

Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students

Applied Business Academy

Review Report

November 2019



Working as the Designated Quality Body for England

Contents

Summary of findings and reasons	1
About this report.....	9
About Applied Business Academy.....	9
Applied Business Academy and Pearson Education Ltd: Responsibilities.....	10
How the review was conducted	11
Explanation of findings	13
S1 The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications' frameworks.....	13
S2 The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers	18
S3 Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them ..	22
S4 The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.....	26
Q1 The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system	31
Q2 The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses	36
Q3 The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.....	42
Q4 The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience	47
Q5 The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.....	52
Q6 The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students	56
Q8 Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.....	60
Q9 The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.....	64

Summary of findings and reasons

Ref	Core practice	Outcome	Confidence	Summary of reasons
S1	The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications' frameworks.	Met	High	<p>From the evidence seen, the review team considers that the standards set for the College's courses are in line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS regulatory framework. The review team also considers that the standards described in the approved programme documentation are set at levels that are consistent with these sector-recognised standards and the College's academic regulations and policies should ensure that standards are maintained appropriately.</p> <p>The review team considers that, based on the evidence scrutinised, the standards that will be achieved by the College's students are expected to be line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS regulatory framework. Based on this information, the review team also considers that the College's academic regulations and policies will ensure that these standards are maintained. The Academy plans to follow the awarding bodies' clear and comprehensive academic regulations to assessment and classification, as well as using its own approach to assessment and therefore the review team found that the Academy has a credible approach to maintain threshold standards. The review team also considers that staff fully understand the College's approach to maintaining these standards and that the evidence seen demonstrates they are committed to implementing this approach. Therefore, based on scrutiny of the evidence</p>

				provided, the review team concludes that this Core practice is met.
S2	The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.	Met	High	<p>The review team, based on the evidence presented, determined that the standards set for students to achieve beyond the threshold on the provider's courses are reasonably comparable with those set by other UK providers. The review team considers that the standards described in the approved programme documentation and in the provider's academic regulations and policies should ensure that such standards are maintained appropriately.</p> <p>The review team determined that the standards that will be achieved by the provider's students beyond the threshold are expected to be reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers. The team considers that the provider's academic regulations and policies should ensure that standards beyond the threshold are maintained. Based on the detailed scrutiny of the evidence, the review team considers that staff at the provider fully understand the provider's approach to maintaining such standards and have opportunities for engagement with peers and external experts in teaching and assessment activities. The review team considers the provider's plans for maintaining comparable standards appropriate, well documented and understood by staff members.</p> <p>Therefore, the review team concludes, based on the evidence described above, that students who are awarded qualifications should have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers and this Core practice is met.</p>

S3	Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.	Met	High	The review team concludes that the Academy has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of the awards it will deliver on behalf of its awarding organisations are credible and secure. This is because the Academy has clear and comprehensive regulations and policies for working in partnership with its awarding organisations to ensure the standards of their awards are credible and secure. The partnership agreements with the awarding organisations are clear, comprehensive and up to date and reflect the Academy's policies for the management of partnerships. Staff fully understand their responsibilities towards the awarding organisations and following their regulations as well as using external examiners with regard to maintaining academic standards. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.
S4	The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.	Met	High	The review team concludes that the Academy will use external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent. This is because the Academy has clear and comprehensive policies describing its requirements for using external expertise in maintaining academic standards. The Academy's arrangements for assessment and classification, which will be implemented once programme delivery has started, are transparent and facilitate fair and reliable assessment; however, plans for dealing with academic misconduct are unclear. Plans for the use of external examiners and their reports are robust and credible and staff understand the requirements for the use of external expertise and the Academy's assessment and classification processes. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.

Q1	The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.	Met	High	The review team concludes that the Academy has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system. This is because the Academy's policies and procedures for recruitment, selection and admission of students are clear, transparent and fair and will enable the Academy to operate a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system once it starts recruiting students. The plans for delivering admissions are credible, robust and evidence-based with clear responsibilities of staff and committees involved in decision making and standardised tools for the assessment of applications against clearly defined and published admissions criteria. Admissions requirements set out in the approved course documentation are consistent with the Academy's admissions policy and awarding organisations' requirements. Staff involved in the admission process understand their roles and are appropriately skilled and trained. Information for applicants, with the exception of signposting to applicants in respect of raising a complaint or appealing an admissions decision, is transparent, easily accessible on the website and fit for purpose. The review team concludes, therefore, that on balance, this Core practice is met.
Q2	The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.	Met	High	The review team concludes that the Academy will deliver high-quality courses. This is because the Academy's policies and procedures facilitate the delivery of high-quality courses. The Academy has credible and robust plans for the delivery of high-quality courses with approaches to learning and teaching, an internally verified assessment design process and a quality assurance framework that supports the delivery of high-quality courses. Approved course documentation indicates that teaching, learning and assessment design will enable students to meet and demonstrate the

				achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Staff have a thorough understanding of policies, procedures and quality assurance processes and are able to articulate the concept of 'high-quality' in the context of the Academy. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.
Q3	The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.	Met	High	The review team concludes that the Academy has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience. This is because the Academy's strategies, policies and procedures for the recruitment of staff provide for a sufficient number of appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience. Its plans and approaches for the recruitment, appointment, induction and support for staff are comprehensive, robust and credible. The Academy has recruited sufficient staff for the start of delivery in 2020 in accordance with the predicted first cohort of 25 students for each programme, who are all appropriately qualified and skilled to deliver a high-quality academic experience. The Academy is fully committed to the development of both academic and support staff to ensure they receive the support required to fulfil their roles. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.
Q4	The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.	Met	High	The review team concludes that the Academy has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience. This is because the Academy has sufficient and appropriate strategies and policies with regard to the development of facilities, learning resources and student support services that will facilitate the provision of appropriate facilities, resources and

				<p>services. The Academy's plans for learning resources and student support services are robust, credible, realistic and evidence-based, taking into account the nature of the student body and the higher education programmes to be delivered, and are closely linked to the delivery of successful academic and professional outcomes for students. The review team's assessment of teaching facilities and learning resources confirmed that they are sufficient, appropriately equipped for the programmes to be delivered and are likely to provide a high-quality academic experience. Academic and professional support staff understand their roles and responsibilities for student support and the provision of learning resources. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.</p>
Q5	<p>The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.</p>	Met	Moderate	<p>The review team concludes that the Academy will actively engage students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience. The Academy is committed to improving the student learning experience as a result of student engagement and has policies and procedures in place to facilitate this, supported by appropriate resource and infrastructure. While the Academy's plans for the engagement of individual and collective engagement of students are credible, they are not robust and lack information for students on the set up and operation of engagement channels such as the election and training of student representatives and the feedback system through surveys. The lack of information for students could impact on the effectiveness of the process. The review team concludes, therefore, that on balance, this Core practice is met.</p>

Q6	The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.	Met	Moderate	The review team concludes that the Academy has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students. The Academy's procedures for handling complaints and appeals are definitive and transparent and should allow timely outcomes to be delivered. There are clear processes with different stages for the resolution of complaints and appeals with appropriate resolution periods and decision-making authorities. The Academy's procedures for handling complaints and appeals are accessible to students. However, they lack robustness with the complaints procedure omitting students' right to escalate complaints to the awarding organisations and the appeals procedure is ambiguous in its scope. The Academy's plans to develop fair, transparent and accessible complaints procedures are credible but also lack robustness as it is unclear how the Academy will monitor the effectiveness of procedures and there is no documented information for students where to go for advice and guidance should they wish to make a formal complaint or academic appeal. The review team concludes, therefore, that on balance, this Core practice is met.
Q8	Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.	Met	High	The review team concludes that the Academy has clear and comprehensive policies for working in partnership with its awarding organisations to ensure the quality of academic experience of the students. Its plans for ensuring a high-quality academic experience for students on the programme it is approved to deliver are credible and robust and the arrangements for teaching practice placements are secure. The partnership agreements with the awarding organisations are clear and comprehensive and reflect the Academy's policies for working with its awarding partners. The staff

				understand their responsibilities towards the awarding organisations. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.
Q9	The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.	Met	High	The review team concludes that the Academy will support all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes. This is because the policies and support mechanisms that the Academy has in place for student support will facilitate the achievement of successful academic and professional outcomes. The Academy's approaches to and arrangements for academic, pastoral and employability support are robust and credible and support the creation of an environment which supports student development and achievement. In their capacity as personal tutors, teachers, placement or welfare officers, staff whom the review team met understand their role in supporting student achievement. Their roles are complemented through systems that help identify, monitor and evaluate students' academic and pastoral support needs. There are credible plans for the achievement of professional outcomes with a focus on work placements for the DET students and a comprehensive menu of employability skills workshops to help students improve their employment prospects. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.

About this report

This is a report detailing the outcomes of the Quality and Standards Review for providers applying to register with the Office for Students (OfS), conducted by QAA in November 2019, for Applied Business Academy.

