach to Educational Partnership Development. The responsibility for ensuring that all new partnerships fit with the strategic direction of the University is shared by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) and Pro Vice-Chancellor (International). ULTSEC has delegated authority from Senate and exercises oversight of such partnerships and reports decisions and actions taken to Senate. The Educational Partnerships Subcommittee has responsibility for the detailed scrutiny of new proposals and is chaired by a senior member of staff, currently a Dean. Reports relating to teaching, learning, quality and external examining outcomes are reported through to Educational Partnerships Subcommittee in order that issues can be reviewed. Educational Partnerships Subcommittee reports to ULTSEC.

2.155 To enhance its approach to manging educational partnerships the University is developing a set of framework documents rather than a taxonomy. These include a statement on Academic Governance, a Framework for Joint Awards, and additional criteria for the approval of non-academic providers by Educational Partnerships Subcommittee. In addition, the University has a range of policies that cover delivery with others in the areas of placements and work-based learning and Doctoral Training Centres. Oversight of this activity is exercised by ULTSEC and its subcommittees and supported by LTDS, with individual areas of the University exercising operational management. For example, the NHS relationship is manged by the Faculty of Medical Sciences.

2.156 The Educational Partnership Policy sets out requirements for approval in three stages: Initial approval to proceed; strategic approval of the partner; and academic approval of programmes. According to the Educational Partnerships Policy, following the submission of the Initial Proposal Template, an assessment is undertaken to ensure fit with the University strategy. The Initial Proposal is considered by the Head of Academic Unit and Faculty Dean. Once agreed, the proposal is sent to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) for approval to proceed to the next stage. In the case of approval of the partner, the business and academic cases are considered separately. The academic case is considered by Educational Partnerships Subcommittee, based on the evidence base set out in the Educational Partnership Policy. According to the policy, Educational Partnerships Subcommittee approves the academic case for a new partner. However, the University's self-evaluation document states that detailed consideration of educational activities is undertaken on behalf of ULTSEC by Educational Partnerships Subcommittee, with the subcommittee recommending the approval of proposed partnerships to ULTSEC before any degree programmes that are the subject of a partnership are considered through the University's standard processes. Minutes of both committees record them as approving partnerships. This situation indicates a lack of clarity about where the authority for approval

actually lies. The review team **recommends** that the University clarifies the policy for the approval of new partnerships to ensure that the ultimate authority for approval is made clear.

2.157   For larger projects, time-limited project groups are convened to focus on the legal, financial and academic risks to be managed. A comprehensive process of approval is devised depending on the scale of the proposal and identified risks. The approval may include off-site visits. Academic approval of programmes follows the usual University process. The work is undertaken by the Faculty Programme Approval Committee and final sign-off is undertaken by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) as Chair of ULTSEC. New programmes with existing partners are considered through a separate process.

2.158   All partnerships are based on a standard five-year legal agreement with review and renewal options at the end of the term. Withdrawal or suspension of a partnership may occur if issues are identified. The Educational Partnership Policy provides for such events and sets out requirements for the run out of programmes to protect the interests of students.

2.159   Programmes with work based or placement learning opportunities are developed with a business case focus using the Teaching Costing Model. Once agreed by the Faculty Steering Group prior to going to the Programme Approval Committee. Designated staff assess and approve placements as suitable for students and undertake risk assessments, taking health and safety matters into account. All placements are based on a student's learning agreement, which is signed by the student and the placement provider who will supervise the student. Where placements are a compulsory element of a programme the University requires the programme team to have alternatives in place in the event of a student being unable to complete or undertake the placement. For non-compulsory placement programmes students may transfer to the non-placement route.

2.160   Overall, the arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations allow the Expectation to be met.

2.161   The team examined a range of policies and procedures relating to partner and programme approval. It considered partner and programme approval documentation, AMR reports, external examiner reports, and the minutes of a number of key committees with responsibility for collaborative provision. The review team tested its findings through meetings with University managers, academic and support staff, partner staff, and students.

