



Higher Education Review of Xaverian College

April 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Xaverian College. The review took place from 18 to 20 April 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Ian Robinson
- Ms Cara Williams (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Xaverian College 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 7.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Xaverian College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Xaverian College.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body **meets** 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 Xaverian College.

- The extensive opportunities for pedagogic and subject-specific staff development that support high quality teaching and learning (Expectation B3 and Enhancement).
- The regular and varied programme of teaching observations, which focuses on the enhancement of the student learning experience (Expectation B3).
- The access to a wide range of learning materials and resources that enables students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectation B4).
- The thorough internal moderation processes, including double-marking of all assessed work, which facilitates the security of assessment decisions (Expectation B6).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendation** to Xaverian College.

By September 2016:

- develop a formal mechanism to inform students of actions taken in response to their feedback (Expectation B5).

Theme: Digital Literacy

Xaverian College has invested significantly in information technology resources since the QAA Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) in 2011, and has achieved some prominence for its virtual learning environment (VLE) developments. It has for some time been regarded as an early adopter of technology and plays a leading role in promoting the use of technology in teaching and learning. It acts as a mentor in good practice for the development and implementation of innovative learning technologies, coordinated by the Technology Exemplar Network, a network supported by the Learning and Skills Council and the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA). It received the Colleges 'Next Generation Learning Award' from BECTA in 2010 in recognition of its work developing its own bespoke virtual and managed learning environments.

The continued investment in creating a technology-enabled learning environment has catalysed and encouraged the use of information technology in teaching. The College supports these developments by committing an increasing proportion of staff development funds and time to enhancing digital literacy. Staff are encouraged to make appropriate use

of social media both in their teaching and to support students, and associated procedural protection has been put in place to safeguard both staff and students.

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

About Xaverian College

Xaverian College (the College) is an inner city Catholic sixth-form college situated two miles south of Manchester city centre. It is located in Rusholme, a district close to the local university campuses and halls of residence. The mission statement of the College is based on that of the Xaverian Brothers: 'through excellent education and example, we commend to our students a way of life rooted in the love of God and our neighbour'. Based on its mission the College aims to enable young people to realise their full potential; to nurture their spiritual, moral and personal development; and to positively contribute to local and national developments. Through its mission statement the College is committed to embracing the agendas of safeguarding equality and diversity, social inclusion and widening participation.

The College's strategic objectives for 2013-16 can be summarised as to nurture and celebrate its distinctive Catholic nature; to provide a range of programmes responsive to the needs and interests of the individual; to deliver outstanding provision; to support young people to overcome the challenges they face on a personal and academic level; and to provide outstanding leadership.

Over the last eight years the College has seen a significant growth (47 per cent since 2007-08) in the number of 16-19 year old full-time students. It now has over 2,200 students, of whom 93 per cent are studying Level 3 programmes. In 2015-16 the College enrolled 127 students on three foundation year higher education programmes. The foundation programmes are in Life Sciences, Pharmacy, and Medicine and Dentistry (combined); these are offered on behalf of the University of Manchester (the University) and constitute year zero of four to six-year programmes.

Since the QAA IQER in 2011 the College has invested in several infrastructure projects. This investment has included improvements in physical resources in the Ryken building, the extension of wireless internet access across the campus, new refectory provision, new laboratory facilities in the science block, a complete refresh of the College network infrastructure to improve teaching and learning resources, and investment in replacement computers. In addition, there have been improvements to social spaces, lab facilities, and IT resources used by College students.

There have also been some changes to the management of higher education programmes in the College. Two new management posts have been created – the Assistant Principal for University Programmes, who is a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and works with the Assistant Principal for Quality and Standards to plan, monitor and report on higher education provision; and the University Programme Leader, who works with curriculum leaders to deliver higher education provision, and reports to the Assistant Principal for University Programmes. In addition, a University Programmes Committee has been established to provide oversight at local level of the three foundation programmes.

Key challenges currently faced by the College include the reducing financial resources and funding available to colleges nationally; the introduction of 16-19 new, unproven providers to a saturated market place; and recent curriculum reform affecting all colleges. The College has been effective in managing growth since 2007 and has had outstanding financial health (confirmed by the Education Funding Agency) for the past seven years. It remains committed to retaining breadth and choice for its students, and is proactive in responding

to curriculum reform, such as the movement towards linearity for all A Level subjects and the introduction of modular examinations in BTEC programmes.

The College works exclusively with the University to deliver the three foundation programmes. These programmes do not result in a formal qualification but enable students to progress to bachelor's and master's degree programmes at the University. The curriculum is, however, credit-rated by the University at level 0 - equivalent to level 3 on the Regulated Qualifications Framework. The College is organised into five faculties, and all foundation programmes are delivered within the Faculty of Science, Technology, Electronics and Mathematics (STEM).

The Life Sciences foundation year programme commenced in 2004 in collaboration with the University's School of Life Sciences in the Faculty of Life Sciences. Students are effectively full time at the College, although they attend a practical seminar series at the University and have a University personal tutor as well as a personal tutor at the College.

The Medicine and Dentistry Foundation Year programme was initially delivered solely by the University; the College's contribution commenced in 2006. This programme is offered in collaboration with the University's Schools of Medicine and Dentistry in the Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences, and links to the five-year Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) programme, for which the General Medical Council is the accrediting body, and to the five-year Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) programme, for which the General Dental Council is the accrediting body. The programme is delivered jointly by the University and the College, and students spend approximately 50 per cent of their time at each institution. Their personal tutor is at the University, although the Assistant Principal for University Programmes acts as nominal personal tutor at the College.

The Pharmacy foundation year programme commenced in 2009 in collaboration with the University's School of Pharmacy in the Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences. Students are effectively full time at the College, although they attend a practical seminar series at the University. They do not have an allocated personal tutor at the University but meet with their University Programme Director weekly, and have a personal tutor at the College.

The University conducted an institutional review of the foundation programmes in Life Sciences and Medicine and Dentistry in 2008. Following this, a five-year (2009-14) collaborative agreement was established between the University and the College for the three foundation programmes. More recently, in June 2014, another institutional review of all three foundation programmes was carried out, following which a new five-year (2014-19) collaborative agreement was established. This agreement included a proposed increase in the number of students onto the Life Sciences foundation programme (to a maximum of 90 students). This in part led to a significant increase in the number of higher education students enrolled at the College in September 2015, when 72 students enrolled on the Life Sciences programme. There was also an increase in the number of students enrolled on the Pharmacy programme (now 25), requested by the University close to enrolment, due to unforeseen circumstances. It is anticipated that in September 2016 a maximum number enrolled onto this programme will be 20 students. There are 30 students currently enrolled on the Medicine and Dentistry programme.

The IQER review team in 2011 made three desirable recommendations to the College: to review the existing College committee structure to establish a forum that complements the existing arrangements with the University; to ensure all higher education activity is integrated into the College self-assessment reporting processes; and to address the perceived variability in student experience across higher education programmes by reviewing the College student induction process and student engagement with University

academic life. In addition, six features of good practice were identified, including the effective and positive relationships between the College and the University; effective assessment practice; the rigorous observation of the teaching and learning process; the extensive range of in-house professional development opportunities and handbooks; workbooks; and subject materials provided to students.

The College has been effective in addressing the IQER recommendations. The committee structure has been strengthened by the introduction of the Xaverian Universities Programme Management Committee (XUPC), which provides local oversight of University programmes as mentioned above. The College self-assessment process now incorporates the foundation programmes in both the STEM faculty self-assessment report (SAR) and the College SAR as appropriate. In addition, as discussed under Expectation B8, the College has introduced further programme review and monitoring processes that encompass its higher education provision. The perceived variability of the student experience has been addressed, in part, by students being assigned a personal tutor and/or having regular weekly sessions and meetings with University Programme Directors at the University. The student induction programme was reviewed and students facilitated to attend Freshers' Week activities at the University.

Good progress has also been made against most of the identified good practice; in particular, the regular and varied programme of teaching observations, and the extensive opportunities for pedagogic and subject-specific staff development, have been identified in this report as continuing good practice.

Explanation of the findings about Xaverian College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College does not have degree awarding powers and has a single formal partnership agreement with the University of Manchester (the University) to deliver three foundation programmes. The University sets academic standards and provides policies and procedures for their maintenance, and is responsible for approving the foundation programmes. Successful completion of a one-year foundation programme at the College allows students to progress to the first year (Level 4) of a degree programme at the University. There are no national higher education benchmarks for foundation programmes which are set at Level 3. The University, through its programme approval processes, considers the A Level curriculum to be an appropriate benchmark for the foundation programmes in terms of overall and module content and level. Students do not receive a qualification on completion of these programmes.

