Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of The University of Nottingham International College

March 2018

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd, The University of Nottingham International College. The review took place from 13 to 14 March 2018 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Ms Brenda Eade
- Mrs Catherine Fairhurst.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provision and to make judgements as to whether or not 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 (Embedded Colleges) 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
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

A check is also made on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) with the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA[2] and explains the method for Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges).[3] For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.
[3] Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges):
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/higher-education-review.

Key findings

Judgements

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the College **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice**.

- The extensive and systematic support provided for tutors to embed technology in teaching and learning in line with the Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy (Expectation B3).
- The close working relationship with the University, which ensures the smooth progression of students to their chosen programme and allows staff to access resources and development opportunities within the University (Expectation B4).
- The allocation and organisation of specific roles to student representatives, which supports the enhancement of the student experience (Expectation B5).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations**.

By September 2018:

- work with external examiners to ensure that they include in their reports more detailed informative comment on the outcomes of assessment (Expectation B7).

By December 2018:

- ensure that the membership of the College's deliberative committees, the frequency of meetings and the format of minutes are in line with the terms of reference, to facilitate full staff and student participation in the governance of the College (Expectation A2.1)
- ensure that annual monitoring reports are effectively considered by the appropriate committees and that staff views contribute formally to the process (Expectation B8).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team did not affirm any actions already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students.

Financial sustainability, management and governance

The financial sustainability, management and governance check has been satisfactorily completed.

About the provider

The University of Nottingham International College (the College) is an embedded College which is part of the Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd (KIC) pathways framework, branded as Kaplan International Pathways, operating in partnership with the University of Nottingham. Students who achieve the progression requirements agreed with the University are able to proceed directly to a programme at the University.

Kaplan International Pathways aims to deliver world-leading pathway programmes designed specifically to meet the needs of international students primarily based outside the EU. Kaplan Pathways programmes prepare international students to progress to university and are designed in close collaboration with partner universities. Programmes incorporate study skills, English language, transferable skills and discipline-specific academic modules for the programme to which students wish to progress.

Kaplan International Pathways has nine Colleges across the UK. The majority of the Colleges are linked to a single partner University but Kaplan International College London offers progression to several universities.

Kaplan International Pathways has established a Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ). CLIQ is primarily based in Nottingham and Liverpool with virtual team presence across all colleges and, together with colleges, has responsibility across all the Kaplan Pathways colleges for academic development and enhancement and for coordinating quality assurance.

This was the first QAA review of the College. KIC underwent a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) - HER (EC) - at provider level in 2016, with positive outcomes (including commended judgements for information and enhancement). QAA has recently reviewed other KIC Colleges (University of Brighton International College, Bournemouth University International College, Glasgow International College, Liverpool International College, Nottingham Trent International College, the University of the West of England, Bristol's International College and Kaplan International College London), with positive outcomes. The HER (EC) visit to the College was one of three (the others being the University of West of England, Bristol's International College and Bournemouth University International College) which took place during March and April 2018.

The College opened in January 2017 and at the time of the HER visit had therefore been operational for 14 months. It offers two foundation certificate programmes: in Business, Law and Social Sciences and in Science. It also offers pre-master's programmes in Business, Law and Social Sciences; and Science and Engineering. At the time of the review visit there were around 340 students studying at the College.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the provider

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 offers two Foundation Certificate programmes in Business, Law and Social Sciences and in Science. It also offers pre-master's programmes in Business, Law and Social Sciences; and Science and Engineering. The length of the programme varies from two to four terms, depending largely on the English language ability of the students.

1.2   Kaplan International Pathways is responsible for ensuring that the pathway qualifications offered by the College are positioned at the appropriate levels, named in accordance with the conventions of the relevant framework, and that learning outcomes align with the relevant qualifications descriptors.

1.3   Kaplan International Pathways has a Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) which includes its own qualifications framework. The credit point framework which is part of the QAF is used for the award of pathway qualifications. The QAF maps to the relevant UK credit and qualifications frameworks, links to Subject Benchmark Statements and specifies the characteristic outcomes for each of the awards. The procedures for programme design and development are set out in the Kaplan International Pathways Academic Standards and Quality Manual (ASQM), Chapter 2.

1.4   The processes for aligning qualifications to the appropriate framework, for the award of credit, and for referencing Subject Benchmark Statements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.5   To test the operation of these arrangements the review team scrutinised a range of documentation relating to academic standards and quality assurance, including the QAF, the ASQM, programme documentation (programme and module specifications) and an example of a programme approval process. The review team also met staff from the College, the University and Kaplan International Pathways.

1.6   The review team found that the programmes delivered by the College conform to the Kaplan International Pathways qualifications framework (QAF) and are developed in accordance with the procedures set out in the ASQM. The University has an input into programme design through the Joint Academic Board (JAB), providing a further external reference point for the qualifications. This ensures that the College pathways are designed to enable students to progress to the relevant University programme.

1.7   The Foundation Certificate programmes are aligned to level 3 of the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), which enables students to enter level 4 of the relevant undergraduate programmes at the University. The pre-master's programmes are aligned with level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and provide the necessary entry criteria for the University's postgraduate programmes. Full details of the progression arrangements that apply to particular cohorts are set out in summary sheets for autumn and spring.

1.8   Programme specifications define the content and structure of the programme and indicate that the qualifications are positioned at the appropriate level. External reference points including subject benchmarks are used. Both credit and non-credit bearing modules are identified within the structure of the programme.

1.9   The recently introduced Kaplan International Pathways Specification Management System provides an effective and secure system for maintaining up-to-date programme specifications and for tracking any changes to them.

1.10   The review team concludes that the programmes are aligned to the relevant framework and are set at the appropriate level, and that learning outcomes reflect the descriptors for that level and take account of Subject Benchmark Statements. Kaplan International Pathways awards qualifications to indicate the achievement of programme learning outcomes. Kaplan International Pathways has comprehensive and detailed processes for securing academic standards, which are adhered to by the College. 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   Kaplan International Pathways has overall responsibility for governance and for managing academic standards and quality. This is effected through the Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQC) which usually meets four times per year. The Academic Standards Quality of Programmes Report, which takes an overview of Annual Programme Reports (APRs) from all colleges, is considered by APQC and enables Kaplan International Pathways to monitor academic standards across all its international pathway colleges.