A Quality and Standards Review (QSR) is a method of review QAA uses to provide the OfS with evidence about whether new providers applying to be on the OfS Register meet the Core practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), based on evidence reviewed by expert assessors. This report is structured to outline the review team's decisions about the provider's ability to meet the Core practices through detailing the key pieces of evidence scrutinised and linking that evidence to the judgements made.

The team for this review was:

Name: Professor Nik Bessis
Institution: Edge Hill University
Role in review team: Subject Reviewer Computing

Name: Mrs Catherine Fairhurst
Institution: University of Manchester
Role in review team: Institutional Reviewer

The QAA Officer for the review was: Siobhan O'Mahony.

The size and composition of this review team is in line with published guidance and, as such, is comprised of experts with significant experience and expertise across the higher education sector. The team included members with experience of a similar provider to the institution, knowledge of the academic awards offered and included academics with expertise in subject areas relevant to the provider's provision. Collectively the team had experience of the management and delivery of higher education programmes from academic and professional services perspectives, included members with regulatory and investigative experience, and had at least one member able to represent the interests of students. The team included at least one senior academic leader qualified to doctoral level. Details of team members were shared with the provider prior to the review to identify and resolve any possible conflicts of interest.

About Applied Business Academy

Based in West Silvertown and delivering from one site in the Docklands area of London, Applied Business Academy (the Academy) was established as an independent training provider in 2013. Its objectives are underpinned by its Mission Statement which states: 'Our mission is to help individuals learn and grow. We want to engage, educate and empower our learners to achieve their career potential and demonstrate technical proficiency with integrity and professionalism'.

Since 2018 the Academy has delivered non-levy Digital IT Apprenticeships (BCS Level 3 Digital Marketing Apprenticeship) and is an approved centre for delivering a Pearson Higher National Diploma in Computing, and a Diploma in Education and Training (DET) validated by City & Guilds, both of which the Academy plans to start delivering in January 2020 with an initial cohort of 25 students for each programme.

The Academy has an overarching Board of Governance into which its Academic Board reports. The current governance structure monitors its apprenticeships, but the Academic

Board will also be the Academy's main decision-making and monitoring forum of higher education provision once it starts delivering in January 2020 and has oversight over three subcommittees: the Student Subcommittee; Finance Subcommittee; and the Disciplinary Subcommittee.

Applied Business Academy and Pearson Education Ltd: Responsibilities

Applied Business Academy will offer one Higher National programme in the scope of this review that leads to an award from Pearson Education Ltd.

Pearson Education Ltd (Pearson) is an awarding organisation that has its qualifications, examinations and assessments regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). As an awarding organisation Pearson creates Ofqual-regulated curricula (which include detailed learning outcomes), as well as programme specifications and handbooks. Pearson also issues certificates to students, when providers submit evidence that their students have completed the relevant programme of study to the standard required.

Pearson devolves responsibility for the recruitment, teaching, support and assessment of students to providers and uses information gained from the initial approval and subsequent external examiner visits to determine if the relevant sector-recognised standards continue to be met. The provider should also have in place processes and procedures to ensure that the learning materials and the learning and teaching strategy are regularly reviewed and modified as appropriate to ensure their continued relevance and validity.

As set out in BTEC Centre Guide to Quality Assurance (2018-19) providers are specifically responsible for:

- Preparing for external examiner visits and seriously considering and acting upon recommendations which are outcomes of visits.
- Designing effective learning materials and a learning and teaching strategy that meets the learning outcomes of the Higher Nationals.
- Putting in place processes and procedures to ensure that the learning materials and the learning and teaching strategy are regularly reviewed and modified as appropriate to ensure their continued relevance and validity.
- Providing definitive programme information relating to the Higher Nationals as delivered at their institution, including a tailored programme specification.
- Operational responsibility for ensuring that students have appropriate opportunities to show they have achieved the intended learning outcomes and grading descriptors (where appropriate). This includes responsibility for setting assessments in direct compliance with Pearson requirements.
- First marking of students' work.
- Giving feedback to students on their work.
- The admission of students including promoting and marketing the programme; setting admissions criteria; selecting applicants; making offers and enrolment,

induction and orientation of new students and making student registrations in a timely fashion.

- Widening access so that all students have an equal opportunity to access their qualifications and assessments.
- The appointment of teaching staff and ensuring they have the right skills and experience to deliver a high-quality programme.
- Delivery of the programme, including provision of learning resources and all aspects of learning and teaching strategy. Appointment of teaching staff. Strategic oversight of the identification and provision of learning resources to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential, including provision for students with additional learning needs.
- Developing, implementing and facilitating arrangements and processes that ensure the engagement of students, individually and collectively, in the enhancement and assurance of the educational experience.
- Ensuring appropriate processes are in place to routinely monitor and periodically review the programme as delivered by them and to keep under constant review all aspects of standards management, quality assurance and day-to-day delivery of the programme.
- Implementation of a fair and accessible complaints procedure for the informal, and where appropriate formal, investigation and determination of a student complaint.

Prior to delivery, any provider must be approved by Pearson to deliver the relevant qualifications. Once approved, providers must register students with Pearson and then be subject to annual visits from Pearson-appointed external examiners to determine if the delivery of the qualifications is in line with the published specifications. Providers are also required to submit provider-wide evidence of review of their HE Pearson provision annually and some providers are subject to annual academic management review (AMR) visits.

As such, Pearson does not have direct relationships with the students of a provider but does provide online support materials (<https://hnglobal.highernationals.com>). Pearson also accepts complaints or academic appeals from students if the students do not feel that these issues have been dealt with appropriately by the provider.

How the review was conducted

The review was conducted according to the process set out in [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

When undertaking a QSR all 13 of the Core practices are considered by the review team. However, for this review it was clear that the provider does not offer a research degree programme. Therefore, the review team did not consider Q7 (where the provider offers research degrees, it delivers these in appropriate and supportive research environments).

To form its judgements about the provider's ability to meet the Core practices, the review team considered a range of evidence that was submitted prior to the review visit and evidence gathered at the review visit itself. To ensure that the review team focused on the principles embedded in the Core practices, and that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews, the team used Annex 4 of the

Guidance for Providers to construct this report and detail the key pieces of evidence seen. Annex 4 expects that review teams will sample certain types of key evidence using a combination of representative sampling, risk-based sampling and randomised sampling. However, the provider only intends to deliver two programmes and had yet to commence delivering higher education provision, therefore no sampling activity was included in this review.

Explanation of findings

S1 The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications' frameworks

1 To meet this Core practice a provider must ensure that threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications' frameworks. The threshold standards for its qualifications must be articulated clearly and must be met, or exceeded, through the delivery of the qualification and the assessment of students.

2 The sector-recognised standards that are used in relation to this Core practice are those that apply in England, as defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS regulatory framework. That is, those set out in Table 1, in paragraphs 4.10, 4.12, 4.15, 4.17, 4.18, in paragraphs 6.13-6.18 and in the Table in Annex C, in the version of [The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#) (FHEQ) published in October 2014. These sector-recognised standards represent the threshold academic standards for each level of the FHEQ and the minimum volumes of credit typically associated with qualifications at each level.

3 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

4 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing
- b City & Guilds Qualification Handbook Diploma in Education and Training
- c Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy
- d Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification
- e Plan for Maintaining Threshold Standards
- f Procedure for the Approval of New Programmes
- g HND in Computing Programme Handbook
- h HND Computing: Unit 1 Handbook
- i HND Computing Assignment Briefs and Completed Internal Verification of Assessment Brief Form Unit 1
- j HND Computing Assignment Briefs and Completed Internal Verification of Assessment Brief Form Unit 2
- k Minutes of the Standardisation Meeting
- l Annual Programme Monitoring Report Template
- m Quality Improvement Plan
- n Views of senior staff and academic staff.

5 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

6 External examiners' reports and assessed student work as the Academy has yet to commence delivering the proposed higher education provision.

7 Third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

8 The review team did not sample any approved course documentation. As the Academy only intends to deliver two programmes the team considered documentation from both programmes to gain a complete understanding of the higher education provision under review.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

9 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider was considered by the review team either prior to the visit, or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the provider's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

10 The review team considered the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing, the City & Guilds Qualification Handbook for the Diploma in Education and Training, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy and the Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification to identify the Academy's approach to course and assessment design, marking and moderation, requirements for awards and approaches to classification as the underlying basis for the standards of awards.

11 The review team considered the Academy's plans for maintaining sector-recognised standards to interrogate their robustness and credibility. This included scrutinising the Plan for Maintaining Threshold Standards, the Procedure for the Approval of New Programmes, the HND in Computing Programme Handbook, the HND Computing: Unit 1 Handbook, the HND Computing Assignment Briefs and Completed Internal Verification of Assessment Brief form for Unit 1 and Unit 2, minutes of the Standardisation Meeting, the Annual Programme Monitoring Report template and the Quality Improvement Plan.