1.2 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.3 The review team met the College Principal, senior and academic staff and representatives from the University, and scrutinised a variety of documents, including the Partnership Agreement, regulation handbooks, programme specifications, minutes from XUPC meetings, SMT meetings, and curriculum-level meetings.

1.4 The responsibilities for the foundation programmes are set out in the Partnership Agreement which clearly defines and differentiates between the roles and responsibilities of the University and the College. There is a longstanding, effective working relationship between the College and the University. In June 2014, the College was the subject of a full institutional review by the University and the partnership was confirmed for a further five years.

1.5 The College has a clear management and reporting structure. The partnership between the College and the University is well developed and staff at the College have well established relationships with staff in both the Faculty of Life Sciences and the Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences at the University.

1.6 The changes to the management of higher education programmes at the College, including the development of two University programme management posts, enable the maintenance of effective planning, monitoring and reporting of higher education provision. Higher education matters are discussed and shared with staff and recorded in the XUPC minutes.

1.7 The involvement of College and University staff in regular Life Sciences and Pharmacy Programme Management Committee meetings provides an effective mechanism for updating and reviewing programme content (see Expectation B8 for further detail). In addition, College staff discuss potential programme amendments at curriculum team meetings to keep up with any changes to A Level syllabuses. For the Medicine and Dentistry programme, the curriculum content is wholly managed by the University.

1.8 The University confirms at approval that the standards of the programmes are at the appropriate level and will effectively prepare students for progression to Level 4. The College acts as a 'stepping-stone' to University and the experience that the foundation programmes provide helps to develop students' skills that a traditional A Level experience may not test. Each programme is tailored to each discipline, and programmes do not share modules as College staff believe that this could affect the quality and distinctive nature of the separate foundation programmes. The majority of students progress to University of Manchester degree programmes and the College supports those students who choose not to and wish to apply to other higher education institutions.

1.9 The University appoints a Programme Director for each foundation programme; this provides the College with a key point of contact and assists the College in maintaining alignment with the University's regulations and requirements.

1.10 There is a positive working relationship between the College and the University and effective processes that enable the use of the A Level curricula to maintain academic standards on the foundation programmes. 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

1.11 Foundation programme students are registered as University students, and thus fall under the University's overarching regulatory framework and academic regulations. The University retains oversight of the programme-specific regulations and has ultimate control of the academic and regulatory frameworks. College processes align with the University assessment regulations, apart from one variance relating to resit regulations; approval for this variance was granted when the regulations were published in 2013.

1.12 The University has ultimate control of the academic and regulatory frameworks set out in the Manual of Academic Procedures. Life Sciences and Pharmacy programme regulations are produced by the College, updated annually under the guidance of the University Programme Director, and align with the regulations of the appropriate faculty of the University. The University's Student Handbook is the equivalent document for the Medicine and Dentistry programme. University Programme Directors also provide updates to programme regulation handbooks to take account of any changes to University regulations or procedures. Once updated, copies of the handbook are provided to students and the University.

1.13 Students exiting the foundation programmes do not receive an award of credit or a qualification, but are enabled to progress to Level 4 of their chosen degree programme dependent on successful completion and level of achievement.

1.14 These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.15 The review team considered a range of documentation including the Partnership Agreement, responsibility checklist, external examiner reports, minutes of Programme Management Committee meetings, Life Science and Pharmacy Regulations Handbooks and Medicine and Dentistry Student Handbook, as well as email trails of updates to the handbooks. The review team also met senior and academic staff, University representatives and students.

1.16 The Colleges uses the University's Manual of Academic Procedures which sets out the University quality standards and enhancement processes. The procedures are comprehensive and provide the College with information on the University expectations in relation to the management of academic standards and compliance with University regulations.

1.17 Overarching regulations and the programme handbooks are detailed and comprehensive and reflect the University's expectations. Any significant changes to the Life Sciences and Pharmacy programmes are approved by the University; programme regulations take into account College consultation but are largely dictated by the University regulations. The College reviews the Life Sciences and Pharmacy specifications on an annual basis and slight modifications to the scientific content and context of the modules may be made. These modifications often relate to changes in A Level specifications or to advances in scientific knowledge. They do not require formal approval but the University is informed and a copy of the revised specification is sent to the University. The University

directly manages the Medicine and Dentistry programme and implements any curriculum changes. The University chairs the exam boards, and their composition and operation is governed by the University's regulations; this further ensures that the College follows University processes for the maintenance of academic standards.

1.18 The University has ultimate control of the academic and regulatory frameworks, and there are clear and effective processes that ensure the College processes align with University requirements. Students are not awarded academic credit or a qualification on completion of a foundation programme. 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

1.19 The College produces programme syllabus (specification) handbooks (variously called syllabuses, specifications and handbooks by the College and University, and referred to in this report as programme specification handbooks), for the Life Sciences and Pharmacy programmes. For Life Sciences a programme specification has also been developed by the College and approved by the University. The Pharmacy Programme Regulations Handbook contains some programme-level information but there is no equivalent programme specification. External examiners are used to check the specification handbooks. For the Medicine and Dentistry programme the University is responsible for producing the Student Handbook and the Student Workbook.

1.20 For the Life Sciences and Pharmacy programmes, instead of making use of the University's normal module specification templates, the College has been permitted to identify the indicative content of each module within the programme specification handbooks; these resemble the various A Level curricula with which they align. The specification handbooks provide detailed curriculum content and an assessment outline for each module. The University's Student Handbook for the Medicine and Dentistry programme provides short module summaries and the Student Workbook contains detailed module content and assessment information.

1.21 The University's programme proposal documentation and associated programme regulation handbooks contain detailed programme-level learning outcomes. In addition, the Medicine and Dentistry Student Handbook and Student Workbook contain programme-level learning outcomes. There are no module-level learning outcomes as module content is based on the relevant A Level syllabus. A detailed mapping process was conducted at the time the programmes were approved, to ensure that the curriculum properly supports the programme-level learning outcomes.

1.22 There are no qualifications to be gained by completing the foundation programmes, and therefore no transcripts are produced.

1.23 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.24 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of these arrangements by examining Life Sciences and Pharmacy programme proposals, syllabuses, specifications and regulations handbooks, and the Medicine and Dentistry Student Handbook and Workbook. The review team also met senior and academic staff, students and representatives from the University.

1.25 Students the review team met confirmed that detailed information on their programme is made available to them in a number of ways, including handbooks, workbooks and module level booklets. Programme specification and regulations handbooks are provided to them during induction and are also accessible on the VLE. Students are clear on the shape of the programme, the overall requirements of assessment and grading criteria,

and levels of performance required to successfully progress to the University of Manchester degree programmes.

1.26 The University marking guidelines relate only to marking of coursework. All end-of-semester examinations are marked according to A Level marking guideline procedures.

1.27 The programme specification and regulation handbooks were initially approved by the University; the regulation handbooks are updated annually and incorporate appropriate contributions and suggestions from the College. There have not been any significant changes and any slight amendments are discussed at management meetings.

1.28 The programme proposals, regulations handbooks, specification handbooks, and for Medicine and Dentistry the Student Handbook and Workbook, form a definitive record of the programmes.

1.29 The College works closely with the University and detailed definitive programme information is made available to students in a number of ways including programme specification and regulation handbooks. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.30 The three foundation programmes delivered at the College form year zero of a range of University of Manchester extended degree programmes in Medicine and Dentistry, Pharmacy and the Life Sciences. The formal agreement between the University and the College and the associated procedural documentation make it clear that the College acts principally as a delivery agent for aspects of the early curriculum in the University's extended programmes, working under the leadership of the University-based Course Directors.

1.31 The curriculum has been developed in partnership by the two institutions and was subsequently formally considered and approved by the University using its standard processes for course approval and review, thus assuring alignment with national benchmarks.

1.32 Within these arrangements the University fully retains responsibility for affirming the academic standards of the programmes and thus the College is able to meet the Expectation.

1.33 The review team considered the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining documentation relating to course approval and revalidation, awarding partners' academic regulations, and partnership agreements. The review team also met senior and teaching staff from the University and the College.

1.34 The review team read and heard of the significant contribution made to programme development by the College. A member of College staff had been seconded to the University to coordinate the development of the Life Sciences programme, bringing together teaching staff from both institutions. The Pharmacy programme has been jointly developed more recently in similar fashion. The delivery of the Medicine and Dentistry programme, already in existence and delivered in-house by the University, was re-sequenced to enable the College to deliver the underpinning science material on the University's behalf. The College made a significant contribution at programme approval and institutional review meetings conducted by the University.