1.12   The Governance Framework, which includes management and committee structures established by Kaplan International Pathways, provides clear lines of responsibility and reporting. It sets out the roles and membership of the key committees for all embedded colleges.

1.13   College Directors report to the Director of Colleges based at Kaplan Headquarters in London. Committee structures are standardised across Colleges, with some local variations to conform to the respective university requirements. The committees include JAB, Joint Strategic Board (JSB), APQC, New Product Development and Approvals Group (NPDAG), Business Approval Group for Programme Developments (BAGPD), Senior Management Team (SMT) and Programme Committee.

1.14   Policies and procedures for the maintenance and management of academic standards and quality are set out in the QAF and the ASQM. These include assessment regulations, and make provision for assessment boards to confirm the achievement of the learning outcomes for the award of qualifications.

1.15   The centralised policies and procedures, together with the governance and management structures, which provide a transparent and comprehensive framework for the award of credit and qualifications, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.16   To test the operation of these arrangements the review team scrutinised a range of documentation including the terms of reference and minutes of the committees referred to in paragraph 1.13, the Annual Programme Report for 2016-17 and sections of the Academic Standards and Quality of Programmes Report (ASQP). The review team also met staff from the College, the University, and Kaplan International Pathways.

1.17   The review team found that the staffing structure of the College aligns with the central structures of Kaplan International Pathways providing clear lines of reporting on quality and standards at the operational level. The College Director has overall responsibility for all aspects of the student experience and standards. The Academic Director is responsible for the delivery of the curriculum and for managing academic staff. The Head of College services is responsible for student services including student support and reports to the College Director.

1.18   The College has implemented the standard Kaplan International Pathways committee structure. The JAB (which is chaired by a member of the University) has oversight of standards and monitors the progression of students from Kaplan International Pathways

onto the relevant University Programme. It helps to ensure that there is a close relationship between the University and the College. The JSB has met twice and considers the key performance indicators and strategic issues such as marketing and recruitment. The SMT monitors the performance of the College, including standards and quality, at the operational level

1.19   The review team found that, although there are frequent meetings with students, there has been only one meeting of the Programme Committee. This is contrary to the Terms of Reference set out in the Kaplan International Pathways Governance Framework which state that normally the committee will meet once per term. Staff indicated that there are separate Programme Committees for each pathway, but the minutes of the meeting refer to all pathways, and do not record who attended the meeting nor do they provide full details of the discussion which took place. Furthermore, the APR has not been considered by the Programme Committee (further discussed in Expectation B8).The review team **recommends** that the College ensures that the membership of the deliberative committees, the frequency of meetings and the format of minutes are in line with the terms of reference, to facilitate full staff and student participation in the governance of the College.

1.20   Although there is a minor weakness in the implementation of programme committees, as outlined above, the centralised structures for governance and the rigorous monitoring of standards and quality by Kaplan International Pathways through its deliberative committees provides a transparent and effective framework for the award of credit. Through the JAB the University is able to confirm that appropriate governance and regulatory structures are in place. 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

1.21   Kaplan International Pathways has developed templates for programme and module specifications that enable definitive information to be recorded for each award including the programme structure, indicative content and assessment. These are aligned to Kaplan International Pathways' Qualifications Framework, which maps to the relevant UK qualifications frameworks and is used for the purposes of the award of credit and qualifications as defined in the programme specifications.

1.22   The arrangements in place for maintenance of definitive records, including the templates and systems provided by Kaplan International Pathways for recording programme content and the approval and amendment of programmes, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.23   The review team tested the operation of these arrangements through scrutiny of a range of documentation relating to the award of qualifications to students (including programme and module specifications, transcripts and records of changes to programmes). The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University.

1.24   The review team found that the programme specifications for the College are clearly set out on the Kaplan International Pathways' templates, make reference to the UK Quality Code, and are mapped to the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements for the University pathway to which they provide progression. Programme specifications set out the learning outcomes for the programme and for the constituent modules and specify the means by which these are delivered and assessed.

1.25   The College has clearly defined agreements with the University of Nottingham that enable students to progress to the designated University programme upon successful completion of their pathway. College programmes are developed in consultation with the University of Nottingham through the JAB. All new programmes and any changes to programmes are approved by APQC. Minor modifications are approved by the Programme Committee in consultation with the SMT.

1.26   Kaplan International Pathways has recently audited its programme specifications and these are now stored on the intranet - KI Connect, which provides secure storage and central access to definitive programme documents.

1.27   Overall responsibility for the award of credit and qualifications rests with Kaplan International Pathways. Records of study/transcripts, confirming the achievement of the learning outcomes and listing the modules studied, are provided for students upon successful completion of their programme.

1.28   There are detailed systems established by Kaplan International Pathways, which are effectively used by the College for making awards to students following successful achievement of the learning outcomes for their programmes. There is central monitoring

and oversight of these processes by Kaplan International Pathways. 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

1.29   The QAF and the Curriculum Development Process define Kaplan International Pathways' principles of programme design and approval. The key focus of the Approval Group (NPDAG) is on the outcomes of the Product Review (Kaplan International Pathways' review of its offering). BAGPD and NPDAG consider any marketing, recruitment, financial, academic and compliance implications of new or changed programme proposals. The QAF maps academic frameworks to undergraduate and postgraduate awards. Kaplan International Pathways uses the RQF and FHEQ as the external reference points for the QAF. Kaplan International Pathways' intranet, with all staff access, contains links to appropriate QAA Subject Benchmark Statements. Academic approval takes place through the APQC and by the JAB at College level. The ASQM describes the process for the approval of taught programmes. The College has responsibility for implementing these processes. There is a formal procedure for course closure.

1.30   Kaplan International Pathways has designed programme approval procedures to ensure that academic standards are set at a level that meets UK threshold standards and are in accordance with relevant academic frameworks and regulations. The arrangements in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.31   The review team tested the operation of these arrangements through scrutiny of a range of documentation relating to quality, including programme approval documents and minutes of College meetings. The review team also met staff of the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University.

1.32   The College's action plan clearly identifies programme development and approval processes. A recent example of programme approval and documentation for the new arts and humanities pathway on the Business, Law and Social Sciences Foundation Certificate demonstrates that the processes described above operate effectively and as intended. Kaplan International Pathways and the College pay strict attention to standards throughout the preparation and approval of new programmes. Kaplan International Pathways has designed and the College applies programme approval policies and processes to ensure the alignment of content and assessment with the UK threshold standards contained within the FHEQ. The minutes show that the JAB, chaired by the University gives formal academic approval to confirm that the programme prepares students effectively for future University study.