12 To verify that the specified standards are consistent with relevant national qualifications' frameworks, the review team considered approved course documentation including the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing, the City & Guilds Qualification Handbook for the Diploma in Education and Training, the HND in Computing Programme Handbook and the HND Computing: Unit 1 Handbook.

13 The review team held meetings with senior and academic staff to assess and test that staff understand the Academy's approach to maintaining sector-recognised standards.

What the evidence shows

14 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

15 The Academy does not design the qualifications it delivers and is not responsible

for setting the standards of awards. This responsibility lies with its awarding organisations - Pearson and City & Guilds. The Pearson HND Computing is aligned to the FHEQ at Level 5. The HND Computing is a Level 4 and Level 5 qualification made up of 240 credits of which 120 credits are at Level 5, and 120 credits are at Level 4 and usually attained through the HNC. The City & Guilds Diploma in Education and Training is a Level 5-recognised teaching qualification, equivalent to the Certificate of Education qualifications in the FHEQ, with a teaching practice requirement. It is made up of a minimum of 120 credits, 60 of which are at Level 5. While the Academy does not design the qualifications, it designs the programmes it delivers by making decisions on the optional units it will offer to meet the needs of their students and the sequencing of units, as well as the local skills and training needs together with the mandatory units specified by the awarding organisations.

16 The Academy maintains academic standards through its design of some assessments for the Pearson awards, there are also some assessments that are set by the awarding organisation. For the Diploma in Education and Training the assessment types (assignments, a portfolio of teaching evidence and observation of teaching or training) are set by the awarding organisation with sample assignments provided.

17 The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy sets out the general expectations for assessment setting, marking and moderation which include well-designed and varied assessments, the use of formative assessment whenever appropriate, the establishment and publication of clear and fair assessment and grading schemes and the operation of effective and rigorous internal verification arrangements with clearly defined staff roles and responsibilities relating to the management of assessment. The Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification sets out the Academy's approach to assessment design, marking and moderation with course tutors designing assignment briefs for Pearson programmes which will be checked by internal verifiers against the qualification level and unit learning outcomes. All assignments will be initially marked by the course tutors. Following the awarding organisation's regulations, marking and grade allocation will be internally verified from a sample size of no less than 25% of assessed work and externally ratified by an external examiner. The review team found that there are clear and comprehensive regulations and frameworks for the setting and management of assessment set by the awarding bodies, which the Academy follows, as well as its own assessments process which forms a credible approach for maintaining sector-recognised standards.

18 The requirements for the achievement of awards and classification calculations are set by the awarding organisations which the Academy follows. For Pearson qualifications classifications include pass, merit and distinction dependent on the points gained through the successful achievement of individual units. For City & Guilds, the qualification is graded pass or fail. The review team found that in following the awarding bodies' clear classification and assessment regulations, the Academy had credible plans for maintaining standards at relevant sector-recognised standards.

19 The Academy's plans for maintaining sector-recognised standards are credible and robust because they involve mechanisms to ensure assessments are set at the correct level, test all the required learning outcomes and the quality of marking is internally assured and externally moderated. The plan for maintaining sector-recognised standards document states that proposals for the delivery of new programmes should set out the justification of units selected but this is not a requirement of the new programme approval procedure. All courses will have annually updated handbooks at course and unit level which will include the course specification with the learning outcomes, modes of assessment and unit level descriptors of core content. Awarding organisation grading criteria will be included, and contextualisation of grading will be set out in assessment briefs. The HND programme and unit handbooks examined by the review team show how this has been implemented for the Pearson programme. The programme handbook shows the mandatory core units and the

choices the Academy made for the delivery of optional units each with the learning outcomes and core content for each unit set by the awarding organisation. It also shows each learning outcome mapped to the assessment criteria as does the unit handbook.

20 The maintenance of sector-recognised standards will be achieved 'through internal and external verification/examination, and the quality assurance requirements of the Academy's partner awarding bodies'. The Academy intends to map unit assignment briefs to learning outcomes and the internal verification of assignment briefs will ensure that all relevant learning outcomes and assessments criteria are covered. The sample of verified assessment briefs for the HND Computing seen by the team confirm that learning outcomes are mapped to the assessment criteria which are clearly stated and that the assessment tasks show which criteria are to be addressed. A sample of assignment briefs will be sent to the external examiner for approval and action plans will be developed to ensure any comments by external examiners are addressed in a clear and timely manner. The marking and moderation of assessed work including internal verification, standardisation and external moderation will follow the processes described above. The Academic Board will meet termly to review and discuss assessment strategies and briefs and to consider opportunities for work to be linked to assessment criteria across more than one unit where appropriate, and at the same level. Standardisation meetings will ensure consistency of quality to the design of assessments across units and confirm that assessment design meets the awarding organisations' requirements. The achievement of the learning outcomes by students and the quality of assessment setting and marking of student work will be moderated by external examiners and their reports will also contribute to the maintenance of sector-recognised standards. This process is discussed in detail in Core practice S4.

21 Programme leaders will be required to produce termly reports which will consider student progress, student feedback, teaching observations, peer review, staff development and other matters which impact on standards and quality of the provision they manage. Programme annual monitoring reports will be submitted to the Principal and reviewed by the Academic Board. The Principal will produce an institution annual monitoring report and overall quality improvement plan summarising key areas for development based on the course annual monitoring reports, student and external examiner feedback, consideration of student data and identified resources issues. The report will be discussed at the Board of Governance. The review team concludes that the Academy's plans for maintaining sector-recognised standards are credible and robust.

22 Staff who met the review team staff understand the Academy's approach to maintaining sector-recognised standards. Senior staff reported that the Academy's academic policies and procedures have been developed based on the awarding organisations' regulations and quality assurance requirements. There is awarding organisation-specific training for new staff at induction to ensure that all staff are familiar with the Academy's approaches for maintaining sector-recognised standards and quality. The awarding organisations' regulations and qualification specifications with the sector-recognised standards embedded in them are made available to all academic staff together with the Academy's policies and procedures. Academic staff reported that they attended the training recently provided by Pearson on assessment design and were able to explain the Academy's processes for the design, internal verification and external moderation as described in its policies and procedures.

Conclusions

23 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing the review team ensured that its

judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

24 From the evidence seen, the review team considers that the standards set for the College's courses are in line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS regulatory framework. The review team also considers that the standards described in the approved programme documentation are set at levels that are consistent with these sector-recognised standards and the College's academic regulations and policies should ensure that standards are maintained appropriately.

25 The review team considers that, based on the evidence scrutinised, the standards that will be achieved by the College's students are expected to be in line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS regulatory framework. Based on this information the review team also considers that the College's academic regulations and policies will ensure that these standards are maintained. The Academy plans to follow the awarding organisation's clear and comprehensive academic regulations to assessment and classification, as well as using its own approach to assessment and therefore the review team found that the Academy has a credible and robust approach to maintain threshold standards. The review team also considers that staff fully understand the College's approach to maintaining these standards and that the evidence seen demonstrates they are committed to implementing this approach. Therefore, based on its scrutiny of the evidence provided, the review team concludes that this Core practice is met.

26 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects most of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix for this Core practice apart from external examiner reports, assessed student work and third-party endorsements. None were available as the Academy had not yet started programme delivery. While reflecting the Academy's current stage in the programme delivery cycle, this means that the effectiveness of the Academy's approach to ensuring sector-recognised standards are maintained could not be fully tested. However, considering that the Academy's plans are credible and robust, and that the awarding organisations have oversight of sector-recognised standards, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

S2 The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers

27 This Core practice expects that the provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.

28 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

29 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing
- b City & Guilds Qualification Handbook for the Diploma in Education and Training
- c HND Computing Assignment Briefs and Completed Internal Verification of Assessment Brief Form Unit 1
- d HND Computing Assignment Briefs and Completed Internal Verification of Assessment Brief Form Unit 2
- e Plan for Maintaining Threshold Standards
- f Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification
- g External Assessment Procedure
- h Standardisation Meeting minutes
- i Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance
- j City & Guilds Centre Manual
- k Views of senior staff and academic staff.

30 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

31 External examiners' reports and assessed student work as the Academy has yet to commence delivering the proposed higher education provision.

32 Third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

33 Finally, the review team did not meet with students as none had been recruited at the time of the review visit.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

34 The review team did not sample any approved course documentation. As the Academy only intends to deliver two programmes the team considered documentation from both programmes to gain a complete understanding of the higher education provision under review.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

35 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider was considered by the review team either prior to the visit, or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the provider's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

36 To identify the Academy's approach to course and assessment design, marking and moderation, requirements for awards and approaches to classification as the underlying basis for the standards of awards, the review team considered the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing, the City & Guilds Qualification Handbook for the Diploma in Education and Training, the HND Computing Assignment Briefs and Completed Internal Verification of Assessment Brief Form for Unit 1 and Unit 2.

37 To interrogate the robustness of the Academy's plans for maintaining comparable standards and to ensure that plans are credible and evidence-based, the review team considered the plan for maintaining sector-recognised standards, the Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification, the External Assessment Procedure, and Standardisation Meeting minutes.