1.35 The definitive programme documentation (see paragraphs 1.19 to 1.21 and 1.28) reflects the University's standard requirements at the time the programmes were developed. The agreement between the University and the College requires that the learning environment and teaching be equivalent to those at the University. This was confirmed by the University both at initial approval, and subsequent institutional reviews. The College formally notifies the University teaching team of any proposed changes.

1.36 While the University retains ultimate responsibility for academic standards, the College discharges effectively its shared responsibilities for contributing to the development and approval of the curriculum and its associated academic standards. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.37 The arrangements for assessment of students on the foundation programmes are described in some detail under Expectation B6. The University retains the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the academic standards of all credit awarded in its name, but it delegates responsibility to the College to design and moderate assessment instruments and mark student work within the requirements of the University's academic regulations. In addition, the College has developed its own Assessment Policy which gives overarching guidance on assessment applying to all its provision.

1.38 The College's Assessment Policy gives direction on, among other things, the need for assessment to test the objectives laid down in a programme, thus reinforcing the University's requirement that student performance should be judged by achievement of the learning outcomes defined within programme and unit documentation.

1.39 The programmes are not formally designated as awards; they are an integrated preparatory year from which successful students progress onto longer bachelor's and master's programmes. The curriculum is, however, credit rated by the University, at Level 0 (Level 3 on the Regulated Qualifications Framework). Definitive programme documentation includes detailed programme-level aims and learning outcomes. The curriculum is mapped in detail onto the programme-level outcomes. Thus, success in assessment demonstrates achievement of the programme-level learning outcomes.

1.40 These procedures would allow the College to meet Expectation A3.2.

1.41 The review team tested the Expectation by scrutinising the University's academic regulations, the College's Assessment Policy, external examiner reports, definitive programme documentation, and records of assessment boards and meetings associated with assessment. The review team also met senior and teaching staff, and students.

1.42 The University's programme proposal documentation and associated programme regulations contained detailed programme-level learning outcomes. The programme specifications produced by the College for the Life Sciences and Pharmacy programmes and the University's handbook for the Medicine and Dentistry programme all contained detailed unit content and curriculum. No learning outcomes were available at unit level, although it was clear that a detailed mapping process had been conducted at the time the programmes were approved, to ensure that the curriculum properly supported the programme-level learning outcomes.

1.43 Internal moderators and external examiners confirm that coursework and examinations produced by College staff provide appropriate coverage of the curriculum. Completed assignments and examination scripts are graded using either University or A Level grading criteria, both of which expect students to demonstrate achievement of target

outcomes. Completed assessments are internally second marked and moderated by the external examiner. At examination boards and in their annual reports, external examiners confirm that coverage is appropriate and that learning outcomes have been achieved.

1.44 While units within the foundation programmes are not specified, using the University's most recent practice of defining learning outcomes at unit level, examination boards are able to be assured that assessment demonstrates that programme level learning outcomes have been met, and that students are appropriately qualified to progress to their chosen programme at the University.

1.45 The review team concludes that the College has effective systems in place to ensure that the assessment of students is robust, and that the award of credit is based on the achievement of the programme learning outcomes. 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

1.46 All three foundation programmes are led and operated directly by the University, which calls upon the College to contribute to the delivery of the curriculum. In the case of the Medicine and Dentistry programme, the College delivers the theoretical aspects, approximately half of the programme material. With respect to the Life Sciences and Pharmacy programmes the College delivers the majority of the programmes, and is thus engaged to a greater extent in the day-to-day operation of the programme.

1.47 Members of University academic staff are appointed as the Programme Director for each of the three programmes, and the College is well represented on the University's three Programme Management Committees. In addition, to provide a focus for all higher education matters, the College brings together senior staff associated with the foundation programmes in a Xaverian University Programmes Committee (XUPC).

1.48 The partnership agreement between the University and the College requires that monitoring of each programme is conducted annually by the various University Programme Management Committees, as detailed in the University's Manual of Academic Procedures. The University employs a continuous monitoring process as part of Programme Management Committee business, drawing upon data and information that becomes available during programme delivery. Both the College and the University provide data and other contributions as required.

1.49 In addition to its participation in the University's annual monitoring procedure, the foundation programmes are considered as part of the College's annual monitoring process. This has particular importance for consideration of the student experience, and is discussed in more detail in section B8.

1.50 University partnerships, and the programmes delivered therein, are reviewed in depth on a periodic basis; a successful outcome is required for the continuation of the partnership. A successful review also confers continuing approval on the associated programmes. The foundation programmes delivered in partnership with the College were successfully reviewed in 2008 and 2014, and will be reviewed again in 2019.

1.51 The College's adherence and contribution to the University's processes for continuous monitoring and review would enable it to meet the Expectation.

1.52 The review team tested the effectiveness of the procedures by examining relevant documentation including minutes of programme committee meetings, external examiner reports, academic regulations, and partnership agreements. The review team also met leadership and teaching staff from the College and the University, as well as students.

1.53 The partnership between the College and the University has been reviewed twice by the University, in 2008 and 2014, leading to an extension of the partnership until 2019 and a commitment to further continual reflection upon the indicative content of the

curriculum. The reports indicate that there is a vibrant two-way proactive relationship between the College and University staff.

1.54 Scrutiny of meeting records and discussions with staff revealed that the annual process of continuous monitoring requires detailed consideration of student performance and achievement, reports from external examiners, and eliciting contextual contributions from students and College staff. It was also clear that the University considers College staff to be full members of the programme team and true partners within the various University processes.

1.55 The College is operating effectively in accordance with the requirements of the University, playing a full and effective part in the annual monitoring and periodic review processes. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.56 All three foundation programmes are led and operated directly by the University, which applies its own procedures and regulations for aspects of curriculum design, delivery and assessment to which the College contributes.

1.57 All three programmes are mature, have been in place for a number of years, and following a successful scrutiny in periodic review have recently been extended in approval. The University developed and approved the Medicine and Dentistry Foundation Year Programme, subsequently inviting the College to become a partner in the delivery of the curriculum. However, the College was more intimately engaged in assisting the University with the development and approval of the Life Sciences and Pharmacy programmes.

1.58 The University's approach to annual monitoring includes using contributions from external examiners to enable programme teams to critically evaluate and review assessment within programmes (see Expectation B7 for detail). The College's responsibilities in meeting this requirement are to ensure that appropriate consideration is given to the feedback provided on both the design of assessment instruments, and on the externals' moderation of students' graded work.

1.59 The College's contribution and adherence to the University's processes for curriculum development and assessment would enable it to meet the Expectation.

1.60 The review team considered the effectiveness of these procedures by scrutinising the University's procedures, reading a number of reports from external examiners and the associated records of Programme Management Committees. It also held meetings with senior and academic staff from the College and University.

1.61 The review team learned that the now Assistant Principal University Programmes was seconded to the University to work with the various subject leads in the development of the curriculum for the Life Sciences programme, and during which a range of external advisers had been identified and consulted. In the development of the Pharmacy programme he undertook the same role, albeit without secondment.

1.62 Staff confirmed that the College engages actively and responsively with the external examiners in the design of the assessment and also after grading has taken place. Reports from external examiners and minutes of Programme Management Committees and XUPC further demonstrated that assessment tested and confirmed the appropriate standards.

1.63 The College works in accordance with the regulations and procedures of the University. It is making effective use of contributions from external examiners and engages

with contributions from external advisers during the curriculum design process. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations: Summary of findings

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

1.65 With regard to the maintenance of academic standards all Expectations are met and all have a low associated level of risk. The review team makes no recommendations to the College, has not identified any features of good practice and does not affirm any actions being taken to address known weaknesses or areas for development.

1.66 The College delivers three foundation programmes in partnership with the University of Manchester. It has a mature and strong relationship with the University as evidenced by the institutional reviews in 2008 and 2014. Student numbers on the Life Sciences Foundation Year programme have increased as result of the most recent institutional review and a new five-year partnership agreement (2014-19) has been signed.

1.67 The College follows the policies, procedures and regulations of the University in ensuring the maintenance of academic standards. Since the IQER in 2011, two new management roles, the Assistant Principal for University Programmes and the University Programme Leader, have been established and appointed. A Xaverian University Programmes Committee has been set up to provide local oversight of the higher education provision.

1.68 Staff work very closely with University colleagues at both operational and management level. A member of College staff was seconded to the University to undertake curriculum development activities for one of the foundation programmes and academic staff attend, and are full members of, University Programme Management Committees. Students are clear on their programme of study and the progression requirements to continue with their four, five or six-year bachelor's or master's degrees at the University.