2.162   The review team considered documents relating to the recent approval of a major new partnership. The partnership was initially considered by Educational Partnerships Subcommittee in August 2014. The Subcommittee noted five reservations regarding the partnership, which it asked to be considered and 'addressed in the further development of the proposal. The outcome of which should be reported back to the Educational Partnerships Subcommittee prior to submission for final programme approval to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching).' The proposal then went to ULTSEC on 19 September 2014, where it was agreed, 'That, subject to the conditions listed at Educational Partnerships Subcommittee, ULTSEC approved the partner as an educational partner of the University for delivery of three undergraduate and three postgraduate programmes, in addition to foundation, diploma and graduate diploma pathway programmes.'

2.163   Reviewers were told that these conditions were subsequently considered in various fora including at programme approval events. However, evidence to demonstrate the satisfaction of this group of conditions was at no point reported back to either Educational Partnerships Subcommittee or ULTSEC prior to the recruitment of students to the partner campus in September 2015. Minutes of Educational Partnerships Subcommittee from January 2016 demonstrate that issues relating to some of these conditions were still under active consideration even though students had been admitted to programmes at the partner

campus. In order to ensure that learning opportunities available to students continue to be assured the review team **recommends** that the University revises the procedures for partner approval to ensure that conditions are met and the partner finally approved before a programme can commence.

2.164   The University recognises that it is responsible for the academic standards of all awards made in its name and never delegates that responsibility. This means that approval of such awards is subject to the standard University process as explained in Expectation B1. External examiners for collaborative partnerships must satisfy standard University criteria for appointment. In the case of Joint Awards, the University uses a Framework for Joint Awards which sets out its expectations and is used for both partner and programme approval of joint awards. This approach is also used for dual and joint doctoral awards, with a bespoke framework in place that governs this type of award.

2.165   The University takes account of local requirements in the case of international partnerships and professional body requirements in programme design and sign-off. This was evident in respect of the University's arrangement in Malaysia (NuMed), where local medical professional body requirements had been addressed to obtain both UK and Malaysian professional accreditation.

2.166   Where programmes are subject to articulation agreements a detailed mapping takes place to ensure that students have the underpinning knowledge and skills to progress to the Newcastle-based programme. Educational Partnerships Subcommittee recommends articulation agreements to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) for approval.

2.167   Ongoing quality assurance arrangements mirror those for Newcastle-based programmes, in particular the AMR process. An additional requirement is a review by Educational Partnerships Subcommittee after one year of delivery and a review to determine whether the agreement will be renewed at the end of the five-year term. External examiners who visit branch campuses are also asked to complete an additional questionnaire, which gives the University a more rounded picture of aspects of delivery. There are occasions where the University approves modules delivered by partners as part of its award. In doing so it assures itself that the learning outcomes are appropriate and that the partner's quality processes assure the quality and standards of the students' learning outcomes. In the case of jointly supervised research degree students, the University assures itself regarding the arrangements for supervision.

2.168   All provision delivered in partnership is delivered in English. Arrangements relating to staff development are clearly set out in the agreements and external examiners are appointed in the standard way, as for other programmes. External examiners are usually expected to visit partners twice during the period of their appointment and such visits result in a site-specific report. Reports of external examiners are considered by relevant Boards of Studies and FLTSEC in line with normal University procedures and LTDS provides Educational Partnerships Subcommittee with an overview report to identify common themes. Review of partnership provision follows standard University processes but areas with significant partner provision may have longer review sessions to ensure proper consideration of this work. Additionally, the University has recently introduced a six-yearly review of partnership and international campus provision, which focuses on educational partnerships and Transnational Education delivered in multiple locations.

2.169   Taught provision leading to an award and delivered through work-based learning is considered using the standard process for approval plus the completion of a work-based learning check list. Academic units are responsible for the assessment of work-based learning and in some cases the placement provider may have a role in the assessment process. External examiners are appointed for work-based learning in line with University

policy and have a focus on the learning agreements, assessment practice and marking criteria. Students who met reviewers were positive about their experience in work placements and the support they received from staff at the University and at the employer.