1.33   The external examiner's report template requires a comment on the alignment of the level of the award with the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. The external examiner's first report in 2017 identifies that this area is satisfactory.

1.34   The review team concludes that the application of Kaplan International Pathways' policies and processes for programme approval ensures that academic standards are set at

a level which meets UK threshold standards in accordance with relevant academic frameworks and regulations. 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

1.35   The APQC is responsible for monitoring the consistency of academic quality and comparability of standards across all Kaplan Pathways Colleges. The Kaplan Graduate Performance at Host Partner Universities report and the annual report on the ASQP report presented to APQC compare the performance and progression rates of student cohorts, modules, programmes and colleges. This level of analysis contributes to the assuring of academic standards.

1.36   The programme approval procedures consider learning outcomes and their assessment to ensure alignment with threshold standards. Programme and module specifications state the programme learning outcomes that are defined in the QAF. The ASQM details Kaplan International Pathways' assessment principles and regulations. A college Assessment Board ensures the award of credit is awarded only where both UK threshold standards and Kaplan International Pathways' academic standards have been satisfied. Kaplan International Pathways provides a guide for colleges on establishing alternative assessment arrangements for students with disabilities.

1.37   The College is responsible for securing academic standards through setting, marking, moderation and feedback of all assessment except for the centrally managed English Language Exit module.

1.38   The policies and regulations in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.39   To test the operation of these arrangements the review team considered a range of evidence (including programme and module specifications, Kaplan International Pathways' quality manuals and the external examiners' reports). The review team also met staff from the College and the University.

1.40   The College undertakes assessment according to Kaplan International Pathways' assessment principles and regulations. The external examiner's report confirms that the learning outcomes are satisfactorily in accordance with the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.41   Students are able to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes through varied modes of assessment. Assessment briefs clearly define grading criteria. The clearly expressed Student Facing Assessment Rules and Regulations document is available on the virtual learning environment (VLE) and students say they are also made aware of the regulations by their tutors.

1.42   A formally constituted Assessment Board decides outcomes for each student. This is chaired by the Academic Director and attended by the external examiner and the College

Director, which ensures consistency. The minutes demonstrate that student achievement is calibrated relative to the threshold standard consistently and systematically.

1.43   The College is able to make appropriate reasonable adjustments to assessment modes where required to avoid the risk of disadvantage to students with protected characteristics (examples were provided of extra time, a separate examination room and provision of a laptop).

1.44   The review team concludes that the students' achievement of the learning objectives of their programme is demonstrated through assessment. These decisions are reached through the formally constituted assessment boards. 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

1.45   Kaplan International Pathways' ASQM provides the framework for the monitoring and review of programmes to ensure the colleges achieve appropriate academic standards. The Programme Leader drafts an APR which is approved by the College Programme Committee and received by the College SMT, the JAB, the external examiner and CLIQ. Using the APRs, CLIQ then compiles the Kaplan International Pathways' annual Academic Standards and Quality of Programme Report (ASQP) for the APQC, the College Executive Management Board (CEMB) and the Kaplan International Pathways SMT. Through the ASQP, Kaplan International Pathways measures student achievement against internal, UK and international reference points. A Periodic Programme Review Report (PPRR) is completed by the colleges once every five years for the APQC and the JAB. Any changes arising from the Product Review will be implemented in 2019-20.

1.46   The policies and procedures detailed in the ASQM allow Kaplan International Pathways and the colleges to explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required to progress to the host university are being maintained. The arrangements in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.47   The review team tested the operation of these arrangements through scrutiny of a range of documentation on the framework and its associated processes including the ASQM, JAB minutes and the APRs. The review team also met staff of the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University.

1.48   The College implements Kaplan International Pathways' processes for the monitoring of programmes to maintain academic standards. The Academic Director produced the College's first APRs in 2017 within Kaplan International Pathways' standard template. This contains detailed programme quality and enhancement activities, qualitative and quantitative data including success and challenges, student achievement and performance, student and external examiner feedback. It is still too early for students' academic achievements at the University to be included in the monitoring process; however, for these early cohorts there has been sufficient oversight of academic standards through student achievement data, by the JAB, chaired by the University, the link tutors and the Link Operational Group (LOG). There is strategic oversight by Kaplan International Pathways through CLIQ and the APQC.

1.49   The documentary evidence and discussion with College staff confirmed that the College has in place processes of programme monitoring that address the students' achievement of threshold academic standards and those required for progression to University.

1.50   Through the application of Kaplan International Pathways' policies and procedures there are appropriate monitoring and review processes in place to assure academic standards. 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

1.51   Kaplan International Pathways has recently revised its procedures for programme development to include external involvement in the setting and maintaining of academic standards and the curriculum development processes. This is described in the new External Review Guidelines document. External review evidence is an element in the curriculum change proposal forms submitted to APQC. Kaplan International Pathways expects colleges to ensure curriculum changes and new programme proposals are evidence-based and have received an appropriate level of external scrutiny.

1.52   External examiners are members of the Assessment Boards and submit written reports. Partner universities, through their chairing of the JABs and the role of link tutors, also contribute significant external expertise to the programmes, which are approved by Kaplan International Pathways and endorsed by the university.

1.53   Kaplan International Pathways achieves additional external referencing through the RQF, FHEQ, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA).

1.54   The arrangements in place, including the partnership with the University and the regulatory and policy framework of Kaplan International Pathways, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.55   The review team tested the operation of these arrangements by scrutinising a range of documentation, including documentation and guidance in the Kaplan International Pathways ASQM and the policies and regulations relating to approval, monitoring, review and the role of external examiners, minutes of meetings and external examiners reports. The review team also held meetings with staff of the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University.

1.56   The College demonstrates external and independent expertise at key stages of the quality processes, mainly through the University, the new programme approval procedures and external examiners. The University has appropriate and robust oversight of academic standards through the JAB and the link tutors and the Link Operational Group. The minutes of JAB and JSB demonstrate that the College uses the externality of the University in a systematic way.