1.69 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body at the College **meets** 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 Among its strategic objectives, the College places priority upon the provision of '...a range of programmes responsive to the needs and interests of the individual', and enables '...access to HE for students who would not have possessed the required qualifications for entry onto the associated degree courses'. There is a resonance between the College's mission, and the University's wish to provide routes to higher education for students who, for example, are returning to study after a period away from it, or who wish to study at University in a discipline area other than that they followed at school. The partnership between the two institutions addresses the aspirations of both.

2.2 The three foundation programmes delivered at the College form year zero of a range of University of Manchester extended degree programmes in Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy and the Life Sciences. The formal agreement between the University and the College and the associated procedural documentation make it clear that the College acts principally as a delivery agent for aspects of the early curriculum in the University's extended programmes, working under the leadership of the University-based Course Directors.

2.3 The curriculum has been developed in partnership by the two institutions and was subsequently formally considered and approved by the University using its standard processes for course approval and review, thus assuring alignment with national benchmarks.

2.4 These arrangements would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

2.5 The review team considered the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining documentation relating to course approval and revalidation, awarding partners' academic regulations, and partnership agreements. The team also met senior and teaching staff from the University and the College.

2.6 The College's approach to curriculum planning and programme approval is described in detail in section A3.1 of this report. It is noteworthy that by seconding a senior member of its teaching staff to the University to coordinate the development of the Life Sciences programme, the College was instrumental in bringing together teaching staff from both institutions. This brought the experience of high quality student support at foundation level to the planning process, a focus upon developing relevant student skills and promoting academic cultural transition, and time to engage with external advisers during the development process. The Pharmacy programme has been jointly developed more recently in a similar fashion. The College made a significant contribution at programme approval and institutional review meetings conducted by the University.

2.7 The College is required to identify the indicative content of each module within locally developed programme specification handbooks. These draw upon appropriate A Level curricula and represent a tailored curriculum which reflects the College's approaches to teaching and learning. Changes to the programme, other than minor updates to the

indicative and contextual material contained within the programme syllabuses, are forbidden. Such minor amendments are considered each year by the teaching team, endorsed by the College's Assistant Principal for University Programmes, and are approved by the appropriate University Programme Director. The review team heard of one such example, where the College made proposals to stream students in order to accommodate a group of better qualified entrants. The individual programme regulations are updated by the University annually and incorporate appropriate contributions and suggestions from the College.

2.8 The agreement between the University and the College requires that the learning environment and teaching be equivalent to those at the University. This was confirmed by the University both at initial approval, and subsequent institutional review. The College formally notifies the University of any proposed changes to the teaching team.

2.9 While the University retains ultimate responsibility for academic quality, the College discharges effectively its shared responsibilities for contributing to the development and approval of the curriculum and its approach to learning and teaching. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.10 The College has no responsibility for the recruitment, selection and admission of students and therefore this Expectation does not apply.

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

2.11 The Assistant Principal for University Programmes has overall responsibility for managing the quality of learning opportunities for higher education programmes and is supported in this role by the Assistant Principal for Quality and Standards, the University Programme Leader and the Curriculum Leaders for Biology, Chemistry and Mathematics. The College's quality management processes monitor the quality of the curriculum areas including those which contribute to the provision of higher education. For example, the College Quality Assurance Audit Team, which consists of the Assistant Principal for Quality and Standards and the Vice Principal, regularly conducts reviews and mid-term audits to assess the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The Assistant Principal for University Programmes attends an annual review of the STEM faculty SAR during which all courses in the faculty are discussed. The quality of higher education provision is also monitored by XUPC, SMT and by the Governing Body. The College has a Quality Strategy, a Teaching and Learning Policy, an Assessment Policy, an Observation of Teaching and Learning Policy, a Staff Development Policy and a calendar for teaching and learning preparation/staff training. These policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.12 The review team considered policy documents from the College and University and met senior and academic staff, support staff, University Programme Directors and students.

2.13 The College has appointed a University Programme Leader to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities and to help monitor students' progress on the Life Sciences programme. This role also involves assessing the standard of teaching and learning, programme management at the College and with the University, and organising coursework and formative assessments. This appointment is seen by the College as addressing some of the issues that have arisen at Student-Staff Committee meetings, for example by extending the opportunities for students on the Life Sciences programme to attend the University on a more regular basis. The University Programme Leader also acts as a Senior Adviser to higher education students and works with the Assistant Principal for University Programmes to support students during and following induction.

2.14 The College's Staff Development Policy supports the development of all staff particularly in providing effective teaching and learning. Staff attend a range of in-house and external training relating to teaching and learning. Opportunities for staff development are negotiated and agreed during the professional review process. Self-directed 'Learning Communities' are an integral feature of the College staff development programme. They encourage higher education staff to try new things out and then reflect on them, helping to create a community within the classroom and sharing elements of good practice. They also play a role in resource planning based on evidence of what works well.

2.15 The College is committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Staff development records demonstrate a comprehensive range of activities are undertaken. There is a focus on assessment and staff engagement as A Level examiners, which provides current benchmarking intelligence. The 2014 institutional review by the University

commended the College on its commitment to staff development. The College achieved Investors in People (IiP) status in 2013 and the report commended the College's approach to leadership and staff development and highlights the development opportunities that are available. These include attendance at Manchester Catholic Education Partnership inset days, science specific museum visits, workshops and residential courses. The extensive opportunities for pedagogic and subject-specific staff development that support high quality teaching and learning is **good practice**.

2.16 Staff teaching on the University programmes are well qualified; three have PhDs, and all have good first degrees in their specialist subjects. Three of the staff have considerable research experience at University and in industry. A significant number of teachers have A Level exam marking or moderating experience including a Principal Examiner and a Senior Examiner. Two of the staff have published revision textbooks.

2.17 The College encourages outstanding teaching, learning and assessment through a variety of mechanisms including the quality cycle self-assessment, course reviews, staff professional development and lesson observations. There is a comprehensive programme of teaching observations and between 2012 and 2014 over 90 per cent of the observations were graded good or outstanding. 'Learning Walks' are brief informal observations of lessons conducted by some curriculum leaders, heads of faculty and the Principal. These informal lesson observations last between 10 and 15 minutes with the observer providing verbal, and in some cases written, feedback on the teaching and learning.

2.18 The Principal's Learner Voice Survey is analysed and the results are reported to the Quality and Standards Committee. Gathering student views on the quality of their courses and learning experience informs self-assessment and improvement planning. Higher education matters form part of the discussion during staff professional reviews. Learning Communities are an effective system for the sharing of good practice in teaching and learning, which is also disseminated to staff through faculty and curriculum meetings, minutes of which are uploaded to the staff area of the VLE. Bitesize presentations have been given on the use of embedding digital literacy into the curriculum, the intranet for Physics students, and high grades in maths; these are also uploaded to the VLE for general access and to further support the sharing of good practice.

2.19 Lesson observations show that effective use is made of good quality resources to stimulate and reinforce learning, and teachers are sensitive to the learning needs of individual students. Quality improvement processes include a thorough system of lesson observations to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. All STEM teachers are observed annually by their line manager with feedback being provided to support professional development and improvements in learners' experiences. Informal peer lesson observations, themed lesson observations and 'Learning Walks' are also used to share good practice. The regular and varied programme of teaching observations, which focuses on the enhancement of the student learning experience is **good practice**.

2.20 When new staff join the College teaching team the Assistant Principal for University Programmes informs the University Programme Directors and this information is added to the handbooks sent to University on an annual basis. New staff undertake a rigorous induction programme and staff records are maintained. Induction programmes are created for all staff, including both academic and support staff. In addition, newly qualified teachers are assigned a mentor, who observe their teaching. Teachers are encouraged to share all their resources on the staff intranet so that they are available to all members of the faculty.

2.21 The College has supported the teaching of smaller cohorts of students, allowing students to develop to reach their academic potential and enabling staff to get to know their students as individuals. Furthermore, designing and maintaining separate discrete

foundation programmes with specific course modules helps to ensure students are adequately prepared for the degree courses they progress to. Lectures involve student interaction through problem-solving exercises, mini-debates and discussions; individual subject support sessions are available in all curriculum areas.

2.22 The College is involved in a collaborative teaching and learning partnership with five other northern Catholic Colleges to facilitate the sharing of good practice and further enhance the quality of teaching and learning and student learning experiences. Last year the College hosted a Teaching and Learning inset day for over 60 teachers from the north-west on a variety of topics.