2.170   Information published by partners regarding their provision with the University is signed off by the University through the University Marketing and Student Recruitment Service and, in the case of NUMed and NUIS, the Faculty Dean in liaison with the Marketing and Recruitment service. In addition, Educational Partnerships Subcommittee receives an annual report on activity to ensure that publicity is accurate. Students receive a handbook that sets out their programme provision and their rights and responsibilities. Programmes with placements are identified in the University prospectus and on the website.

2.171   The University retains the authority for all award certificates. All transcripts record the name and location of any partner and in some cases this appears on the parchment. In joint awards, the parchments are sometimes prepared by the partner. In the case of work-based learning this is recorded on the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR).

2.172   The team concludes that the University takes ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them. The arrangements for managing the learning opportunities for students placed with partner organisations are managed effectively and, on the whole, are implemented securely. However, the lack of absolute clarity with regard to the procedures for final approval of a partnership, and for assuring that appropriate learning opportunities are in place, led the team to conclude that while the Expectation is met there is a moderate level of risk attached to the current situation.

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

2.173   The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) has strategic responsibility for the research degree provision and its quality management. Institutional oversight of research degree provision is maintained by ULTSEC, with the Postgraduate Research Subcommittee undertaking the detailed consideration of quality management, regulatory and policy matters on behalf of ULTSEC, to which it reports regularly. Faculty Graduate School Committees, chaired by the Deans of Postgraduate Studies, are responsible for the quality management of research degree provision within each faculty. At academic unit level, responsibility for the day-to-day management of the research student experience rests either with Directors of Postgraduate Studies or Directors of Research (Postgraduate Research Student Coordinators in the Faculty of Medical Sciences).

2.174   The framework for the quality management of research degree provision is set out in the University Regulations and the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes, which covers all PhD, MPhil, MD and research master's programmes, along with the research elements of research degrees that incorporate a taught element. Adherence to the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes is monitored through annual and periodic review, monitored by Graduate School Committees at faculty level, and by the Postgraduate Research Subcommittee and ULTSEC.

2.175   The University is a partner in 16 Doctoral Training Centres or Partnerships (DTCs/DTPs) funded by research councils.

2.176   The team concluded that the policies and procedures allow the University to meet the Expectation. The effectiveness of implementation was tested by detailed analysis of the documentation available to the team, including relevant committee minutes and policy documents, and by meeting staff and students involved in research degrees.

2.177   The University Regulations set out the requirements of candidature and submission for research degrees as well as progression and examination. The Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and a Handbook for Research Student and Research Supervisors are amended annually to ensure their currency. These are supplemented by subject specific-guidance that is made available at the level of the academic unit, which include research centres and institutes. All new students are provided with a copy of the Code of Practice and the Handbook.

2.178   The implementation of the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes in academic units is monitored through the University's QAEF, which combines annual reporting by all academic units with a periodic review of each academic unit at least once every six years; the process is overseen within faculties by the Faculty Graduate School Committee and through the Postgraduate Research Subcommittee and ULTSEC at University level.

2.179   The University's Student Charter applies to research students and includes a Supplementary Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities for Students on Research

Programmes, which complements the Handbook for Research Students and the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes.

2.180   The criteria for a suitable research environment are set out in the Code of Practice and compliance is monitored through the QAEF process. Research degree programmes are also offered at the University's branch campuses in Malaysia and Singapore, where the research student experience was considered as part of the RPICP visits in March 2015.

2.181   Admissions procedures for research students are defined in the University Admissions Policy, with selection processes and minimum entry requirements in the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes. Guidance has been produced for ensuring equality and diversity in the selection of postgraduate students. A decision of an offer must be supported by the Postgraduate Research Director and at least one other member of staff. English language requirements are in place and conditional offers can be made subject to successful completion of pre-sessional training. The University encourages applicants to be interviewed and in all cases they are required to provide two independent references.