38 To test that specified standards beyond the sector-recognised for the courses will be reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK higher education providers, the review team considered the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing, the City & Guilds Qualification Handbook for the Diploma in Education and Training, the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance, the City & Guilds Centre Manual and the Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification.

39 The review team held meetings with senior and academic staff to assess and test that staff understand the Academy's approach to maintaining comparable standards.

What the evidence shows

40 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

41 The Academy's approach to securing threshold academic standards through course and assessment design, marking and moderation, requirements for awards and approaches to classification has been assessed in detail in Core practice S1 above. Opportunities for students to achieve standards beyond the threshold level are evident in the qualification specifications developed by the awarding organisations. For the HND Computing, the qualification specification clearly states the pass, merit and distinction criteria for each learning outcome in each unit of study. These are repeated in the HND Computing assessment briefs examined by the team. For the observation of teaching the Ofsted descriptors for grading trainees as set out in its Initial Teacher Education handbook are used which include 'outstanding' and 'good' criteria.

42 The Academy's plans for maintaining comparable standards are credible and robust because they involve standardisation of assessments and the use of external examiners from the awarding organisations for the approval of assessment briefs and moderation of assessment results. The Standardisation Meeting will ensure that all assessment is set and marked at the correct level and confirm that the assessment tasks test the required learning outcome. The Academy's plans are evidence based, as comparable standards will be achieved by the external moderation of sample assessments and their results where external examiners from the awarding organisations will help ensure that standards of the Academy are comparable to that of other centres in the UK delivering the same qualification. Recommendations in the reports of external examiners will be acted upon in accordance with the External Assessment Procedure discussed in greater detail in Core practice S4.

43 The specified standards beyond the threshold in the awarding organisations' qualification specifications will be reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK higher education providers as all UK higher education providers who deliver the awarding organisations' qualifications are required to achieve and maintain them, and the Academy has appropriate procedures as set out in paragraph 42 for assessment design, marking and moderation in place to ensure this.

44 Senior and academic staff who met the review team understand the Academy's approach to maintaining comparable standards. Senior staff explained how the Academy translates the awarding organisations' expectations for the achievement of threshold standards and beyond into practice. The Academy claims it does this by ensuring that all academic staff are familiar with the awarding organisations' requirements, academic regulations and qualification specifications. Teaching staff are also made aware of the Academy's teaching, learning and assessment, marking and moderation policies and procedures to ensure students are enabled to achieve the stipulated learning outcomes to demonstrate achievement of both threshold standards and standards beyond the threshold level. Senior and academic staff also explained the role external examiners will play in ensuring that standards achieved at the Academy are comparable with those at other UK delivery centres through sampling of assessment marking and results. Academic staff confirmed that staff meetings have been used to discuss regulations and standards and reported that they had attended awarding organisation training on assessment design to help them turn this into practice.

Conclusions

45 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

46 The review team, based on the evidence presented, determined that the standards set for students to achieve beyond the threshold on the provider's courses are reasonably comparable with those set by other UK providers. The review team considers that the standards described in the approved programme documentation and in the provider's academic regulations and policies should ensure that such standards are maintained appropriately.

47 The review team determined that the standards that will be achieved by the provider's students beyond the threshold are expected to be reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers. The team considers that the provider's academic regulations and policies should ensure that standards beyond the threshold are maintained.

Based on the detailed scrutiny of the evidence, the review team considers that staff at the provider fully understand the provider's approach to maintaining such standards and have opportunities for engagement with peers and external experts in teaching and assessment activities. The review team considers the provider's plans for maintaining comparable standards appropriate, well documented and understood by staff members.

48 Therefore, the review team concludes, based on the evidence described above, that students who are awarded qualifications should have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers and this Core practice is met.

49 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects most of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix for this Core practice apart from external examiners reports, assessed student work and third-party endorsements. None were available as the Academy had not yet started programme delivery. While reflecting the Academy's current stage in the programme delivery cycle, this means that the effectiveness of the Academy's approach to ensuring comparable standards are maintained could not be fully tested yet. However, considering that the Academy's plans are credible and robust, and with the awarding organisations' oversight the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

S3 Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them

50 This Core practice expects that where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.

51 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

52 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Handbook for the Diploma in Education and Training (DET)
- b Work Placement Procedure
- c Guide to Mentoring and Observing DET Student Teachers
- d Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification
- e External Assessment Procedure
- f Standardisation Meeting minutes
- g Plan for Maintaining Threshold Standards
- h Programme Delivery Approval Letter Pearson
- i Programme Delivery Approval Letter City & Guilds
- j Pearson Centre Agreement
- k City & Guilds Centre Manual
- l City & Guilds Qualification Handbook Diploma in Education and Training
- m Contract Progress Document North East Surrey College of Technology
- n Policies and Procedures Framework
- o Views of senior staff and academic staff.

53 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

54 External examiners' reports and assessed student work as the Academy has yet to commence delivering the proposed higher education provision.

55 Third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

56 Finally, the review team did not meet with students as none had been recruited at the time of the review visit.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

57 The review team did not sample any partnership agreements as there were only two. The team considered all agreements to gain a full understanding of the partnerships under review.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

58 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider was considered by the review team either prior to the visit, or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the provider's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

59 To identify how the Academy ensures the standards of its awarding organisations' awards are credible and secure where these are delivered by partners, the review team examined the Handbook for the Diploma in Education and Training, the Work Placement Procedure, the Guide to Mentoring and Observing DET Student Teachers to identify how the Academy ensures the standards of its awarding organisations' awards are credible and secure where these are delivered by partners.

60 To assess whether the Academy has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for securing standards in partnership work, the review team examined the Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification, the External Assessment Procedure, Standardisation Meeting minutes and the plan for maintaining threshold standards.

61 To interrogate the basis for the maintenance of academic standards within specific partnerships, and that those arrangements are in line with the Academy's regulations or policies, the review team examined the programme delivery approval letters from Pearson and City & Guilds, the Pearson Centre Agreement, the City & Guilds Centre Manual, the City & Guilds Qualification Handbook for the Diploma in Education and Training, the contract progress document with the North East Surrey College of Technology and the policies and procedures framework.

62 The review team met with senior academic and professional support staff to test that staff understand and discharge effectively their responsibilities to the awarding organisations.

What the evidence shows

63 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

64 The Academy's approach to, and its plans for securing standards in, partnership work with its awarding organisations have been discussed in detail in Core practices S1 and S2 above and are therefore not repeated here. The Academy has robust policies and procedures and credible and evidence-based plans for the maintenance of standards for the qualifications it delivers.

65 The Academy has approval from Pearson to deliver the HNC/D Computing until August 2022. The signed centre agreement between the Academy and Pearson sets out the responsibilities of the Academy for the maintenance of standards which include adhering to all of Pearson policies and procedures, terms and conditions for continued centre recognition and qualification approval; fully supporting Pearson's centre and qualification monitoring processes and operating the required internal and external assessments in full accordance

with Pearson policies and procedures. The Academy also has approval from City & Guilds to deliver the Diploma in Education and Training (DET). The responsibilities of each party are detailed in the general terms and conditions which are contained in the City & Guilds Centre Manual. With regards to maintaining standards, the awarding organisation requires the Academy to comply at all times with standard policies, procedures and regulations published and adopted by City & Guilds relating to the centre qualification approval and only use the provided assessment materials in accordance with the terms. The arrangements in place with the awarding organisations are in line with the Academy's academic policies and procedures framework. Through the agreements with its awarding bodies and their requirements to deliver their awards, the review team found that the Academy has clear and comprehensive regulations and policies for working in partnership with its awarding organisations to ensure the standards of their awards are credible and secure.

66 There were no external examiner reports to consider as delivery of the programmes had not yet started but the requirements of the HND Computing programme expect the Academy to liaise with the external examiner appointed by the awarding body through annual visits. In the same way, the DET Programme has an External Quality Assurer appointed by City & Guilds who will visit the Academy and sample assessments. Academy staff whom the team met confirm that the Academy would draw up an action plan in response to the external examiner/assurer's recommendations which will feed into an overarching Academy Quality Improvement Plan. Staff also confirm that the Academy intends to share the reports with students. The team concludes that the Academy's plans for working with external examiners are credible and robust.

67 The review heard that the Academy is in the process of establishing a partnership with North East Surrey College of Technology (NESCOT) with regard to the delivery of the above programmes. At the time of the review visit a contractual agreement was still to be formally ratified although the arrangements were in the final preparation stage.

68 Senior staff who met the review team reported that the Academy has taken due account of the awarding organisations' requirements for maintaining standards when developing its own policies and procedures that govern programme delivery, assessment and monitoring. Academic staff demonstrated an understanding of their responsibilities to the awarding organisations and explained how to find, use and apply their academic regulations for assessment design, marking and moderation. They plan to discharge their responsibilities for maintaining standards effectively through staff discussions, assessment training and standardisation meetings. Senior staff outlined the nature of the future relationship with NESCOT and confirmed that a dedicated liaising member of staff would be having regular meetings with the Partnership Manager at NESCOT to ensure that the relationship is effectively managed.