2.23 The College collects and analyses student data to ensure a strategic approach and to enhance the student experience and achievement rates. Student retention data confirms that high levels are maintained and students are more than likely to progress onto the first year at the University. In end of year student surveys most students indicate that teaching is good. Students whom the review team met were positive about their recent experiences of teaching and learning.

2.24 The Medicine and Dentistry foundation programme uses a mix of didactic teaching and enquiry-based learning (EBL). The College delivers most of the A2-level content in biological sciences and chemistry. During time spent at the University, EBL is used to help students apply the knowledge gained in College to short clinical scenarios or cases that enable students to apply the relevant biomedical science. This combination of teaching methods is good preparation for entry to the main BDS and MBChB programmes.

2.25 The College has a clear commitment to developing the quality of teaching and learning. Higher education staff are well qualified, and clearly passionate about continuously developing their professional practice. The College's strategy for staff development captures and develops initiatives to improve the understanding, quality and consistency of higher education teaching and is a feature of good practice, so too is the extensive use of teaching observation. The Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

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

2.26 The College's strategic and operational approaches to enabling student development and achievement are expressed in the Strategic Development Plan 2013-16. Following the 2011 IQER, XUPC was established to manage all the University programmes and to discuss student feedback. This Committee reports to and is evaluated by the SMT, the University institutional review process and the STEM faculty SAR. Resource planning and decisions are made at SMT level based upon student numbers. Under the Partnership Agreement the College is required to provide, to a standard required by the University, academic staffing resources; adequate resources for staff development and support; and all facilities, services, procedures and an environment appropriate for the provision of the programme. These arrangements are intended to support the transition of learners to further study at the University and enable the College to meet the Expectation.

2.27 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's arrangements and resources by scrutinising documentation including student and staff guidance information, programme handbooks, the VLE, student survey results and the student written submission. The review team also met a range of academic and support staff and students.

2.28 Students registered for the foundation programmes have two inductions at the start of their study; the first is with the College and the second is with the University. Ex-students are invited to attend the induction for the Pharmacy and Medicine and Dentistry programmes. In addition, students have the opportunity to engage in tutorial sessions with University staff. Students confirmed that they use study areas at the University and they have full access to University resources; they do not differentiate between College and University but consider themselves to be University students.

2.29 Foundation programmes are the equivalent of a two year A Level syllabus in a single year, therefore students require high levels of staff contact and support. For this reason they are taught in classroom-sized groups of around 25 rather than in larger lecture-style settings. Students are given regular problem sheets for each of the subjects, exactly as they would do on the degree programme, and they are also required to sit end-of-Semester examinations. There is good progression from the foundation programmes to the University of Manchester (see Expectation B6 for further details).

2.30 The College provides a wide range of resources to support higher education students. Students have access to their own individual learning plan on the VLE and are also able to subscribe to any A Level material from other subjects delivered across the College. In addition to the comprehensive workbooks, students can access additional notes and presentations, including past A Level questions, through the College VLE. These resources are regularly reviewed by curriculum teams, support independent learning and statistical skill development, and support students outside of the classroom.

2.31 At the start of their course, students receive key textbooks and a free licensed copy of proprietary office software, available on up to five personal devices, which expires when their course is completed. The STEM faculty has six laboratories which are well equipped for practical work, and teaching and learning resources are good; all rooms have mounted projectors, networked computers with internet access and display boards. There is a good range of subject-specific textbooks supported by online learning and audiovisual resources.

Additionally there is a 'dry laboratory', a science resource room with nine computers, a maths resource room, a refurbished University common room and University computer base, and a lecture theatre for 60 students with a smart board. Students have access to the University VLE in addition to the College system.

2.32 The access to a wide range of learning materials and resources that enables students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential is **good practice**.

2.33 The College has robust processes for resource planning based on students' needs which have led to enhancements in social spaces, laboratories and IT resources for higher education students. The Assistant Principal for University Programmes has a budget specifically for higher education provision, which is largely committed to procuring texts and consumable learning materials for students.

2.34 Students on the foundation programmes are taught in separate cohort groups to engender a sense of higher education community. There is a dedicated common room, an IT and seminar room for University students and a range of advice and guidance services including accommodation, finance, welfare, and counselling. As students registered with the University, they can use all of the facilities that are available to other University students. This includes recreational and social facilities such as the Students' Union and Athletic Union, the academic support services and advice services, such as careers. Students have access to a wide range of personal support services, both at the University and the College, and the student handbooks provide signposting to the University's disability support team. Students also have access to the counselling services of the College and can access the Careers Service at the University.

2.35 All students are allocated a personal tutor to support them in their personal and academic development; Life Sciences students have a personal tutor at the College and at the University. The tutorial system at the College has been changed from whole group sessions to one-to-one tutorials. This adaption to the process has supported students in understanding what is expected of them and informing them of the various mechanisms of assessment, grading criteria and academic and pastoral support. Students have ready face-to-face access to their tutors as well as telephone and email contact details. Students whom the review team met confirmed they have a close and frequent relationship with personal tutors, and that teaching staff are accessible and approachable.

2.36 Students receive a Student Handbook containing information about College regulations, procedures, support systems and complaints procedures. Student Handbooks detail available resources and confirm that students have access to all the University facilities as well as those at the College.

2.37 Through student feedback, Life Sciences students requested more access to the University and this has been provided. There is now much more contact regarding the academic aspects of their programme, for example students now undertake practicals at the University which contribute to the final grade; as already mentioned the College teaches the foundation programmes in separate discrete subject groups to further develop a sense of community and belonging; and Life Sciences students now have a personal tutor at the University as well as at the College.

2.38 Overall, the review team considers that the College has effective arrangements to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. There is a clear commitment to enhancing the campus and the facilities available to both higher

education staff and students. The review team identified one feature of good practice regarding the access to a wide range of learning materials and resources. The Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

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

2.39 Foundation programme students are registered at the University, although they are additionally registered as students at the College. The University ensures that the foundation programme students have full opportunity to participate in its processes to engage with students, including the election of student representatives; student representative attendance and contribution to Staff Student Committees (SSCs); student feedback through the University's Student Barometer survey; student involvement in periodic reviews; and participation in module surveys to give direct feedback on their learning experience. In addition, the student voice is heard formally through student membership of school, faculty and University-level deliberative committees. The University's Student Charter applies to all its students, including those at the College, in which both student and provider responsibilities are defined. Through the principles adopted in the Charter, all students commit to engaging in the various processes to provide feedback to the institution.

2.40 In parallel to the University's own procedures for hearing the student voice, the College has its own internal mechanisms to engage directly and seek feedback from the foundation student community. The Assistant Principal for University Programmes and the University Programme Leader meet all students on arrival, emphasise their personal availability to all students and the importance of their regular timetabled one-to-one tutorials. Students are given the email addresses of all tutors and encouraged to use them whenever they feel necessary; a programme tutor is always available when students are in the Higher Education Common Room; the external examiners meet students each year, and give immediate feedback to the College; and the Principal and other senior staff regularly visit classes and conduct focus groups or hold meetings with students to personally solicit student views. Feedback gathered is discussed and actioned through the XUPC.

2.41 The mechanisms put in place to engage with students through the frameworks at the University and the less formal mechanisms at the College would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.42 The review team examined the effectiveness of the strategies and procedures in place to engage students by examining documentation including the College's Quality Strategy, student and programme regulation handbooks, details of the student representation systems, and minutes of relevant groups and committees. The review team also met teaching and support staff, senior staff, the Principal, students, and course representatives.

2.43 Discussions with staff and students demonstrated clearly that the opportunity for student representatives to make contributions, both as individuals and on behalf of their peers, to SSCs is widely promulgated and valued. Feedback emerging in SSC meetings is shared with the College, and where necessary, action is taken; for example clarification on the use of grading criteria was made available to remove confusion. Student representatives described the comprehensive training and other resources made available to them by the University, and explained how they have opportunities and are able to contribute to deliberative processes within the University faculty. In addition, those students who have personal tutors at the University find their meetings helpful.

2.44 The parallel College engagement mechanisms feed into the XUPC for action, and any matters of importance are taken forward to the College SMT. The review team learned, for example, of early action being taken to improve staff approaches to teaching in one subject area. Both students and staff find the timetabled one-to-one tutorials valuable, providing alternative paths for feedback to the College when student representatives may have found attendance at SSCs difficult to arrange. The College described how feedback from students led to revisions of the Medicine and Dentistry programme content to better prepare students for their enquiry-based learning at the University, and the review team heard that students had been consulted in the development of the College web presence and VLE.