1.57   Kaplan International Pathways introduced the External Review Guidelines after the validation of the College's programmes but there is evidence to show that there had been external contribution to recent programme modifications. The College gains further external expertise through employing business practitioners in the delivery and assessment of programmes.

1.58   The external examiners are members of the Assessment Boards and provide impartial advice and recommendations as to whether the assessments demonstrate that academic standards are achieved. Their reports confirm that programmes adhere to relevant professional and regulatory standards and benchmarks.

1.59   The review team concludes that there are appropriate procedures for the use of external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards for the College's programmes. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the provider: Summary of findings

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

1.61   All Expectations in this area are met and the associated level of risk is low in all cases.

1.62   The College has appropriate procedures for ensuring academic standards, which are aligned with Kaplan International Pathways policies and procedures. There are effective arrangements in place for the management of the quality of programmes, in partnership with the University.

1.63   There is one recommendation in this judgement area, in Expectation A2.1, that the College should ensure that the membership of the deliberative committees, the frequency of meetings and the format of minutes are in line with the terms of reference, to facilitate full staff and student participation in the governance of the College.

1.64   The review team found that there was some lack of clarity about the number of programme committees and the frequency of meetings, and that the minutes of the programme committee meeting that had taken place lacked formality and detail. The recommendation concerns minor oversights in the College's governance arrangements which do not present any serious risks to the management of academic standards.

1.65   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by 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   Kaplan International Pathways' SMT has strategic oversight of programme design, development and approval through the NPDAG and the BAGPD. The central processes are in the QAF and ASQM as described in Expectation A3.1.

2.2   APQC takes the final decision on programme and module approval and significant modifications. To ensure consistency between colleges the QAF defines learning outcomes for each level of programme together with an analysis of graduate attributes. Kaplan International Pathways is currently undertaking a Product Review, and changes as a result of this will be introduced after consultation in the colleges, from Autumn 2019.

2.3   Kaplan International Pathways has recently revised the Curriculum Change Proposal Form to include external review. The College is responsible for curriculum design and development with CLIQ support.

2.4   The procedures in place for programme design, development and approval would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.5   The review team tested the effectiveness of these procedures by scrutiny of documentation including Kaplan International Pathways' quality manual (ASQM), JAB minutes and programme approval documentation. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.6   Kaplan International Pathways and the College systematically and consistently apply processes for programme design, development and approval to enhance the quality of learning opportunities. The 2017 programme modification documentation clearly illustrates the application of these processes. This ensures that new or modified programmes are assessed against the criteria in the QAF. The current Product Review and the introduction of the External Guidelines show how Kaplan International Pathways evaluates and improves these processes. The College provided some input on assessment into the Product Review before it was considered by JAB. Kaplan International Pathways, the College and the University carefully scrutinise programme and curriculum development and modification to ensure the programmes prepare students for study at the University. Teaching staff have opportunities to contribute to programme modifications and gave the review team several examples, for example the new topics in the curriculum and changes to the assessment format in the Introduction to Legal Principles and Systems module. Kaplan International Pathways provides development opportunities to enable staff to contribute effectively. The Programme Committee minutes demonstrate that students are encouraged to contribute to discussions on the quality of learning opportunities.

2.7   With the oversight of CLIQ and the University, the College operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes to enhance the quality of learning opportunities. 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

2.8   Recruitment, selection and admission is managed centrally by Kaplan International Pathways. Within the Marketing and Recruitment team there are a number of functional teams to support students, for example Admissions, Pre-Enrolment Services, Central Accommodation services, and Visa and Auditing services. The Director of Admissions oversees the teams.

2.9   The policies and procedures for admission of students to all Kaplan Pathways programmes at embedded colleges are set out in the Admissions Manual, are linked to B2 of the Quality Code, and include the processes for making decisions about each application. The centralised admissions processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.10   The review team tested the operation of these processes through scrutiny of documentation including the policies and procedures relating to admissions, offer letters, and information given to students including the prospectus and other pre-entry material. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.11   The review team noted that the general entry requirements, which are agreed with the University, are published in the prospectus and online.

2.12   There is a detailed procedure for verifying qualifications and making decisions about the suitability of a student for entry to a College pathway, which is clearly set out in the admissions manual. External reference is made to the National Academic Recognition Information Centre to check student qualifications against the entry requirements.

2.13   Admissions decisions are normally made by the central admissions team at Kaplan International Pathways, but exceptional applications may be referred to academics at the College or are sometimes escalated to the University - for example, where there are specialist entry requirements, such as music performance. Recognition of prior learning is not generally used for the admission of students, but language qualifications evidencing competence at a given level may exempt students from some of the English language modules. Students have an opportunity to declare their special educational requirements during the admission process.

2.14   A joint offer letter from Kaplan International Pathways and the University is sent to all successful applicants and states the percentage and English language scores they must achieve in their pathway programme to enable them to progress to their designated University programme.

2.15   Students confirmed that they receive all the information they require prior to joining the College and are able to contact members of the admissions team and the College prior to starting their course. They undergo an extensive induction programme during their first

week of study. They are able to provide feedback on the admissions processes via the arrival survey which is now linked back to agents to enable the College to evaluate their role in admissions.

2.16   The suitability of the entry criteria is currently monitored by tracking student performance on their pathway programmes. The College is working with the University to obtain more data on student performance once they have progressed to their University programme and this will enable an evaluation of the entry criteria. Kaplan International Pathways has undertaken several admissions monitoring activities such as analysing student performance in relation to start dates. It is intended to further extend the tracking processes to obtain performance data about students once they have graduated.

2.17   Retention and progression data provided by the College indicates that students are able to complete their programmes of study and successfully progress to their University pathway.

2.18   Academic staff are provided with an overview of the role of admissions, for example at the Kaplan International Pathways Leadership and Management programme. Kaplan International Pathways has a training policy for admissions staff that includes maintaining a log of the training each member of staff has undertaken.

2.19   Overseas agents are appointed to recruit students in their home country. The appointment of a new agent is subject to due diligence activities undertaken by the wider Kaplan International Pathways group. Training is provided for all agents through the Kaplan International Pathways 'on-boarding' process. Many agents who are employed by Kaplan International Pathways also work for the partner university, which enables them to have an overview of the student journey from entry to the pathway programme to the completion of the university course. During 2017, Kaplan International Pathways ran a Priority Agent Familiarisation visit which enabled overseas agents to visit some of the pathway colleges and update their knowledge of the UK education system.