Conclusions

69 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

70 The review team concludes that the Academy has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of the awards it will deliver on behalf of its awarding organisations are credible and secure. This is because the Academy has clear and comprehensive regulations and policies for working in partnership with its awarding organisations to ensure the standards of their awards are credible and secure. The

partnership agreements with the awarding organisations are clear, comprehensive and up to date and reflect the Academy's policies for the management of partnerships. Staff fully understand their responsibilities towards the awarding organisations and in following their regulations as well as using external examiners with regard to maintaining academic standards. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.

71 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects most of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix for this Core practice apart from external examiners' reports, assessed students' work, third-party endorsements and views of delivery partner and awarding organisation staff. None were available as the Academy had not yet started programme delivery. While reflecting the Academy's current stage in the programme delivery cycle, this means that the effectiveness of the Academy's arrangements for ensuring standards in partnership working could not yet be fully tested. However, considering the awarding organisations' oversight, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

S4 The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent

72 This Core practice expects that the provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.

73 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

74 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification
- b External Assessment Procedure
- c Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy
- d Student Handbook
- e Policies and Procedures Framework
- f Draft Terms of Reference Assessment Board
- g City & Guilds Qualifications Handbook Diploma in Education and Training
- h Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing
- i HND Computing Programme Handbook
- j Plan for Maintaining Threshold Standards
- k Terms of Reference of Boards and Committees
- l Formative and Summative Assessment Feedback Form Templates
- m Higher Education Delivery Planning Documents
- n Student Feedback Form Templates
- o Annual Programme Report Template
- p Views of senior and academic staff.

75 Some of the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

76 External examiner reports and provider responses as there were none to consider because the Academy had not yet commenced programme delivery.

77 Assessed student work as the Academy has yet to commence delivering the proposed higher education provision.

78 The team also did not consider records of course approval as this is not applicable because the Academy does not develop the qualifications it delivers.

79 Third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

80 Finally, the review team did not meet with students as none had been recruited at the time of the review visit.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

81 The review team did not sample any approved course documentation. As the Academy only intends to deliver two programmes the team considered documentation from both programmes to gain a complete understanding of the higher education provision under review.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

82 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider was considered by the review team either prior to the visit, or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the provider's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

83 To identify how external experts are used in maintaining academic standards, and how the Academy's assessment and classification processes operate, the review team considered the Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification, the External Assessment Procedure, the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, the Student Handbook, the Policies and Procedures Framework, the draft terms of reference for the Assessment Board, the City & Guilds Qualifications Handbook Diploma in Education and Training and the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing.

84 To assess whether plans for using external expertise in maintaining academic standards and plans for assessment and classification processes are credible, robust and evidence-based, the review team considered the External Assessment Procedure, the Plan for Maintaining Threshold Standards, the Terms of Reference of boards and committees, the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification, Computing, formative and summative assessment feedback form templates, the higher education delivery planning documents, the Draft Terms of Reference for the Assessment Board, student feedback form templates, the annual programme report template.

85 To assess the reliability, fairness and transparency of assessment and classification processes for the courses, the review team considered the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing, the HND Computing Programme Handbook and the City & Guilds Qualification Specification for the Diploma in Education and Training.

86 The review team met with senior staff and academic and professional staff to test that staff understand the requirements for the use of external expertise, and the Academy's assessment and classification processes.

What the evidence shows

87 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

88 The Academy has clear policies and procedures for the use of external expertise in maintaining standards. The Academy plans to do this by working with the awarding organisations' external examiners during the moderation of assessment results. The Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification states that a sample of internally verified assessed student work will be made available to the external examiners who will check the quality and standard of assessment grading and student achievement. The external assessment

procedure sets out the processes for the consideration of external examiner reports at programme and institutional level and the response mechanisms to recommendations made in the reports including action plans and dissemination to students.

89 Assessment processes are clearly articulated in the Academy's policies and procedures. The Academy's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy includes a commitment to ensure 'that assessment across all programmes is robust, valid, fair and reliable' and that students will receive 'appropriate, timely and supportive feedback' on their work. Special arrangements are put in place for students with disabilities. The assessment requirements for each award are set by the awarding organisations and are specified in their qualifications handbooks with the Diploma in Education and Training being assessed through a combination of assignments, a portfolio of teaching evidence, and observation of teaching. Learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each unit are clearly identified. The HND Computing is assessed through a combination of formative and summative assessment tasks. The assessment setting, marking and internal moderation processes set out in the Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification and discussed in Core practice S1 above, are supported by procedures on assessment submission, fair assessment and academic misconduct. Assessment outcomes at unit and programme level are confirmed by a formally constituted Assessment Board. In relying on the awarding bodies' assessment requirements, the review team found that the Academy has a robust and credible approach to the process of assessment setting and moderation.

90 For the classification of the HND Computing award, the Academy follows the classification calculation rules set out by Pearson in the qualification specification. Classification is not applicable for the Diploma in Education and Training as the qualification is graded pass or fail.

91 The Academy's plans for using external expertise in the maintenance of academic standards are robust and credible because it has clear protocols for use of external examiners (who are appointed by the awarding organisations) and their reports. Upon receipt of the report the Academy will send a formal acknowledgement with a comment, if appropriate, upon the proposed action to be taken by the Academy in response to any comments or recommendations made. Programme staff will consider external examiner recommendations and propose an appropriate plan of action and agreed timescale to meet these. At institutional level the programme action plans will be discussed at Academic Board and feed into the Academy's annual self-evaluation report. Students will receive a summary of the key findings including recommendations through the student representative system. The Academy will explain to student representatives the significance of any recommendations made and will also publish reports on the virtual learning environment (VLE) in order to promote transparency and student engagement. In addition, for the HND Computing a sample of assignment briefs will be submitted to the external examiner for approval.

92 The Academy's plans for the conduct of assessment are credible and robust because the qualification and unit specifications developed by the awarding organisations are the reference point for assessment and because each programme has an assessment plan developed by the Academy. Assessment briefs will be developed to a standard template and internally verified according to a published schedule thus ensuring consistency and quality, and a standardised assessment feedback pro forma will be used to provide formative and summative feedback to students on written assignments.

93 Students will be encouraged to adopt good academic practice in assessment, including timely submission of assessed work and the avoidance of plagiarism. All assignments should be submitted using plagiarism-detection software with high similarity scores being discussed at the Standardisation Committee, Academic Board and the

proposed Assessment Board. With three committees having responsibility for this it is unclear where individual cases would be considered and what decisions will be made and by whom for the varying degrees of offences. In its plan for maintaining threshold standards, the Academy merely states that 'where a student's work is found to contain high levels of plagiarism, the work will be referred, and students judged to have plagiarised work will be required to attend Disciplinary Committee'. However, 'high levels of plagiarism' is not defined and it is also not clear what the sanctions would be as the Disciplinary Committee deals with gross misconduct offences committed by students or staff which range from physical and verbal assault to damage to property, drug abuse, breach of legal obligations and fraud.

94 The Academy's plans for assessment are evidence-based, as a formally constituted Assessment Board will confirm unit grades achieved after internal and external moderation of assessment, monitor student progression, consider extenuating circumstances, referrals and deferrals and confirm awards for both Pearson and City & Guilds provision thus recording all assessment decisions accurately and systematically. There are clear rules set by Pearson for the reassessment of students which state that students who failed to achieve a pass have only one reassessment opportunity per unit. Grades will be capped at a pass for that unit. The plans for the classification of Pearson awards are credible and robust as the Academy will implement the rules set by Pearson in its qualification specification. One reassessment opportunity also exists for the assignment components of the Diploma in Education.

95 The Academy's plans for assessment also include regular review of assessment practices and procedures and an evaluation of their effectiveness based on the results of student surveys, and student retention, performance, progression and achievement will be captured in the annual programme monitoring reports and evaluated against key performance indicators.

96 The approved course documentation shows that assessment processes will be transparent, reliable and fair because unit learning outcomes for the HND Computing have been mapped to the assessment criteria at and beyond the threshold level. This mapping grid is published in the programme handbook and contextualisation of grading is clearly set out in assignment briefs. Classification processes are transparent as programme specifications clearly map the learning outcomes to assessment for each unit and detail classification processes, specifying the requirements for fail, pass, merit and distinction. The calculation of the overall qualification grade for the HND Computing is based on the student's performance in all units. Students will be awarded a pass, merit or distinction qualification grade, using the points gained through all 120 credits at Level 5, based on unit achievement. Similarly, for the Diploma in Education and Training unit, learning outcomes have been mapped to assessment criteria and these unit specifications are contained in the qualification specification of the awarding organisation to which students have access, thus ensuring transparency. As the qualification is pass/fail classification does not apply.