2.45 The arrangements the College has put in place clearly work well and the University's periodic institutional reviews confirm that when students raise matters the College addresses them swiftly. However, the review team considers that the arrangements are largely reactive, with little sense of engaging with the students as partners in their education. Higher education students are not represented at the College Student Council, yet the College does not alternatively engage with the course representatives the students nominate for University SSC membership, and relies on the representatives to feed back any lessons identified from the SSCs. End-of-year student surveys clearly inform College action plans and initiate change, yet the foundation programme students are not formally made aware of changes initiated by feedback from either themselves or their predecessors. While the burden of a permanent student contribution to College deliberative processes might be too high for any one student on a one-year intensive programme, the College has not explored opportunities for higher education students to be engaged periodically at XUPC or the Board of Governors, in for example, reflecting upon the success of their programme or possible curriculum changes. The success of the Principal's learner voice meetings with students suggests that students might welcome greater opportunity to be engaged. The review team thus considers that the current arrangements for engaging with higher education students within the College might be further enhanced and **recommends** that the College develop a formal mechanism to inform students of actions taken in response to their feedback.

2.46 The review team concludes that in addition to students having full opportunity to provide feedback through the University's arrangements for student engagement, the College has a wide range of other mechanisms for their voice to be heard within the College. However, the review team considers that these could be more effective and recommends that the College develops a formal mechanism to inform students of actions taken in response to their feedback. Overall, despite the recommendation, the review team considers that the existing informal processes for feedback provide sufficient reassurance to judge that the Expectation is met, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.47 The arrangements for assessment of students on the foundation programmes are clearly defined within the Partnership Agreement between the University and the College, and are articulated in more detail in the associated procedural documents. The University retains the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of all credit and qualifications awarded in its name, operates the examination board associated with each programme, and appoints external examiners to oversee assessment.

2.48 The overarching University assessment regulations apply to all three foundation programmes with one approved minor variance to accommodate specific requirements for progression to the pharmacy degree. The Programme Regulation Handbooks signpost students to the University regulations, and directly identify key matters such as procedures for the consideration of mitigating circumstances, for referral and for the investigation of academic malpractice, appeals and complaints.

2.49 The University's Mitigating Circumstances Policy applies, and is implemented either through a joint University/College Mitigating Circumstances Committee, or through the Medicine and Dentistry Mitigating Circumstances Panel.

2.50 The University's regulations on academic malpractice apply to the foundation programmes and investigations would be undertaken by the University. In addition, University Fitness to Practice regulations apply to the Medicine and Dentistry students. The University's Health and Conduct Committee hears and determines outcomes in cases of suspected unprofessional behaviour or unsatisfactory conduct.

2.51 The setting, marking, moderation of assessment and feedback to students is delegated to the College, although in the Medicine and Dentistry programme the responsibility is shared due to the close and integrated relationship between the aspects of the programme delivered at the College and University. Thus, in Life Sciences and Pharmacy the College conducts all assessment activity, subject to the oversight of the University's external examiner.

2.52 The College has developed its own Assessment Policy which gives overarching guidance on assessment applying to all its provision, and gives the College contextual values and principles which complement the more detailed requirements of the University regulations.

2.53 The College's own values and principles for assessment and its approach to complying with the University assessment regulations would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.54 The review team considered the effectiveness of the policies and procedures by examining documentation such as the Assessment Policy, the University's assessment regulations, external examiner reports, annual SARs, and minutes of committees and

meetings that have a role in assessment. The review team also met with senior, and academic staff, and with students.

2.55 The College has a strategic and comprehensive approach to assessment, supporting its Assessment Policy with a range of staff development activities focused on assessment and close oversight of the design and grading of assessment instruments by senior staff. Criteria for success in coursework assignments are made explicit, and for examinations success is defined in terms of achievement of not only a passing grade, but an overall achievement sufficient to progress to further study at the University (see also Expectation A3.2 for further detail).

2.56 The review team learned that all coursework and examinations produced by College staff are moderated internally before being moderated by external examiners. Similarly, all completed assignments and examination scripts are internally second-marked and subsequently moderated by the external examiner. The process is tightly managed by the Assistant Principal for University Programmes, and coordinated in a timely manner through the XUPC. The process significantly exceeds the minimum requirements of the University and the expectations described within the College's Assessment Policy. The thorough internal moderation processes, including double-marking of all assessed work, which facilitates the security of assessment decisions, is **good practice**.

2.57 Students whom the review team met were generally positive regarding the timeliness of feedback on their work; it is returned well within the University's expectation of three working weeks. However, the value of feedback given for coursework was considered inconsistent. Where students are streamed into different classes, the detail of feedback varies considerably. In some classes feedback is negligible. Students confirmed that tutors are approachable, and one-to-one feedback is always available if required, although perhaps thereby negating the value of written feedback on the assignment. Coursework constitutes a small proportion of the overall assessment regime for all students: assessment is largely based on examinations that make up of 80 per cent of the final grade, and assessed coursework, which accounts for the remaining 20 per cent, often also includes a 10 per cent in-class test. In addition, students did not consider themselves disadvantaged by the lack of detailed assessment feedback in some instances, partly because they are on a one-year programme and perceive that they would not have the opportunity to improve their overall performance on the basis of such feedback. Staff acknowledged the variability experienced, and reported that the matter would be followed up.

2.58 Examination boards comprise College and University staff chaired by the University's Programme Director. Consideration of student performance is detailed, and there are opportunities for units to be reviewed, and improvements in delivery identified. There is no opportunity for students to claim any recognition of prior learning to exempt themselves from any aspect of their programme. External examiners consistently confirm that appropriate standards are being set, and that students are achieving them (see also Expectation B7 for further detail).

2.59 Achievement overall is good, both in terms of completion of the programme, and subsequent progression to the University. The University's most recent periodic review of the provision confirmed the excellent track record of the provision, and also confirmed that in the University's opinion, students were well prepared for their later study.

2.60 The College operates appropriate procedures that enable equitable, valid and reliable assessment. Procedures are detailed and well managed, and the thorough internal moderation processes including double-marking of all assessed work which facilitates the

security of assessment decisions represents a feature of good 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 (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.61 All three foundation programmes are led and operated directly by the University, which applies its own procedures and regulations for aspects of assessment to which the College contributes. The University appoints external examiners to critically evaluate and review assessment within these programmes, and a range of support material is made available to assist them in their role. An external examiner is appointed for each foundation programme; the practice is long-standing for the Life Sciences and Medicine and Dentistry programmes, although only recently introduced for the Pharmacy programme. Previously the College had used an 'internal external' (a retired member of College staff) to bring an independent perspective to moderation of assessment. The University seeks nominations for appointment from the College.

2.62 Externals are expected to comment on draft assessments and grading schemes, moderate the final marked scripts and attend the appropriate examination board. The College is required to give detailed consideration to the external examiners' feedback on the design of assessment instruments, and on their moderation of students' graded work. The external examiners' annual reports to the University are shared with the College, considered in Programme Management Committees, responses made, and any necessary action identified.

2.63 The College's own procedures and its adherence to those of the University would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.64 The review team examined the effectiveness of these procedures in practice by examining a range of documentation including external examiner reports, annual monitoring reports, and minutes of relevant meetings where reports are considered. It also held meetings with students, teaching and senior staff.

2.65 Staff confirm that the College engages actively and responsively with the external examiners, in the design of the assessment and also after grading has taken place. External examiners' reports are discussed in detail in the XUPC, shared with the programme team and subsequently inform the University's continuous annual monitoring process (see Expectation A3.3 for detail) and the College's own annual reflection. Scrutiny of Examination Board minutes revealed that some externals take the opportunity to meet students during their visits; their reports and comments at boards thus being more fully informed.

2.66 Annual reports from external examiners' reports are consistently positive. Responding to the reports is a shared responsibility between the University and the College. The College takes the lead in coordinating the response for the Life Sciences and Pharmacy programmes, the University for the Medicine and Dentistry programme.

2.67 Students are made aware of the role and importance of external examiners in their programme regulations and handbooks and are advised that they may meet their external examiner during their visits. Students also acknowledged that external examiners' reports for the Life Sciences and Pharmacy programmes are shared on the College VLE. The College understands that publication of the external examiner's report for the Medicine and Dentistry programme is not permitted due to the confidential engagement of professional regulatory bodies in the assessment process.