2.182   Supervision requirements are formally specified in the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes. Criteria for arrangements of research supervision are stipulated in the Handbook for Research Students and Research Supervisors. When it is only possible for one supervisor to supervise a student, the supervisor must have a prior record of successful supervision. Students have an identified point of contact from the time of admission, though this may change once their project is approved.

2.183   Staff who have not previously supervised research students are required to undertake appropriate initial training and development. Supervisory training sessions include a workshop for new internal examiners, called Assessing the Doctorate. Experienced supervisors are normally expected to undertake continuing professional development relevant to their supervisory role. Should a supervisor not adhere to the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes, the Dean of Postgraduate Studies has the power to remove the member of staff from the list of approved research supervisors and will make alternative arrangements for the supervision of the student. A range of resources for continuing development is also available, and the Code of Practice states that staff are expected to engage with them; this can be discussed during annual Performance Development Review. The Code of Practice also states that a supervisor should not supervise more than six full-time students; this, together with overall workload, is monitored within academic units and is monitored through quality review processes.

2.184   Research students, upon beginning their studies, are provided with online information as well as receiving an induction programme from their faculty, which complies with the Code of Practice requirements. A learning agreement is completed and signed by the student and supervisor, and additional personalised agreements can be made.

2.185   As stipulated in the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes, students and supervisors are expected to use an electronic sharing tool to record progress and formal contact. Monitoring of activities completed by research students is recorded and reported to Graduate School Committee for review and consideration. Decisions on student progress are made at an Annual Progress Review by an independent panel of academics who are not involved in the supervision of the student.

2.186   The University is a signatory to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. A researcher development training programme is available in each faculty, and participation is monitored. The programmes offer transferable skills as well as discipline-specific studies. Information on the training and professional development opportunities is included in faculty research student handbooks and online, and communicated via email. Training and development events provided by the Careers Service,

as well as information regarding the Vitae Researcher Development Framework, is drawn to students' attention in the Handbook for Research Students, in which emphasis is placed on the need to develop skills and plan for future careers from the beginning of a research programme. The University has also expanded the career development opportunities available to research students.

2.187   The University has implemented a Research Student-Supervisor Learning Agreement, which is discussed and signed by both student and supervisor(s), to aid an understanding of shared responsibility and expectation and which acts as a focus for the initial student-supervisor formal meeting. Supervisors and their students are encouraged to use the online sharing system to document identified skills development needs arising from the training needs analysis. Project approval is required to take place at the preliminary stage of a student's PhD programme; this is also mediated via the electronic sharing system.

2.188   The University enables research students to undertake teaching and demonstrating duties, subject to training. Training is delivered through the Introduction to Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, a two-day interactive workshop organised and managed by the Staff Development Unit in order to meet the University's minimum training requirements for part-time and postgraduate teachers. Students can progress to the Certificate in Advanced Studies in Academic Practice, offering a route to a fellowship with the Higher Education Academy.

2.189   The University's standard mechanisms for student representation are available to research students. Student representatives from academic units attend Faculty Graduate School Committees. Specific training for research student representatives is available from the Students' Union. In addition, separate Student-Staff Committees for research students exist in the vast majority of academic units.

2.190   The University encourages research students to participate in national surveys such as the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and the International Student Barometer, which are analysed and compared at institutional, faculty and subject level, with scores benchmarked against those achieved by UK institutions and by comparator group universities and used to inform the further enhancement of the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and research environment. Data from surveys is used in quality management processes. The University has also introduced an exit survey for research students.

2.191   Procedures for the assessment of research degrees are detailed in the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and University Regulations. There is a Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees that details the arrangements for examinations and communicating results. The academic standards of research programmes are considered at Graduate School Committees, a process which makes use of feedback from external examiners.