97 Academic staff who met the review team displayed a clear understanding of the requirements for the use of external expertise and the Academy's assessment and classification processes. They competently articulated the use of external examiners' expertise in assessment and moderation and confirmed that external examiner reports will be discussed in programme team meetings. Both senior and academic staff confirmed that reports will be shared with student representatives, the Student Committee and with all students through the VLE. Academic staff also described the processes that would be employed for dealing with suspected plagiarism and reported that at the first offence students would receive a verbal warning and a second warning would be in writing. They also confirmed that students found guilty of plagiarism have to re-submit the assignment and the maximum grade achievable would be a pass. In contrast, senior staff stated that students suspected of plagiarism will be reported to the Principal and their case considered

by the Disciplinary Committee. They also confirmed the use of plagiarism-detection software for the submission of assignments. Senior staff explained that the Academy has undertaken development activities for academic staff to ensure that all are familiar with the assessment processes and awarding organisation requirements.

Conclusions

98 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

99 The review team concludes that the Academy has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of the awards it will deliver on behalf of its awarding organisation are credible and secure. This is because the Academy has clear and comprehensive regulations and policies for working in partnership with its awarding organisations to ensure the standards of their awards are credible and secure. The partnership agreements with the awarding organisations are clear, comprehensive and up to date and reflect the Academy's policies for the management of partnerships. Staff fully understand their responsibilities towards the awarding organisations and following their regulations as well as using external examiners with regard to maintaining academic standards. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.

100 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects most of the evidence described in QSR evidence matrix for this Core practice with the exception of external examiner reports, third party endorsements and views of students. None were available as the Academy had not yet started programme delivery. While reflecting the Academy's current stage in the programme delivery cycle, this means that the effectiveness of the Academy's approach to the use of external expertise could not be tested yet and the reliability, fairness and transparency of the assessment and classification processes could not be fully confirmed. However, considering that the Academy's plans are credible and robust, and with the awarding organisations' oversight the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

Q1 The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system

101 This Core practice expects that the provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.

102 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

103 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Admissions Policy
- b Student Recruitment and Enrolment Procedure
- c Public Information Review and Sign Off Procedure
- d Student Handbook
- e Admissions process document on the Academy's website
- f Complaints and Grievances Procedure
- g Management and Committee Structure
- h Admissions Committee Terms of Reference and Membership
- i Admission Committee Minutes
- j Recruitment Targets for 2020
- k Quality Assurance Procedure
- l Admissions Assessment Forms
- m Initial assessment tests for literacy, numeracy, English language and ICT
- n Diploma for Education and Training Admissions Interview Pro forma
- o Admissions Pages of the Academy's Website
- p Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing
- q City & Guilds Qualification Handbook Diploma in Education and Training
- r HND Computing Programme Handbook
- s Mandatory Staff Training List for 2019-20
- t Views of staff involved in the admissions process.

104 Some of the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

105 The team did not consider admissions records or meet with students because the Academy had not yet started to recruit students.

106 Arrangements with recruitment agents because the Academy reported that they do not use recruitment agents.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

107 The review team did not sample any approved course documentation. As the Academy only intends to deliver two programmes, the team considered documentation from both programmes to gain a complete understanding of the higher education provision under review.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

108 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider was considered by the review team either prior to the visit, or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the provider's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

109 The review team considered the Admissions Policy, the Student Recruitment and Enrolment Procedure, the Public Information Review and Sign Off Procedure, the Student Handbook, the admissions process document on the Academy's website and the Complaints and Grievances Procedure to identify institutional policy relating to the recruitment, selection and admission of students; roles and responsibilities of staff involved in the admissions process; support for applicants; how the Academy verifies applicants' entry qualifications; how the Academy facilitates an inclusive admissions system; and how it handles complaints and appeals.

110 To assess whether the Academy has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for ensuring that admissions systems are reliable, fair and inclusive, the review team considered the Student Recruitment and Enrolment Procedure, the management and committee structure, the Admissions Committee terms of reference and membership, Admission Committee minutes, recruitment targets for 2020, the Academy's Quality Assurance Procedure, the Student Handbook, admissions student assessment forms, Initial Assessment Tests for literacy, numeracy, English language, and ICT and the Diploma for Education and Training admissions interview pro forma.

111 The review team considered the admissions pages of the Academy's website and the Student Handbook to test whether the information given to applicants is transparent, inclusive and fit for purpose.

112 To test whether admissions requirements for the courses reflect the Academy's overall policies, the review team considered Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing, the City & Guilds Qualification Handbook Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training, the HND in Computing Programme Handbook, the Student Handbook and the admissions pages of the Academy's website.

113 The review team met with staff involved in the admissions process and considered the mandatory staff training list for 2019-20 to test whether staff understand their responsibilities, are appropriately skilled and supported and can articulate how the Academy's approach to inclusivity is manifest in the admissions process.

What the evidence shows

114 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

115 The Academy has clear policies and procedures for the admission of students. The Admissions Policy sets out the Academy's commitment to a transparent, fair and inclusive

admissions system. It states that students will be admitted on the basis of clearly specified, fair and reasonable selection criteria. The Student Handbook states the Academy's commitment to inclusivity through equal opportunities. The Academy 'aims to treat fairly potential and actual students on the basis of merit and ability to profit from courses offered regardless of age, disability, gender, marital status, family responsibilities, nationality, race, religious or political views, socio-economic background and sexual orientation'.

116 The Admissions Policy states that 'promotional materials and enrolment information provided to applicants will be accurate, complete and fit for purpose and all communication with applicants will be conducted in a professional and supportive manner'. The Public Information Review and Sign Off Procedure which also applies to admissions information such as entry requirements, application codes, admissions procedures and descriptions of programmes and modules is robust and supports the admissions process. It sets out the processes and responsibilities for the generation and amendment of admissions and course information with Programme Leaders having responsibility for the initial drafting or amending of information, followed by approval by the Higher Education Coordinator, consideration by the Academic Board and final sign off by the Principal.

117 The Student Recruitment and Enrolment Procedure is clear and comprehensive and designed to facilitate a fair, transparent and inclusive admissions system. It sets out the application process including the supporting documentation students are required to submit and gives clear and comprehensive guidance to staff assessing applications on how to score and select applicants using a points system. Applications are assessed by the Admissions Officer who submits a report to the Admissions Committee using a standard assessment form. All applicants must meet the minimum entry requirements. The application assessment also includes a financial assessment, an English language assessment carried out by a member of academic staff and an academic assessment based on the qualifications submitted and the grades achieved. A minimum of 5.5 IELTS (International English Language Testing System) points or equivalent is required for all QCF diploma courses of Level 5 or below. Original qualification certificates will be used for verification by the Admissions Officer.

118 The Academy's approach to inclusivity is evident from the weight it will put on academic qualifications and achieved grades. The Academy considers that while a student's academic qualifications provide evidence of aptitude, exclusion of other factors may be discriminatory. In as much as it is not bound by admission criteria stipulated by awarding organisations, the Academy may consider potential students where factors may have led them to under achieve. These may include, for example, poor home facilities for study, family discouragement, prolonged illness or disability, and additional plans can be put in place to support these students if required. Unsuccessful applicants may reapply or may be offered another course that is more suitable for them. Admissions decisions are made by the Admissions Committee and communicated to students by the Student Welfare Officer.

119 Support for applicants is available from the Admissions Office whose advisers will guide students through the process if required. Students are also encouraged to visit the Academy.

120 Neither the Admissions Policy nor the Student Recruitment and Enrolment Procedure contain explicit provision for the appeal of admissions decisions or complaints about the admissions process and it is not clear how students would be informed about complaining. While the Admissions Policy states that the Academy will 'ensure that all complaints and appeals about the students admissions process are dealt with in an efficient, fair and reasonable manner', the Student Recruitment and Enrolment Procedure states that decisions of the Admissions Committee are final. The Academy's Complaints and Grievance Procedure would allow for admissions complaints to be raised but the review team found

that there was no plan to ensure transparency or accessibility to complaints or appeals for students going through the admissions process.

121 The Academy's plans for delivering admissions are credible and robust because the Academy has an appropriate infrastructure to support the admissions process, and roles and responsibilities of staff and committees involved in making admissions decisions are clearly defined with clear reporting lines. The Admissions Committee which reports to the Academic Board makes final admissions decisions based on a thorough analysis of applications by admissions and academic staff. The terms of reference for the Admissions Committee show that it has oversight of the Academy's recruitment strategy, will determine recruitment targets and monitor performance against targets, and periodically review admissions policies and practices. The minutes of the only committee meeting at the time of the review demonstrate that it discharges its responsibilities appropriately. The committee set the recruitment targets for 2020, approved the application assessment form, confirmed the requirements for applicant assessment using diagnostic testing tools, numeracy, English language, and ICT and discussed the procedure for dealing with applicants with a disability.