2.20   Kaplan International Pathways has a process for programme closure that includes procedures for supporting students who have already been made an offer for a programme that will no longer be offered. At the time of the review visit no programmes had been closed.

2.21   Effective communication between the admissions team and College staff enables the College to respond to changes in the pattern of recruitment, in terms of resources, and ensures the admissions team are aware of any changes to pathways.

2.22   The review team concludes that the centralised admissions process, which adheres to the principles of fair admission, is transparent, reliable, valid and inclusive, and is effectively implemented for the recruitment and admission of students to the College. Meetings with admissions staff, College academic and support staff and students confirmed that the procedures and policies in place support the selection of students who are able to successfully complete their programmes and progress to the University. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.23   Kaplan International Pathways takes a strategic approach to learning and teaching, which is included in the Strategic Plan. This includes the KapPACK Achievement Portfolio which enables students to demonstrate the achievement of graduate attributes such as personal development, academic exploration, effective communication, knowledge skills and experience.

2.24   The UK Pathways Learning and Teaching Framework is the reference point for individual college's Learning and Teaching and Assessment strategies. The framework sets out five main areas of practice: pedagogy, quality assurance and enhancement, blended learning, student engagement and professional development. A Learning and Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) has been developed by the College.

2.25   The arrangements in place, including central guidance and the LTAS, would enable the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the operation of these arrangements by reviewing the documentation relating to learning and teaching including policies and minutes. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.26   The review team found that a variety of teaching methods is used by the College including group work, guest lectures by University staff, tutorials and support for independent learning. Students are able to access specialist equipment in the University for their chosen pathway, including science laboratories. The College is currently taking part in a trial to use a new assessment platform for the delivery of module assessments and English language writing assessments, which is designed to enhance the learning experience.

2.27   The teaching team effectively combines the delivery of subject-based material with the development of academic skills through the use of common texts. This helps to enable students to obtain their award and progress to their chosen University programme. Students participate in 'Learning Outside the Classroom' activities, which include visits to relevant institutions, and social activities to support their integration into the UK system of education. Students confirm that the variety of learning opportunities helps them to become familiar with the requirements of studying in the UK.

2.28   Students provide feedback on the quality of teaching through end-of-module surveys and frequent meetings with academic staff. The outcomes of module evaluation are included in the APR.

2.29   All teaching staff are qualified to the level above that which they are teaching. New staff complete an induction programme that includes an introduction to both the content of the pathway programmes and guidance on teaching international students.

2.30   Teaching observations are linked to probation and annual appraisal. Staff also participate in peer observation enabling them to share best practice.

2.31   CLIQ provides information about training sessions, conferences and projects and supports the sharing of best practice through the use of a dedicated 'best practice' site on the VLE. This acts as a hub for collaboration and a repository for sharing resources and finding answers to frequently asked questions.

2.32   Continuing professional development is supported through internal training programmes such as the Kaplan International Pathways Professional Development Programme. CLIQ also runs webinars for tutors. College staff are able to access the staff development programmes offered by the University and have recently participated in training relating to dyslexia. Two members of staff are in the process of obtaining Associate Fellowship from the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and two other members of staff are applying for Senior Fellowship.

2.33   Kaplan International Pathways has implemented the Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy (TEL) which is designed to develop staff competence in the use of technology. Colleges are required to assess their use of technology and set goals for future implementation and innovation. A champion at the College provides training in the use of specific software applications and encourages staff to experiment with technology and use popular apps such as Quizlet to enhance their teaching methods. Staff indicated that they had been able to use innovative approaches to delivering the curriculum through the use of technology which had enhanced their teaching.

2.34   The extensive and systematic support provided for tutors to embed technology in teaching and learning in line with the Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy is **good practice**.

2.35   The review team concludes that through the implementation of its Learning and Teaching Strategy the College provides a range of learning opportunities that are continually reviewed and enhanced and enable students to develop as independent learners with the capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking. This is confirmed by successful student progression to University pathways. There is systematic monitoring of learning and teaching by Kaplan International Pathways. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.36   Kaplan International Pathways aims to provide a high quality learning experience that meets the specific needs of international students and facilitates their smooth transition to higher education. There are central systems that support students throughout the recruitment and enrolment process and provide opportunities for the identification of additional needs. Kaplan International Pathways takes a strategic overview of academic and pastoral support and the resources provided by all its colleges through the Kaplan International Pathways SMT.

2.37   There is a range of policies and procedures that facilitates the smooth transition of students to higher education in the UK, and to their chosen university pathway. This includes the development of digital literacy skills.

2.38   The arrangements in place, including procedures and policies implemented and monitored by Kaplan International Pathways, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.39   The review team tested their operation by scrutiny of a range of documentation relating to the systems and resources in place to support students throughout their programmes of study and enable their successful transition to University pathways. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.40   The learning experience and support offered by the College, which begins at the recruitment stage, is the responsibility of the Head of College Services who manages a team of support staff and reports to the College Director. Meetings between Kaplan International Pathways Heads of College Services enable the level of support provided across Colleges to be monitored.

2.41   At the operational level, the Programme Committee is responsible for developing and monitoring the quality of learning opportunities, including the provision of resources and support to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Oversight of student support rests with JAB.

2.42   Guidance and support for students includes extensive pre-arrival information and an induction programme specifically designed to prepare students for study in the UK. Attendance is closely monitored and students are contacted if they have unexplained absences.

2.43   Students with additional needs are identified during the admissions process and discussions take place with the College to ensure they can be given the necessary support while on their programme of study.

2.44   Academic guidance and support for students is tailored to meet the needs of individual students. This is effected through the tutorial system at the College. Students confirmed that they received both academic and pastoral support and met regularly with their tutors to discuss their progress.

2.45   All programmes include standard modules for the development of language and academic skills (Skills for Study and Language for Study). The QAF provides a set of

Graduate Attributes which encourages students to evidence the skills they have developed while at the College. Students confirm that they feel well prepared for their University programme and find it easy to integrate into the University on completion of their international pathway programme.

2.46   The College has developed a good working relationship with the University and this helps to ensure smooth progression of students as well as providing opportunities for staff to access University resources and staff development. The close working relationship with the University, which ensures the smooth progression of students to their chosen programme and allows staff to access resources and development opportunities within the University, is **good practice**.