2.192   The regulations and research degree examination conventions are sent to external examiners on appointment. All research degrees are examined by two examiners, including one external. The Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes states that external examiners should be from research-intensive universities where possible, and the role of the external examiner is clearly defined.

2.193   The University Regulations and the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes, together with the Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees sent to all examiners, set out the University's criteria for the examination and assessment of research degrees. On appointment, external examiners are sent a copy of the University's Regulations and Examination Conventions governing the relevant research degree. All criteria are based on the national qualification descriptors for doctoral-level programmes,

and for MPhil and research master's programmes the Level 7 descriptor. The assessment of professional doctorate programmes includes assessment of the taught component, which is subject to the Policy and Procedures for the External Examining of Taught Programmes.

2.194   Procedures for making academic appeals and complaints are handled under the University procedures, as explored in relation to Expectation B9. Information concerning the procedures for Complaints and Appeals for research students is provided within the Handbook for Research Students and Supervisors and is available on the University website. It was less clear that students who met the team know about the appeal process, but they affirmed that they would know where to find information (and seek advice) should they need to make use of it.

2.195   The review team saw a range of evidence provided by the University on its policies and procedures relating to research degrees, as well as evidence that these processes are securely implemented in practice. Meetings with students and those staff with responsibilities for research degree provision at the University provided further evidence that such systems are kept under appropriate review, and the student experience is enhanced as a result. 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

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

2.197   All Expectations are met and the risk is judged low in all but one Expectation (B10), where a moderate level of risk has been identified. Two recommendations are made in this Expectation that, taken together, lead the team to conclude that there is a moderate level of risk relating to the clarity of procedures for approving a new partner. There is one affirmation offered in support of the University's efforts to improve consistency and effectiveness in the use of management information within annual monitoring reports.

2.198   Two examples of good practice have been identified in Expectation B3. These relate to the high level of support, development and career opportunities for staff and the positive impact this has had on learning, teaching and quality assurance, and the design of key roles that have strengthened leadership in learning and teaching,

2.199   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 publishes a wide range of information on its public website, including its structure, mission, values and governance arrangements. For prospective students, general procedures are published on the website as well as particular course information, including relevant costs and funding options. Additional sections of information are available for international applicants and those with disabilities.

3.2 Detailed information on undergraduate and postgraduate courses is available through the searchable interactive prospectus pages on the website. The Key Information Set is displayed on undergraduate course profiles in the online prospectus, alongside any additional information. Programme information can also be accessed through the academic units' websites, under a Study with Us link on each website.

3.3 Open Days and prospectuses (both online and printed versions) are coordinated and reviewed by the centralised Marketing and Student Recruitment Directorate. Programme specifications are produced and reviewed by academic units on their programmes of study, and these are archived and made available in student handbooks and on the University website throughout the student lifecycle. Information for prospective students is reviewed annually, and a survey is carried out of undergraduate and postgraduate students to whom offers have been made to feed into the review process.

3.4 Staff working on Open Days are trained and marketing teams work closely with academic units and other central services to ensure that information delivered at Open Days accurately reflects the University's learning opportunities. Online webinars are also run to allow prospective students to discuss the admissions process and ask questions, particularly if they are not able to attend a Post-Application Open Day. Social media is used for similar purposes.

3.5 Students are provided with digital or printed copies of their programme and module handbooks each year. Information in each handbook is reviewed by the relevant Board of Studies, and a sample of handbooks is reviewed annually as part of the LTR process.

3.6 A minimum threshold standard for module content available on the VLE is in place. Compliance is monitored as part of the LTR process.

3.7 The University communicates with students using a variety of methods, including a smartphone application that delivers live information about, and allows interaction with, a range of University services. The Student Services Portal provides students with tailored information and services in one place when they connect to the campus network.

3.8 Responsibilities between students and the University are set out in the Student Charter. Students are introduced to the Charter during their induction. Programme-level commitments may supplement the Charter, and are published in programme handbooks.