122 The plans are evidence-based because applications are judged using bespoke diagnostics for literacy, numeracy, English language and ICT testing tools against the Academy's own objective points system. In addition, for the Diploma in Education and Training, a standard interview questionnaire will be used to support decision making. Furthermore, the Quality Assurance Process contains a commitment to performance monitoring of student recruitment, retention, progression and achievement after each intake or annually against set targets and/or benchmarks. The Student Handbook states that 'the Academy will put in place arrangements to monitor the applications and admissions by ethnic origin, gender, age and disability. The Academy will also monitor students who withdraw from their courses. The data obtained will be considered by the Senior Management team and circulated to admissions staff on an annual basis'. This information will be used to periodically review the admissions policy and procedures to ensure they continue to ensure that the Academy's admissions systems are reliable, fair and inclusive.

123 The information given to applicants is mostly transparent and accessible because the Academy's website contains the procedures for application and admission to the programme, as well as course information. The online information is fit for purpose because the application procedures are detailed and comprehensive and include information on how to apply, the documents required in support of the application and how the Academy will verify them, the issuing of offer letters and actions applicants have to take to accept the offer as well as the documents required to complete the enrolment process. Similarly, the course information is clear and comprehensive and includes the entry requirements, course structure, course delivery and skills development, job prospects and course fees and funding information which will enable applicants to make an informed choice.

124 While the Academy's Admissions Policy and the Student Recruitment and Enrolment Procedure do not list any admissions criteria, the City & Guilds Qualification Handbook for the Diploma in Education and Training and the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing specify broad entry requirements for each programme. For the Diploma in Education and Training the course specific admissions criteria as expressed in the course information pages on the Academy's website and in the Student Handbook are consistent with the awarding organisation's expectations for entry stated in the qualifications handbook. For Pearson, the entry requirements specified in the HND Computing Programme Handbook developed by the Academy correspond to those stated for the programme on the website and are consistent with the broad entry requirements stipulated by Pearson in its qualifications handbook. Therefore, the team concludes that the Academy's stated admissions requirements reflect the awarding bodies' requirements.

125 Staff involved in admissions understand their roles and responsibilities. They competently articulated the admissions process and their role in it. They drew attention to the accessibility and transparency of admissions information on the website and the personalised support and guidance available to applicants which includes students with special needs. Support plans will be developed for students with disabilities and/or special needs who do not self-declare. Senior staff stated that the Academy will consider applications from all local communities and backgrounds, thus facilitating inclusivity. They also confirmed the Academy's commitment to review the admissions process regularly in light of the experience gained and in response to feedback from students. From the mandatory staff training list, which includes workshops on the use of UK NARIC and UCAS as well as best practice in admissions, it is evident that admission staff are appropriately supported and have the opportunity to maintain the currency of their professional skills. Senior staff reported that all staff involved in admissions have had training.

Conclusions

126 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

127 The review team concludes that the the Academy has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system. This is because the Academy's policies and procedures for recruitment, selection and admission of students are clear, transparent and fair and will enable the Academy to operate a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system once it starts recruiting students. The plans for delivering admissions are credible, robust and evidence-based with clear responsibilities of staff and committees involved in decision making, and standardised tools for the assessment of applications against clearly defined and published admissions criteria. Admissions requirements set out in the approved course documentation are consistent with the Academy's admissions policy and awarding organisations' requirements. Staff involved in the admission process understand their roles and are appropriately skilled and trained. Information for applicants, with the exception of signposting to applicants in respect of raising a complaint or appealing an admissions decision, is transparent, easily accessible on the website and fit for purpose. The review team concludes, therefore, that on balance, this Core practice is met.

128 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects most of the evidence described in QSR evidence matrix for this Core practice. The lack of evidence from admissions records and views of students on the admissions process, while reflecting the Academy's current stage in the programme delivery cycle, means the effectiveness of the Academy's approaches to ensuring a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system could not be fully tested. However, the Academy's plans are credible and robust and therefore the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

Q2 The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses

129 This Core practice expects that the provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.

130 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

131 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment
- b City & Guilds Centre Manual
- c Strategic Plan 2019-23
- d Approval of New Programmes Procedure
- e Approval of New Programmes Form – HND Computing
- f Minutes of Board of Governors April 2019
- g Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy
- h Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification
- i Teaching Observation and Peer Review Procedure
- j Quality Assurance Procedure for Observation of Learning and Teaching and Staff Appraisal
- k Performance Review Procedure
- l Staff Development Policy
- m Annual Monitoring Procedure
- n Terms of Reference and Membership for the Academic Board and the Standardisation Meeting
- o HE Delivery Planning Documents Guide to Mentoring and Observing DET Student Teachers
- p Quality Improvement Plan 2019-20
- q HND Computing, Unit 2: Networking - Scheme of Work
- r DET Unit 1: formative and summative assessment feedback forms
- s HND Computing Unit 1 and 2 Assignment Brief and Internal Verification of Assessment Brief Form
- t Standardisation Meeting minutes
- u Tutor Observation and Peer Review Record Forms
- v Staff training documents
- w Module Evaluation and End of Programme Evaluation Forms
- x Annual Programme Report template
- y HND in Computing Programme Handbook
- z HND Computing: Unit 1 Handbook
- aa Views of senior staff and Academic and Professional Support Staff.

132 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

133 External examiner reports as there were none to consider because the Academy had not yet commenced programme delivery.

134 Third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

135 The review team did not undertake observations of teaching and learning as delivery of the programmes has yet to commence.

136 Finally, the review team did not meet with students or consider students' views as no students had been recruited at the time of the review visit.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

137 The review team did not sample any approved course documentation as the Academy only intends to deliver two programmes. The team considered documentation from both programmes to gain a complete understanding of the higher education provision under review.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

138 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider was considered by the review team either prior to the visit, or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the provider's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

139 The review team considered the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment and the City & Guilds Centre Manual, the Academy's Strategic Plan 2019-23, the Approval of New Programmes Procedure, Approval of New Programmes Form – HND Computing, the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, the Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification, the Teaching Observation and Peer Review Procedure, the Quality Assurance Procedure for observation of learning and teaching and staff appraisal, the Performance Review Procedure, the Staff Development Policy, the Annual Monitoring Procedure as well as the Boards and Committee Terms of Reference and Membership for the Academic Board and the Standardisation Meeting to identify the Academy's approach to delivering high-quality courses.

140 The review team considered higher education delivery planning progress updates, the Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification, the Guide to Mentoring and Observing DET Student Teachers 2019-20, the Quality Improvement Plan 2019-20, the HND Computing, Unit 2: Networking - Scheme of Work, the DET Unit 1: formative and summative assessment feedback forms, the HND Computing Unit 1 and 2 Assignment Brief and Internal Verification of Assessment Brief Form, Standardisation Meeting minutes, the tutor observation and peer review record forms, staff training documents, module evaluation and end of programme evaluation forms, the annual programme report template 2019-20 as well as the Boards and Committee Terms of Reference and Membership for the Academic Board and the Standardisation Meeting to assess whether the Academy has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for delivering high-quality courses.

141 The review team considered the HND in Computing Programme Handbook and the HND Computing: Unit 1 Handbook to test that the assessment design will enable students to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes.

142 The review team had meetings with senior staff and academic and professional support staff to assess how staff ensure course delivery is of high quality.

What the evidence shows

143 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

144 The Academy has no responsibility for the design of courses which lies with its awarding organisations. This includes curriculum development, content and organisation and learning, teaching and assessment approaches. The Academy's responsibility with regard to this Core practice is limited to the delivery of courses and the design of assessments in accordance with the awarding organisation's requirements as set out in their quality assurance manuals.

145 The Strategic Plan 2019-23 describes the Academy's overarching approach to delivering high-quality courses. It has the development and maintenance of high-quality student learning as one of its key objectives. This includes the assurance of an excellent student experience through the development of academic skills, critical and analytical thinking, reflective and independent learning; the offer of a wide and varied curriculum which is responsive to the requirements of students, employers and the local communities; the encouragement of entrepreneurship through projects and work-based learning activities and the provision of a supportive learning environment that values diversity and promotes equality. The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy which underpins the Strategic Plan sets out the Academy's approaches to learning, teaching and assessment in detail. It states that 'the Academy will take appropriate measures to ensure that effective and learner-centred teaching is delivered, that teaching delivery methods are varied and designed to encourage student engagement and that content is related to real world examples. In addition, 'varied learning opportunities, which foster and encourage independent learning will be provided and the Academy will ensure that students have the opportunities to achieve the intended learning outcomes of their programmes and that assessment across all programmes is robust, valid, fair and reliable'. The Academy ensures that programmes are adequately resourced through careful consideration of human, physical and learning resources of new programmes to be delivered by the Academy. This is done by submitting a New Programme Approval form to the Board of Governors who assesses whether the programme fits with the Academy's Strategic Plan and is financially feasible and which contains information around resources and how the programme is to be structured and delivered. There was evidence that the Board of Governors considered resources for the programme. The review team concludes that the Academy's approach to the approval of programmes facilitated the design and delivery of high-quality courses.