2.68 Overall, the contribution made by the external examiners is clear and well-embedded in the University's quality assurance systems. The College makes effective use of external examiners' reports in managing the foundation programmes. 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

2.69 All three foundation programmes are led and operated by the University, which calls upon the College to contribute to a greater or lesser extent in the delivery of the curriculum. In the case of the Medicine and Dentistry programme, the College delivers the theoretical aspects – approximately half of the programme material. For the Life Sciences and Pharmacy programmes the College took a leading role in the development of the programmes and delivers the curriculum, and is thus engaged fully in the day-to-day operation of the programme.

2.70 The University appoints a Programme Director for each foundation programme, and the College is well-represented on the University's various Programme Management Committees. In addition, to provide a focus for all higher education matters, the College, brings together senior staff associated with the foundation programmes in a Xaverian University Programmes Committee (XUPC).

2.71 The University's continuous monitoring process is implemented by its Programme Management Committees, with contributions from the College as required, and includes a focus on student support, teaching, learning and assessment, and periodic review (see Expectation A3.3 for detail).

2.72 In addition to its participation in the University's annual monitoring procedure, the College ensures that the foundation programmes are also embedded in its own annual monitoring process, described in its Quality Strategy. This enables the College to give emphasis to the consideration of the student experience as well as student achievement. The annual College self-assessment and quality improvement cycle requires all the College curriculum and service support areas to produce a reflective SAR. The experience of students is captured continuously by listening to the 'learner voice' in its various forms; for the foundation programme students, the student voice is quantified through an end-of-year student experience survey, and is contextualised by a variety of other communication channels (see Expectation B5 for detail). The faculty SARs inform a formal review meeting between the Principal and the Head of Faculty, following which the faculty annual action plan can be finalised.

2.73 The faculty and service area SARs are verified by a cross-College Audit Team. They are subsequently used in the generation of a consolidated College SAR and Quality Improvement Plan, which is endorsed by SMT and Governors.

2.74 University partnerships, and the programmes delivered therein, are reviewed in depth on a periodic basis, as described under Expectation A3.3. The foundation programmes delivered in partnership with the College were successfully reviewed in 2008 and 2014, and will be reviewed again in 2019.

2.75 The College's adherence and contribution to the University's processes for continuous monitoring and review, together with the consideration of higher education provision within its own annual monitoring procedures would enable it to meet the Expectation.

2.76 The review team tested the effectiveness of the procedures by examining documentation including annual monitoring and institutional review reports, minutes of programme committee and other relevant meetings, external examiner reports, academic regulations, and partnership agreements. The review team also met leadership and teaching staff from the College and the University, and students.

2.77 The University's two reviews of the partnership between itself and the College were successful, the latest being in 2014. This led to an extension of the partnership until 2019 and recommended the introduction of a central College deliberative coordinating group to bring a focus to foundation programme matters. The College accepted the recommendation and, in response to this and the last QAA review, established the XUPC. The reports judged that student achievement was high, that the College provided an excellent and supportive learning environment, and that by focusing on small group teaching the students were extremely well-prepared for progression to the University.

2.78 Scrutiny of meeting records and discussions with staff and students confirmed that student representatives contribute to, and College staff comprehensively engage with, the University's continuous monitoring processes (see Expectation A3.3 for detail).

2.79 While the College's higher education programmes form a relatively small part of its entire provision, all three foundation programmes reside within the College's STEM faculty, headed by the Assistant Principal for University Programmes, and thus attract particular attention within the self-assessment cycle. The SARs are carefully structured in a template to address among other aspects student achievement, the quality of teaching and learning, student self-development, and the quality of teaching.

2.80 There is no separate SAR for the College's higher education provision; higher education matters are embedded in the various curriculum areas and STEM faculty SARs. The SARs, taken together with the Principal's review with the Head of the STEM faculty, reveal that despite the good record of student success, the faculty aspires to improve both achievement and student experience, and this is clearly reflected in the faculty action plans. Furthermore, data and information from the faculty SAR and the Principal's review informs and contextualises the Assistant Principal for University Programmes' contributions to the three University Programme Management Committees; the faculty SAR thus providing a common source of information for both the University and College quality processes. Although the College SAR reports contain little reference to the higher education provision, reflecting the successful outcomes and relatively minor matters highlighted for action at faculty level, the Principal reports routinely on higher education matters to the Board of Governors.

2.81 The College adopts a comprehensive approach to listening to the learner voice (see Expectation B5 for detail), and these messages contribute widely within the various SARs. That apart, there is no other involvement of the higher education student community in the College's annual monitoring or deliberative processes.

2.82 The review team considers that the College is operating effectively in accordance with the requirements of the University, playing a full and proactive part in the annual monitoring and periodic review processes. In addition, the College operates an internal annual self-assessment process which oversees the quality of student learning opportunities. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.83 The arrangements for handling appeals and complaints from students on the foundation programmes are clearly defined within the partnership agreement between the University and the College, and articulated in more detail within the associated procedural documents. In all cases, the University's procedures for complaints and appeals are applied. The University retains complete responsibility for instigating and managing academic appeals, the College and University share responsibility for complaints where personal tutor relationships, SSCs or the course leadership might provide appropriate vehicles for student concerns to be considered.

2.84 These arrangements would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

2.85 The review team tested the effectiveness of the procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints by examining programme regulations and handbooks, the University's complaints and appeals procedures, and information on the University website. The review team also held meetings with teaching and support staff, and students.

2.86 Students and staff confirmed that while the programme regulations give clear information on appeal and complaints procedures through links directly to the appropriate University regulations, students would more than likely seek advice from their personal tutor or Xaverian Programme Leader; they were confident that appropriate advice would be given. Staff experience suggests that any minor complaints concerning the foundation programmes would be initially addressed by the Assistant Principal for University Programmes. Any serious complaints would be referred immediately to the University. Students are aware that they may raise matters directly with the University Programme Director and have their contact details in their handbook.

2.87 Formal appeals and complaints have been so few in number over the lifetime of the partnership that trend analysis is impossible; a summary of the matters considered was made available to reviewers – none pertained to matters within the College's purview, all related to the application of University procedures or regulations.

2.88 Notwithstanding that the numbers of appeals and complaints has hitherto been small, and that as University students, complainants and appellants would have access to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) through the University, the College has joined the OIA scheme in its own right.

2.89 The University applies its own procedures for complaints or appeals to all students on the foundation programmes. College staff and students have a clear understanding of the procedures or where to find the information should they require it. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.90 The College does not manage higher education provision with others, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

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

2.91 The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.93 The College works very closely with its degree-awarding body and has no involvement in admissions, recruitment or selection of students. It has no research provision and does not manage higher education provision with others. All relevant Expectations pertaining to the quality of learning opportunities are met and all associated levels of risk are low.

2.94 The review team has identified four areas of good practice and makes one recommendation to the College; there are no affirmations. The good practice includes extensive opportunities for staff development, the regular and varied programme of teaching observations, the access that students have to a wide range of learning materials and resources, and thorough internal moderation processes. The review team recommends that the College develops a formal mechanism to inform students of actions taken in response to their feedback.

2.95 Overall the College has effective policies, processes and frameworks to ensure that the quality of the student learning experience is well managed and resourced. It has a strong and productive working relationship with its degree-awarding body and uses the University's academic frameworks and regulations appropriately and effectively, as well its own internal mechanisms, to manage quality.

2.96 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **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 marketing of the foundation programmes is the responsibility of the University and at its request the College does not publish any promotional material on these programmes. In addition students do not achieve any award of credit at the end of the foundation programme and there is therefore no transcript or certificate issued. The University is responsible for all information provided for external audiences and the College only has responsibility for the provision of information internally.

3.2 The College seeks approval from the University before producing the Regulations and Specifications Handbooks for the Life Sciences and Pharmacy programmes. These are annually updated by the Assistant Principal for University Programmes during the summer and forwarded to the University for verification and updating of the University's contribution. The handbooks are distributed to the students at registration and are also placed on the University and the College VLE. These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.3 To test the effectiveness of processes for the provision of internal information, the review team considered the College website, student and staff VLE, the staff shared drive and policy documents. Meetings were held with College and University staff and students.

3.4 Students confirmed that they receive detailed handbooks which allows them to prepare well for their programme of study. They also confirmed that information available to them as prospective students, once they had applied to the University and been offered a place, was detailed, fit for purpose, constituted an accurate reflection of their programme and prepared them well for progression to the University.

3.5 Information on the quality of higher education teaching and learning is generated from SSC meetings, annual STEM faculty SARs, end-of-year surveys and informal discussions between University staff and students. Staff have access to quality assurance documentation, regulations handbooks, the Quality Strategy, the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy and minutes of governing body meetings on the shared staff drive and staff intranet.