3.9   Students can access a record of their progress and marks awarded at any time, and upon leaving are issued with a transcript. A Higher Education Achievement Report is issued to each taught student upon graduation. Approval for extracurricular activities to feature on the report is granted by the Student Experience Subcommittee.

3.10   The University's Quality and Standards Handbook, which details the framework for managing academic standards and quality, is available publicly on the website. The information about quality management procedures is available via the LTDS and Student Progress Service websites, and these services ensure that policy is up to date and approved by the ULTSEC and Senate.

3.11   Council has overall responsibility for published information. Content provided online is managed locally by departments, and strategic oversight lies with the Corporate Affairs Directorate.

3.12   The University's approach to the production of information for its stakeholders allows the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the University's operation of its procedures and policies by meeting with a sample of its staff and students during the review visit and by considering a range of documentary evidence.

3.13   The ULTSEC is currently overseeing work to ensure that the University's approaches for providing information are in line with the Competition and Markets Authority guidance. Students met by the review team praised the pre-arrival information provided by the University.

3.14   The University provides a template for programme handbooks, which is reviewed and updated annually. Central guidelines are in place for developing handbooks to ensure that the information within them is accurate, clear and consistent with information provided to students from other sources. Students are aware of where to find information and programme specifications, but are not familiar with the Student Charter. The Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching has final sign off on prospectuses.

3.15   The undergraduate and postgraduate websites were redeveloped in 2012 and 2014 respectively, and this work focused on ensuring that there is one definitive record of programme information, to which other areas of the website, such as academic units' web pages, make reference.

3.16   Comments from School Representatives on the usefulness and accuracy of the information are generally positive. Feedback from students on the language support for international students has been largely positive, although it was noted that this could be further improved. Students met by the review team confirmed that the regulations, procedures and penalties for plagiarism are clear and fair.

3.17   Results from quality monitoring processes are reported to the relevant committees for consideration. The University uses management information and data as part of its quality and standards monitoring processes.

3.18   The Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes is a comprehensive guide to the postgraduate research environment, complemented by information on the Student Progress Service website and the Student Services Portal.

3.19   The responsibilities for provision of information by educational partnerships are agreed in the Student Lifecycle Table when the partnership is formed. The information is reviewed annually for accuracy by the LTDS, overseen by the Educational Partnerships Subcommittee. The University's procedures for producing and reviewing information are well understood by its staff and students, and it is clear where responsibilities for scrutinising and

approving information lie. These procedures support the University in producing information that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The review team therefore finds that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.21   The one Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or examples of good practice.

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

4   Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1   The University's approach to enhancing the quality of student learning opportunities is set out in the strategic priorities of the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy. The University describes its approach as grounded in self-reflection, with a commitment to continual improvement, peer review at all levels, and a culture of collaboration in which students are partners in identifying opportunities for improvement. ULTSEC's terms of reference refer to its responsibility to be proactive in driving enhancement.

4.2   Institutional and faculty leadership of enhancement is provided by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching), Deans and Associate Deans, supported by Directors of Academic and Student Services. At academic unit level, leadership is provided by the Directors of Excellence in Learning and Teaching, who have undertaken a bespoke Leadership Foundation training programme.

4.3   The University sees enhancement as a routine element of the management of provision through monitoring and review, including the external examiner system, programme approval, annual monitoring, periodic review, professional body accreditation, and the consideration of student evaluations.

4.4   Quality assurance processes are themselves subject to review to evaluate their effectiveness as vehicles of enhancement, for instance the SWOT format of LTR and RCICP, as well as revisions to annual monitoring and programme approval processes. The most recent revision of AMR addressed its fitness to support enhancement.

4.5   The University's aim is for enhancement to be 'owned' by staff and students, and by those with responsibility for delivery and quality management of the student learning experience, at disciplinary level. More broadly, reflection to identify actions towards improvement is encouraged at the level of the individual member of staff, academic units, faculties, institutional committees, and the LTDS.