2.47   Pathway programmes provide progression to a number of university degrees. A small number of Law students from the previous cohort were unable to progress to their Law programme at the University as they did not reach the required threshold on the Law National Aptitude Test (LNAT), an external test which is a requirement for Law courses. The College is working closely with the University link tutor to provide extra support to help students to pass the test. As modules are common across several pathway programmes, students who do not pass the test can opt to join an alternative programme at the University. Students who do not meet the entry criteria for their chosen course at the University can use the Kaplan International Pathways University Placement Service (UPS), which supports them to find an alternative University programme.

2.48   The review team concludes that the comprehensive support and resources, which have an international focus and are tailored to the individual needs of students, enable students to develop their academic personal and professional potential and to successfully progress to their University pathway. There are extensive processes in place for oversight and monitoring of these services, through Kaplan International Pathways and the University. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.49   The College is responsible for student engagement based on Kaplan International Pathways' policy, detailed in the ASQM. Colleges appoint and train student representatives to gather views of other students, and disseminate information. A summary of the findings of student feedback is included in the APR, which is considered by the Programme Committee. Kaplan International Pathways uses various methods for eliciting student views including focus groups, formal staff and student forums, use of student representatives on Programme Committees, student representatives' feedback to senior management, feedback boxes, and email surveys and questionnaires. This feedback is reviewed and acted upon through the APR. There is a student member in the Programme Committee Terms of Reference. Methods to gain feedback are reviewed regularly, for example questions were adjusted after consultation with alumni.

2.50   The arrangements in place for student engagement would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.51   The review team tested the operation of these arrangements through scrutiny of documentation including the student submission for the review, minutes from meetings where students had been invited to participate, and information available to staff and students. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.52   There is evidence to show that the College creates and maintains an environment within which students and staff engage in discussions that bring about demonstrable enrichment of the educational experience. This includes student representation, module evaluation and the student experience survey.

2.53   The Lead Student representative has signed the Student Charter together with the College's senior management and JAB. The Head of College Services arranged for the president of the University's Student Union to talk to current College students. The VLE contains details of how to apply to be a student representative together with the email addresses of College alumni who are able to give current students advice and support. There are formal minuted meetings of students who represent different aspects of the student experience such as activities, pre-master's, welfare, external liaison and a University of Nottingham liaison representative. The student representatives told the review team that the College fully supports them in their role. This allocation and organisation of specific roles to student representatives, which supports the enhancement of the student experience, is **good practice**.

2.54   The APR demonstrates that the College carefully considers the results of Kaplan International Pathways' Student experience questionnaire, the College module surveys and students feedback from programme committees. The College feeds back actions taken in response to this to student representatives and actions taken are also published on posters.

2.55   As noted in Expectation A2.1, the review team found that the minutes of the Programme Committee lacked formality and detail. Although they are not identified in the minutes students appear to attend Programme Committees, which provides an effective opportunity for students' opinions to be heard at this level. However, no direct student

representation exists on College (or Kaplan International Pathways) committees or groups that manage and drive quality assurance processes, such as the JAB.

2.56   There is evidence that the College values and responds to students' contributions and has taken deliberate steps to engage students individually and collectively as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. 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

2.57   The ASQM describes the assessment principles together with the regulations, moderation processes, assignment submission, marking procedures and feedback mechanisms. It specifies the minimum requirements for successful completion of modules and programmes, and how individual module marks are awarded and aggregated at programme and module levels. There are standardised templates for assessment board agenda and minutes. CLIQ provides support for colleges in implementing these assessment processes, for example it has produced an Assessment Development Guide and disseminates information to colleges through the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Newsletter. Kaplan International Pathways provides extensive development on student assessment for college teaching staff to ensure that student performance is equitably judged.

2.58   These arrangements, including Kaplan International Pathways' academic rules, regulations and procedures, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.59   The review team tested the operation of these arrangements through scrutiny of relevant documents such as regulations, policy and strategy documents, minutes of meetings including an assessment board, assessment information for students and external examiner comments and reports. The review team viewed an example of assessment related information for students on the VLE. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.60   The College operates effective processes for the assessment of students to enable them to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes. The teaching staff follow the procedures for marking, double-marking and moderation as detailed in the ASQM. External examiners are asked to confirm the appropriateness of the assessment methods to the learning outcomes and that student achievement is measured rigorously, fairly and the Assessment Board operates satisfactorily.

2.61   In response to the external examiner's recommendation that the feedback sheets should show more detail, the College trained all tutors on how to use the standard Kaplan Pathways feedback forms and the assessment seen by the review team confirms this. The teaching staff provide widespread formative feedback to support students with the summative assessments. Students confirm that feedback to them on their assessed work is constructive and developmental. Students report they were prepared in advance for these assessments through classes, tutor sessions and general in-college support. Students receive assessment information during induction and on the VLE. They say they understand the regulations and know where to find the details. Student surveys reflect that guidelines are very clear. These inclusive, accessible and clear assessment guidelines comprehensively support student understanding of the assessment objectives, criteria and process. Students say they understand how to avoid unacceptable academic practices and the penalties. They also say they are continuously reminded about the referencing and formatting of assessments, which they submit electronically using plagiarism-detection software. Students also benefit from sharing peer feedback and reviewing each other's work.

2.62   The College uses assessment procedures that are fully aligned with Kaplan International Pathways' regulations. These enable students to demonstrate they have achieved intended learning outcomes through equitable, valid and reliable processes. 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

2.63   Kaplan International Pathways has explicit policies and regulations for the appointment of independent external examiners. One external examiner operating across colleges is responsible for the English Language Exit module. College Programme Leaders formally nominate their external examiner who is then approved by JAB. The ASQM defines the roles and responsibilities of examiners. There is an external examiners' handbook available for guidance. The external examiners are members of the College's assessment board where decisions are made on the conferment of awards.

2.64   Kaplan International Pathways' external examiners' report template requires them to comment and to indicate satisfaction or dissatisfaction with academic standards, assessment processes and the comparability of standards with other similar institutions. There is a section within the report to identify good practice. The College's Programme Leader is responsible for providing a formal response to the external examiner's comments. The external examiner's report is included in an annex to the Annual Programme Report. Kaplan International Pathways has oversight through the ASQP report and the University through JAB.