3.6 Students receive detailed programme information in the Life Sciences and Pharmacy specification and regulations handbooks including the programme structure, information on student induction and support, and a curriculum map of course modules against intended programme learning outcomes. Students registered on the Medicine and Dentistry foundation programme receive a Student Handbook which provides detailed information on key policies and procedures, and acts as a source of reference for students, signposting them to answers for any queries they may have. It also includes module timetables, the structure of the programme, intended programme learning outcomes, assessment details, and information on student support and resources. On registration with the University students also receive the University of Manchester Crucial Guide which contains further detailed information relating to University regulations, student support and services, accommodation, students' health service and careers. Support services

information is available to students in handbooks, on the student VLE and at induction. Some students whom the review team met commented that the current VLE does not create a sense of higher education community and is mainly set up for further education students. The College intends to review and update the VLE to improve the experience for all students, including those on foundation programmes, and intends to include students in the redesign process.

3.7 The College keeps records of student attendance and provides this to the University annually as required by the agreement. Attendance of students is recorded on the College information system and students can monitor their own attendance record. The results of all formative and summative tests are recorded centrally on a spreadsheet so that the personal tutors and teachers can monitor the progress of individual students in all their course modules. This enables informed discussions with students and signposting to academic support sessions as required.

3.8 The review team found that the College has effective arrangements to ensure that students have access to information on their programme of study and support services at the College and the University, and that the information provided is fit for purpose and accurately reflects foundation programmes. The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.10 The College is responsible for the provision of information about learning opportunities to prospective students once they have applied to the University and been offered a place on a programme with a foundation year at the College; to current students; and to staff with responsibility for maintaining standards and assuring quality. The University is responsible for public information and for the provision of information to completing students.

3.11 The review team makes no recommendations or affirmations to the College and has not identified any features of good practice. The information provided by the College is fit for purpose, trustworthy and accessible. Students and staff have good access to information on the College VLE and staff shared drives. Students are provided with comprehensive handbooks containing details about programmes of study, modules and regulations. Handbooks are either developed in collaboration with the University or seen, updated and approved by them. Staff confirmed they understand the quality assurance processes and know where to find relevant information.

3.12 The review team concludes that the quality of information about learning opportunities at the College **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 College's Three Year Strategic Development Plan 2013-16 places the 'delivery of outstanding education within...programmes that are responsive to the needs and interests of the individual' high in its aims and strategic objectives. The plan further develops a range of detailed targets against which Governors will measure performance, including a requirement to annually review the quality of student experience on the foundation programmes, giving challenging completion and progression targets, and setting high expectations for the quality of observed teaching. Enhancement of the quality of student learning opportunities is thus a central aspect within the College's mission, which resonates with the College's formal agreement with the University expecting each institution to take responsibility for enhancement.

4.2 In response to its last QAA review and the University's 2014 institutional partnership review, the College has established the XUPC through which the three foundation programmes are managed. This was a deliberate step, in part, to enable programme teams to share the College's higher education agenda as well as engendering a culture of enhancement across the teaching staff.

4.3 The College Quality Strategy sets out the institutionally led quality cycle through which curriculum areas and faculties are required to reflect on student achievement and the quality of student learning opportunities (see Expectation B8 for further detail). The development of the Institutional Quality Improvement Plan enables year-on-year progress against institutional targets to be tracked, and the detail of the SARs is informed using evidence drawn from a wide range of mechanisms to capture the learner voice (see Expectation B5 for detail); student feedback from the University SSCs (see Expectation B5 for detail); senior staff learner walks, teaching observations and staff appraisal (see Expectation B3 for detail).

4.4 The College also provides a range of opportunities for staff experience to be shared. Structured, albeit self-directed, learning communities of staff are encouraged to explore the applications of different pedagogies, weekly College-wide short staff meetings are used to share staff experience, and half-termly staff meetings take place to communicate information and share good practice. On a wider front, the College was instrumental in establishing a group of colleges to facilitate the sharing of good practice and further enhance the quality of teaching and learning, and participates in a number of other similar networks. The College has hosted network events and routinely sends staff to participate in others (see Expectation B3, paragraph 2.22 for further detail).

4.5 The College's strategies and procedures would allow this Expectation to be met.

4.6 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the strategies and procedures by examining the Strategic Development Plan, meeting minutes, SARs and other documents relating to the quality assurance and enhancement processes. The team also met the Principal, senior and academic staff, and students.

4.7 Discussions with staff revealed that while the College does not have a formal enhancement strategy, a culture of continuous improvement pervades its approach to learning, teaching and the student experience. The annual resource planning cycle is

focused in part on enhancement of the learning environment, with priorities agreed at SMT. The significant investment since the last QAA review in social spaces, laboratories, IT resources and the physical infrastructure for higher education students demonstrate the importance the College associates with the foundation programmes. The multiple mechanisms for hearing the student voice ensure that matters needing urgent consideration are swiftly brought to the attention of senior staff, and students confirmed that action would invariably be taken.

4.8 Staff explained that opportunities for their professional development, both pedagogic and discipline based, were identified as a matter of course during teaching observations and the annual appraisal process. In addition, other opportunities regularly became available on an opportunity basis. Staff could not recall a reasonable request or opportunity being refused. The opportunities for internal staff development were identified as being particularly helpful and responsive to staff need and support the good practice identified in Expectation B3.

4.9 More formally, the College's systematic gathering of student feedback informs the development of the annual SARs and discussions at the XUPC, the College's SMT meetings and the three University Programme Management Committee meetings. This frequently leads to the College and the University improving the provision. Examples cited include changes in module content and mode of delivery to better prepare Medicine and Dentistry students for the style of learning (enquiry-based learning – EBL) used at the University, the development and enhancement of the VLE, reduction in class sizes, the introduction of streamed classes, and changes to the assessment regime. In the words of students 'The staff constantly strive to improve the course...and achieve a concise and rich delivery...'.

4.10 Overall, the College has effective processes for the management and quality assurance of its higher education courses, and these provide appropriate frameworks for enhancement of the student learning experience. Therefore the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.12 The College has a culture of continuous improvement exemplified through its focus on the learner voice, the quality cycle which encompasses higher education provision, and the extensive opportunities for staff development. Although there is no enhancement strategy there are multiple mechanisms for hearing the student voice, sharing good practice and engaging in internal and external networks and learning communities. The College's strong links with its awarding body partner further support the development and enhancement of the foundation programmes.

4.13 The review team makes no recommendations or affirmations to the College and has not identified any specific features of good practice. There is a link to the good practice in staff development identified in Expectation B3 that contributes to the College's enhancement activities. Deliberate steps are being taken at College level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacy

Findings

5.1 The College has for some time been regarded as an early adopter of technology within the learning environment. It has played a significant role in promoting the use of technology in teaching and learning through its role as a mentor in good practice for the development and implementation of innovative learning technologies coordinated by the Technology Exemplar Network; a network supported by the Learning and Skills Council and the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA).

5.2 It received the Colleges 'Next Generation Learning Award' from BECTA in 2010 in recognition of its work developing its own bespoke VLE/MLE (managed learning environment). The award recognised the provision of flexible tools for college administration, course management, student support, and learning development. The Assistant Principal Resources was subsequently acknowledged as 'Innovator of the Year' by JISC Northwest Regional Support Centre.

5.3 The College has invested significantly in information technology resources since the 2011 IQER, and has achieved some prominence for its VLE developments. All higher education teaching spaces have interactive whiteboards, full wireless access and in specific locations, a TV to enable the use of tablets and smart phones in lesson delivery. The College plays a leading role in promoting the use of technology in teaching and learning and continues to actively engage with JISC.

5.4 The continued investment in creating a technology-enabled learning environment has catalysed and encouraged the use of information technology in teaching, with staff regularly making use of embedded interactive, video and audio material. These not only enliven the learning experience, but open greater resource for students in their own time. Collaboration with an alumnus, now a student at the University, has facilitated the successful interactive use of tablets in the classroom, and as a result further investment in tablet technology is planned.

5.5 The College continues to support these developments by committing an increasing proportion of staff development funds and time to enhancing digital literacy. As examples, this has included 'hands-on' training in the use of mobile devices and applications in the classroom, and in-house workshops in which staff experience embedding digital literacy in the curriculum.

5.6 All higher education students have access to a complete suite of proprietary office software, available on up to five personal devices. This enables students to remotely access any College teaching resource and the range of electronic resources provided by the library.

5.7 The College 'aspires to introduce innovative technologies to both support and inspire learning'. Staff are encouraged to make appropriate use of social media both in their teaching and to support students, and associated procedural protection has been put in place to safeguard both staff and students.

Glossary

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

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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