4.6   Partnership with students is evidenced by the University-Students' Union committee, improvements to course representative training, participation of students in institutional decision making, formal dialogue via Student-Staff Committees and Boards of Studies, student involvement in quality management processes such as LTR and QAEF, as well as student interns working with the LTDS. The student representation scheme provides structured opportunities for more than a thousand student representatives to share in responsibility for enhancement.

4.7   The University's understanding of enhancement, in its strategies, reflective processes and culture, allows the Expectation to be met.

4.8   The team tested the Expectation by reading documentation of enhancement projects and the formal processes through which they are initiated, resourced and disseminated, together with the outputs from monitoring and review processes, as well as by talking to students, including those involved in enhancement projects, academics and professional services staff.

4.9   The University has a deliberate approach to improving the quality of student learning opportunities, and the team recognises the impact of improvements to policies on assessment and assessment feedback as an example of the effectiveness of this approach. Data on student satisfaction considered by ULTSEC led to the identification of assessment and feedback as an area for improvement. The University agreed Assessment and Feedback Principles, and these were used as the framework for policy revision and development. An increase in student satisfaction has resulted and the University is now focusing enhancement efforts on the quality and consistency of the content of assessment feedback through the 2016 Learning and Teaching Conference and other initiatives.

4.10   The University has undertaken further centrally initiated enhancement projects, including reviews of quality assurance processes, the creation of the Newcastle Offer, parity of esteem for Learning and Teaching in the University's processes for Reward and Recognition, engagement with the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), a focus on employability in the context of the commitment to learning for life, a review of the LTDS's role in enhancement, and investment in learning technologies, teaching and learning spaces and facilities.

4.11   The Newcastle Offer sets out a baseline of opportunities available to all students. It is being implemented through a programme of enhancements, including the Graduate Skills Framework, the use of the electronic sharing tool for recording a range of student achievements, lecture Capture (ReCap), and enabling an engaged and participative student community. A Taught Postgraduate Offer is under development.

4.12   As well as having a strategic approach to prioritising and delivering deliberate steps to enhance student learning opportunities, in particular through its policies and its periodic review process, the University encourages, and is receptive to, 'bottom-up' initiatives and has a track record for disseminating them.

4.13   The University has developed effective structures for driving enhancement at the level of the academic unit. The Director of Excellence in Learning and Teaching role was introduced in 2012 to support Heads of Academic Units in managing learning and teaching, and to lead on innovation. Directors of Excellence in Learning and Teaching are responsible for leading the local implementation of the Newcastle Offer, and attend and participate in a Directors of Excellence in Learning and Teaching forum. The University commissioned the Leadership Foundation to create a training programme for Directors of Excellence in Learning and Teaching, which has been repeated, and which will be extended to Degree Programme Directors.

4.14   Staff recognise the effectiveness of the University's processes for supporting and rewarding contributions to learning and teaching. There is now an evidence base for promotion on teaching grounds, under review by a Reward and Recognition Steering Group. The University has taken steps to support the development of its staff as teachers through Higher Education Academy recognition, and access for postgraduate research students who teach to the Introduction to Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and Newcastle Teaching Award.

4.15   The University has a systematic and effective approach to disseminating good and innovative practice ULTSEC provides a lead through its shaping and implementation of the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy, and through developments to annual and periodic review to support dissemination of exemplary practice in pursuit of enhancement goals. Taught Programmes Subcommittee and Postgraduate Research Subcommittee also fulfil a responsibility for identifying and disseminating good practice through their oversight of annual monitoring. The LTDS maintains a Case Studies database online, and staff draw on these to develop their own delivery and assessment practice.

Effective practice is also shared via an influential Learning and Teaching Conference, a Teaching Fellows forum and an eLearning forum, as well as away-days and fora for faculty and Academic Unit enhancement leaders.

4.16   The Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy identifies partnership with students as a key approach to achieving enhancements in learning and teaching at programme and institutional levels. Students have been supported to take part in enhancement projects that reflected their interests and which provided employability opportunities in terms of internships.