2.65   These arrangements, including Kaplan International Pathways' central policies and oversight procedures, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.66   The review team tested their operation by scrutinising documentation including Kaplan International Pathways' policies and procedures, ASQP, APR and external examiners' reports and JAB minutes. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.67   The College uses two external examiners for its programmes to secure academic standards. They are appointed according to the ASQM defined criteria and are confirmed by JAB. The appointment procedure demonstrates that they are able to give impartial and independent advice on the assessment processes, the academic standards and student achievement. Their reports on Kaplan International Pathways' templates show that external examiners are satisfied that they receive appropriate information on assessment and external examining procedures and practices, and assessment regulations from the College. The Programme Leader responds to their comments within the template.

2.68   The external examiners receive assignment briefs and questions in advance of the assessment although the College does not send them samples of students' completed work. The external examiners scrutinise students' assessed work at the Assessment Board visit and give a verbal report. The College emphasised the extensive email communication and the helpful detailed discussions which take place at these visits.

2.69   There is very little detail in the external examiners' written reports. In particular the Business, Law and Social Science report predominantly notes 'satisfactory' with very brief comments in only two sections of the eleven provided. The review team was told that external examiners make detailed verbal comments at visits, however the review team noted that these are not formally recorded and that Assessment Board minutes include only brief comments. In order to meet the specific needs of the College and to assure academic

standards it is **recommended** that the College work with external examiners to ensure that they include in their reports more detailed informative comment on the outcomes of assessment.

2.70   The College considers the external examiners' reports through the APR and the University through JAB. Although the students say they are not aware of it, the VLE contains full details of the external examiners and their reports.

2.71   In reaching its conclusion on this Expectation, the review team noted that Kaplan International Pathways' procedures for the use of external examiners are generally appropriate but that there are shortcomings in the rigour with which they are applied at the College. The review team also took account of the relatively short period over which the College has operated. The College and Kaplan International Pathways acknowledged the issue of the quality of external examiners' reports at the visit and identified it as an area requiring action. 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

2.72   The ASQM provides the framework for the systematic monitoring and review of programmes for assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, such as that for setting and maintaining academic standards in Expectation A3.3. APQC has strategic oversight of the outcomes of all colleges' programme monitoring and reviews to ensure the enhancement and the parity of student experience. At the colleges the Programme Committee approves the APR which is received by the College AMT, JAB and the external examiner.

2.73   The arrangements in place, including the policies and procedures of Kaplan International Pathways, would enable the Expectation to be met. The review team tested their operation through scrutiny of a range of documentation relating to programme monitoring and review. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.74   In order to reflect on the programmes and determine how these can be improved, the Academic Director completes an APR. This includes both quantitative and qualitative information relating to the programmes. There is a matrix of quality assurance and enhancement activities, data of student success and achievement and the programme's challenges and progression, together with comments for the students' experience survey and quotations from the external examiner's report.

2.75   The College clearly considers that students are a primary source of information about the programmes on which they are studying and solicits their opinions both formally and informally. The Programme Committee and student surveys demonstrate that the College actively seeks feedback from students about their learning experience. The College APR action plan contains a recommendation taken directly from the Student Experience Survey.

2.76   There is a Kaplan International Pathways teaching observation scheme. The APR reports that 80 per cent of College staff had an evaluative observation and 20 per cent of staff had peer observation. Staff complete module surveys. Language staff attend a focus group and any suggestions from this go directly to CLIQ. However, the APR does not formally include staff feedback.

2.77   The Programme Committee has responsibility for continuous programme and module monitoring. The College's first APRs were produced in November 2017, which did not allow them to be considered and approved by the Programme Committee meeting in July 2017 or received by the subsequent JAB. Any actions as a result of feedback from the January-July 2017 cohort cannot therefore theoretically be put into place until after the July 2018 Programme Committee. JSB considered key performance indicators and student performance and student feedback without these being confirmed by the Programme Committee.

2.78   The review team **recommends** that the College ensures that the APRs are effectively considered by the appropriate committees and that staff views contribute formally

to the process. The review team considers that this will demonstrate transparent effective processes for programme monitoring so that learning opportunities for students may be enhanced.

2.79   Although the Programme Committee did not formally agree the APR it has been the first year of operation of the College. Regular oversight by Kaplan International Pathways and the University ensures the operation of systematic and regular processes for monitoring the quality of the students' learning opportunities. 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

2.80   Kaplan International Pathways has procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints which are set out in the ASQM. They make provision for both informal and formal complaints and set out a staged process for considering complaints, including escalation to higher authorities should the complainant not be satisfied with the outcome. Colleges are required to provide information to students about the complaints procedure on the VLE and in the programme handbooks.

2.81   There is an online complaint form. Formal complaints are dealt with by the Head of College Services and if necessary referred to the College Director. If students are not happy with the outcome they can ask for an independent person to be appointed to deal with the complaint. Responses to complaints should be made within 5 working days.

2.82   Colleges are required to keep a log of formal complaints and their outcomes which is reviewed by the College SMT to assess any trends or issues. This is then reviewed by the UK Pathways SMT.

2.83   Appeals normally have to be lodged within three days of an Assessment Board. Where an initial settlement through discussion with the Academic Director cannot be agreed an appeals panel will be convened.

2.84   The procedures for complaints and appeals now include a requirement for students to be informed in writing about the outcome of a formal appeal or complaint. This responds to the recommendation made following the Higher Education Review of 2016.

2.85   The detailed procedures relating to complaints and appeals, set out in the ASQM, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.86   The review team reviewed the information available to students about complaints and appeals, including appeals about admissions. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.87   The review team found that information about how to make a complaint or lodge an appeal is available on the VLE. This includes access to the relevant forms for a complaint or an appeal, and sets out clear guidelines about the stages of a complaint or an appeal, and the timeframe for a response.

2.88   Students who met with the review team confirmed that they are aware of how to make a complaint and that this information is given to them during the induction process. They are also aware of the procedure for appealing about an assessment decision.

2.89   The College encourages the resolution of complaints through an informal process. In relation to academic appeals, students are made aware of the process and the grounds on which they can appeal. Where there are grounds for an appeal and a settlement cannot be offered, or is not accepted, an Academic Appeals Panel shall be convened.