4.17   The evaluation of the ULTSEC Innovation Fund (2004-2014) indicates that one quarter of project leaders of the 150 projects believed their project had wider impact. ULTSEC has funded 73 innovation projects since 2010, and there is now a Postgraduate Research Innovation Fund which has supported 18 projects since 2013.

4.18   The University has reviewed the effectiveness of the arrangements for encouraging and supporting enhancement. As a result there has been an investment in more-tailored resources for supporting staff (including blended learning and webinars). Implementation of Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy is reviewed, drawing on management information and evaluations.

4.19   Enhancement of learning resources has included an award-winning pop-up temporary exam-period library and a new library with 500 study spaces, the electronic sharing tool to support personal tutoring for taught students and progress review for postgraduate research students.

4.20   The University supports both pragmatic and strategic approaches to the enhancement of learning and teaching, and has taken deliberate steps to create an environment in which staff receive support, training and reward for enhancement activity, often in collaboration with students. The University has developed its monitoring and review processes to identify enhancement opportunities, has effective means for dissemination of good practice, and evaluates its enhancement activity. For these reasons, the expectation is met.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.22   There are no recommendations, affirmations or good practice identified in this judgement area.

4.23   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 2009 QAA Institutional Audit team recognised the range of ways in which the University is developing the employability of all of its students as a feature of good practice. Employability remains at the centre of the University's thinking and is a core criterion in the approval of new degree programmes. Since the 2009 audit the University has built on the good practice it had by increasing placement opportunities and introducing elective employability modules and the Rise Up initiative. The delivery of these opportunities follows a three-strand approach: curriculum; co-curriculum; and extra-curriculum.

5.2   The curriculum approach allows students to develop skills set out in the Graduate Skills Framework. The Graduate Skills Framework was developed with input from employers and students to define a set of skills that, when added to a degree, will give students the skills needed in life beyond university. Students acquire subject-specific academic and professional skills as part of their degree programme, and have the opportunity to develop other transferable skills through opportunities offered by the Careers Service under the ncl+ umbrella. All taught degree programmes are required to be mapped to the Framework, which is then checked as part of programme approval and monitored through LTR.

5.3   The Co-curriculum approach offers a range of opportunities outside the curriculum such as the University-Wide Language Programme and some discipline-related workshops for students. Extra-curriculum opportunities are available to all students and include the ncl+ offer, a range of activities through the careers service, and the Rise Up challenge events, which are one-day events to stimulate entrepreneurial thinking among students.

5.4   Employers are actively engaged in the development of University programmes. Examples include PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers), the Law School Advisory Board and relationships with the NHS. In addition to placement activity, the University has a number of other work-based and placement learning initiatives and opportunities to support students' development of employability skills, including the following examples: a Passport to Work scheme, which provides work shadowing opportunities for students with no or limited work experience; Newcastle Work Experience placements, through which students undertake paid term-time or vacation placements within the University or with regional small and medium enterprises (SMEs); JobsOC, an on-campus employment service for students to gain part-time work as a way of enhancing their employability; and a Staff-Student Shadowing Scheme, whereby senior University staff and students shadow one another for a full day and share their experiences.

5.5   Systematic and detailed consideration of Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) data takes place each year, with analysis undertaken at all levels of the institution, and outcomes are used to enhance employability initiatives at provider level. The Careers Service prepares an annual report on DLHE data to ULTSEC, FLTSECs, the Directors of Excellence in Learning and Teaching Forum, and separate sign-up sessions for academic units. Analysis includes subject-level comparisons across the sector and with other Russell Group institutions. Student feedback suggests that students feel well prepared for employment (76 per cent) and students who met the team were able to articulate the importance of employability skills in their programme.

5.6   The University continues to be committed to improving its employability offer to students and has a Placements Project underway, which will roll out in 2016-17 and do much to further underpin its employability strategy.

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.