2.90   Students can make a complaint by discussing their concerns informally with their Personal Tutors, or can go directly to College Services, or may use the suggestion boxes

provided. Formal complaints are made via an online form that links directly to the Head of Student Services.

2.91   The review team concludes that the College effectively uses the procedures of Kaplan International Pathways for the handling and resolution of academic appeals and complaints about the quality of learning opportunities, and that the response to appeals and complaints is timely. Students confirm that these procedures are fair and accessible. The oversight by JAB enables enhancement of the learning opportunities to be implemented in response to the outcomes of complaints and appeals. The Expectation is met, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.93   All Expectations in this judgement area are met, and the associated level of risk is low in all cases.

2.94   The review team identified several areas of good practice in this Judgement area: the extensive and systematic support provided for tutors to embed technology in learning and teaching in line with the Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy; the close working relationship with the University, which ensures the smooth progression of students to their chosen programme and allows staff to access resources and development opportunities within the University; the allocation and organisation of specific roles to student representatives, which supports the enhancement of the student experience.

2.95   There are two recommendations in this area concerning the need to work with external examiners to ensure that they include in their reports more detailed informative comment on the outcomes of assessment; and to ensure that annual monitoring reports are effectively considered by the appropriate committees and that staff views contribute formally to the process. The recommendations are indicative of minor omissions or oversights or the need to amend or update details in documentation which do not present any serious risks to the quality of student learning opportunities at the College.

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 Kaplan International Pathways has a public information policy that covers the production of the prospectus and the provision of other information for students, including the website. There is a nine-stage process for producing and signing off information contained in the prospectus. This includes design, content and checking the use of the University and Kaplan logos.

3.2 Formal Agreements between Kaplan International Pathways and the University, which set out the arrangements for delivering higher education through the College, include the use of the University trademarks, and require all information given to students to be approved by the University.

3.3 The processes in place for managing the provision of information and ensuring that it is reliable and trustworthy would enable the Expectation to be met.

3.4 To test the Expectation the review team scrutinised documentation including the information available to students in hard copy and through the website and VLE. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

3.5 Information for prospective students and other stakeholders is provided through the Kaplan International Pathways' website and the College prospectus. The Kaplan International Pathways' website has a direct link to the University of Nottingham. Access to information about the College and the courses it offers is through the University website.

3.6 Details of the international pathway programme and the University programme to which the student can progress is included in a joint offer letter which is sent to successful applicants. Students are provided with an Accommodation Guide and a Pre-Arrival Guide. These documents are available on the College website.

3.7 Students confirm that the information they receive prior to joining the University enables them to make a decision about whether or not to accept the offer.

3.8 During induction, students receive a Student Handbook, which contains a code of conduct and sets out what students can expect from the College. It provides information about living and studying in the UK and signposts students to other more specialist sources of information. Students also receive a Programme Handbook which contains information about the programme including assessment regulations and details of their tutors. The Student and Programme Handbooks are available on the VLE.

3.9 The Handbooks are produced by the College using a Kaplan International Pathways template and are checked for accuracy by the College Director and then by CLIQ to ensure that they align with the information contained in the programme specifications.

3.10　　Feedback from students about the information provided by the College is collected through the Arrival Survey and the Module Questionnaire. The accuracy and appropriateness of information provided by the College is also discussed at meetings with student representatives.

3.11　　On completion of their pathway programme, students receive a transcript setting out the modules they have studied.

3.12　　The centrally managed Higher Education Course Management (HECM) system is used to capture information about all pathways and their progression routes. Kaplan International Pathways is developing a Product Catalogue which will provide a more effective link between the various information management systems, including the course content library which holds programme specifications, information on the VLE and progression routes. This is part of a revised IT strategy.

3.13　　The review team concludes that the College has effective systems in place to ensure that the information provided to its intended audiences is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy and the Expectation is met. The associated risk is low as the University and Kaplan International Pathways maintain oversight of the information provided by the College.

Expectation:　　Met
Level of risk:　　Low

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

3.14   In reaching its judgement, the review team considered its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook

3.15   The Expectation in this judgement area is met, and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or identified areas of good practice.

3.16   Published information for the College is produced in accordance with Kaplan International Pathways procedures which involve a staged process for production and approval, and provide standard templates for documentation. The College works with the University and Kaplan International Pathways on the production and approval of information, and Kaplan International Pathways and the University maintain oversight. At the time of the visit, Kaplan International Pathways was engaged in a review which aimed to ensure improved links between its various information systems including a course information library.

3.17   Students indicated that the information they received prior to joining had been accurate and had assisted them in decision-making. The College has processes in place for evaluating the effectiveness of published information, and student views are considered as part of this.

3.18   The review team found that there are appropriate procedures in place for ensuring that published information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.19   The review team concludes that the quality of the information produced by the College about its provision **meets** UK expectations.

4 Commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunitiesCommentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunitiesCommentary on 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 strategic approach to enhancement is led and driven by the SMT, which ensures that both centralised and College-level initiatives lead to improvements. Kaplan International Pathways uses a wide range of quality review processes to identify opportunities for enhancement and Colleges are encouraged and supported to share good practice. CLIQ plays an important role in supporting both central and College-level projects. Integrated initiatives include the Kaplan Assessment Development Guide and the introduction of the VLE as a host for assessment questions and student forum.

4.2 The College continues this strategic approach to enhancement that is led from its SMT. Committee structures and annual monitoring processes ensure that quality enhancement is embedded within the College. The College shares good practice through an active learning space which is monitored by CLIQ. For example, as the College is new, assessment advice was sought from Nottingham Trent University International College which is a more established Kaplan International Pathway college.

4.3 Students are clearly able to influence the cycle of enhancement through the programme committees and by giving formal and informal feedback. Additionally, students are able to articulate examples of where changes have been made as a result of student feedback, for example feedback gained from module evaluations has shaped programme modifications. There is a systematic approach to staff development which encourages staff to be proactive in recognising the College's and their own development needs. The College demonstrates commitment to the enhancement of the student experience by out-of-class activities such as visits to law courts, the Houses of Parliament and external exercises.

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 24-27 of the Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) handbook.

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

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.

Awarding organisation
An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

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.

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.

Self-evaluation document
A report submitted by a higher education provider, assessing its own performance, to be used as evidence in a QAA review.

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.