146 The Academy assures itself of the quality of teaching and learning through management and peer observation processes which are set out in its quality assurance and performance review procedures. This is supported by the Academy's approach to staff development as set out in its Staff Development Policy, which states that all staff will have access to initial and continuing professional development opportunities relevant to their job role. The quality of assessment design will be assured through internal verification processes and standardisation meetings. The review team considered that together these policies and procedures form a robust framework for supporting the delivery of high-quality courses. Deliberative committees such as the Academic Board and the Standardisation Meeting provide institutional oversight and monitoring of the quality of delivery through consideration of annual monitoring reports, outcomes of teaching observations and internal

verification processes.

147 The Academy's plans for delivering high-quality courses are credible and robust because the learning, teaching and assessment approaches are appropriate, and assessments will enable students to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes. The Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification, which applies both to Pearson and City & Guilds programmes, provides clear guidance for staff on the processes for designing assessment approval and grading which include internal verification. The scheme of work for the HND Computing mapped unit learning outcomes to weekly learning and teaching activities which are varied in nature and include formative feedback. Examples of assessment briefs seen by the review team clearly state the learning outcomes and assessment criteria and show which learning outcomes are being addressed by each assessment task together with the pass, merit and distinction criteria. In line with the Academy's quality assurance requirements, assessment briefs had been internally verified and the outcomes documented on a verification form. Minutes of the standardisation meeting confirm that 'the assessment methods employed and tasks are appropriate for the units considered and consistent with the requirements specified in the relevant awarding organisations' guides; assessment tasks are valid and inclusive and assess the knowledge and skills set out in the unit learning outcomes and do not exclude students from achieving. They are also diverse enough to allow students to produce a range of evidence that they have met the learning outcomes'. Similarly, for the Diploma in Education and Training, the Guide to Mentoring and Observing DET Student Teachers provides comprehensive guidance for teaching staff on how to support students' teaching practice, observe and assess their practice performance using the same criteria, for example session preparation and planning, teaching and learning strategies employed, assessment of learning as for the observation of teaching of Academy teaching staff. For all units, formative and summative feedback form templates, which the Academy will use, list all the unit learning outcomes.

148 The robustness and credibility of the Academy's approach to deliver high quality courses is supported by staff training. Staff training documents indicate that the Academy has taken steps to ensure staff are enabled to deliver high-quality courses. Training provided by Pearson for Academy staff includes assessment planning and writing, and the mandatory training schedule for academic staff features sessions on how to provide effective one to one sessions, creative writing skills and grammar, HE curriculum and developing a consistent assessment system. Academic staff confirmed that training sessions with Pearson around standards and course design had already taken place.

149 The Academy's plans to deliver high-quality courses are evidence based because it will gather and analyse feedback on the quality of course delivery through a series of questionnaires. The module and programme evaluation forms require students to state their level of satisfaction with the course organisation, delivery and assessment; appropriateness of teaching and assessment methods; and the quality of teaching. Student feedback will inform the annual programme monitoring report which will be considered by the Academic Board. In addition, the Academy aims to summarise key areas for development and improvement based on the analysis of course annual monitoring reports, external examiner reports, student progression, retention and achievement data in a Quality Improvement Plan, an example of which showed actions to be taken, persons responsible, completion dates and update on progress. Progress will be monitored using a traffic light system.

150 The comprehensive Tutor Observation Form and Peer Observation Form, which comment on session preparation and planning, teaching and learning strategies employed, assessment of student learning, the effectiveness of the presentation of course content, teaching techniques used to engage students and quality of interactions with students, will enable the Academy to effectively monitor the quality of teaching and course delivery.

151 As part of the Academy's plans to monitor the delivery of the programmes, the terms of reference for the Academic Board and the standardisation meeting show that the Academy has the appropriate infrastructure in place for monitoring the delivery of courses at institutional level based on evidence generated from its internal quality assurance processes. For example, the terms of reference for the Academic Board state the Board will consider the teaching and learning arrangements for all programmes, review the effectiveness of assessment, consider the outcomes from teaching observation and prepare programme and institutional annual monitoring reports. In addition, the standardisation meeting will review the performance of individual teachers and the effectiveness of the internal verification process.

152 The higher education delivery planning documents, which have been reviewed twice in the last 12 months by the Academic Board (as noted on the documents), demonstrate that the Academy is taking seriously its commitment to deliver high-quality courses. Items routinely considered include the robustness of quality assurance processes and plans across all programmes, requirements for assessment plans, assessment brief templates, internal verification of briefs and assignments, feedback to students on assessed work, tracking of student progress, the establishment of Assessment Boards, the requirements for the response to recommendations made by external examiners as well as student support for their teaching practice.

153 Assessment design as evidenced by the assessment tasks included in the programme and unit handbooks will enable students to meet the intended learning outcomes and demonstrate their achievement because unit learning outcomes are mapped to assessment criteria at and beyond the threshold level and to the knowledge and skills students are expected to demonstrate.

154 Senior and academic staff who met the review team demonstrated a sound knowledge and experience of programme and assessment delivery and were able to articulate the concept of 'high quality' with reference to the design of course materials and schemes of work, quality assurance processes for programme monitoring, tutor and peer observations, and the assessment procedures including internal verification and standardisation meetings as described above. They explained how they will track student progress and use student feedback on programme delivery. Teaching staff explained that the VLE will be key to the delivery of high-quality courses, hosting digital resources, assessment briefs and facilitate electronic assignment submission. Teaching staff also reported that there were staff development opportunities and confirmed attendance of academic staff training events provided by Pearson.

Conclusions

155 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

156 The review team concludes that the Academy will deliver high-quality courses. This is because the Academy's policies and procedures facilitate the delivery of high-quality courses. The Academy has credible and robust plans for the delivery of high-quality courses with approaches to learning and teaching, an internally verified assessment design process and a quality assurance framework that supports the delivery of high-quality courses. Approved course documentation indicates that teaching, learning and assessment design will enable students to meet and demonstrate the achievement of the intended learning

outcomes. Staff have a thorough understanding of policies, procedures and quality assurance processes and are able to articulate the concept of 'high-quality' in the context of the Academy. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.

157 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects some of the evidence described in QSR evidence matrix for this Core practice. The lack of evidence from student views, external examiners' reports, observations of teaching and learning and meetings with students and third parties while reflecting the Academy's current stage in the programme delivery cycle means the effectiveness of the Academy's approaches to delivering high quality courses could not be fully tested. However, the Academy's approaches and plans are credible and robust. Therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

Q3 The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience

158 This Core practice expects that the provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.

159 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

160 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Strategic Plan 2019-23
- b Human Resources Policy
- c Staff Recruitment and Selection Procedure
- d Staff Development Policy
- e Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment
- f City & Guilds Qualification Handbook Diploma in Education and Training
- g Teaching Observation and Peer Review Procedure
- h Performance Review Procedure
- i Tutor Observation Record
- j Peer Review, Performance Review and Probation Review Forms
- k Staff Induction Programme
- l Completed Staff Induction Checklist
- m Mandatory Staff Training List 2019-20
- n Committee and Management Structure
- o Current staff list
- p Job descriptions
- q CVs of academic and support staff
- r Views of senior, academic and professional support staff.

161 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

162 Third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

163 The review team did not undertake observations of teaching and learning as delivery of the programmes has yet to commence.

164 Finally, the review team did not meet with students or consider students' views as no students had been recruited at the time of the review visit.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

165 The review team did not sample any job descriptions due to the small number of senior, academic and support roles at the Academy. However, the team examined a sample of seven CVs as provided by the Academy to assess whether staff are appropriately qualified and skilled to perform their roles effectively and to assess whether they were recruited according to the Academy's policies and procedures. This included senior, academic and support staff.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

166 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider was considered by the review team either prior to the visit, or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the provider's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

167 The review team considered the Strategic Plan 2019-23, the Human Resources Policy, the Staff Recruitment and Selection Procedure and the Staff Development Policy to identify how the Academy recruits, appoints, inducts and supports staff.

168 The review team considered the Staff Recruitment and Selection Procedure, the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment and the City & Guilds Qualification Handbook Diploma in Education and Training, the Teaching Observation and Peer Review Procedure, the Performance Review Procedure, tutor observation record, peer review, performance review and probation review forms, the staff induction programme and a completed staff induction checklist, as well as the mandatory staff training list 2019-20 to assess whether the Academy has credible and robust plans for ensuring that there are sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality learning experience.

169 The review team considered the committee and management structure and the current staff list to identify the roles and posts the Academy has to deliver a high-quality learning experience and assess whether they are sufficient.

170 The review team considered job descriptions, CVs of academic and support staff and the current staff list, and the City & Guilds Qualification Handbook Diploma in Education and Training to assess whether staff are appropriately qualified and skilled to perform their roles effectively and to assess whether they were recruited according to the Academy's policies and procedures.

171 The review team had meetings with senior, academic and professional support staff to test that staff are appropriately qualified and skilled.

What the evidence shows

172 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

173 The Academy has a number of clear policies that support the recruitment of staff and ensure their ongoing support. The Strategic Plan 2019-23 provides the overall framework for the recruitment, appointment and support of staff. The Academy's Human Resource Policy sets out the aims and objectives for recruitment of staff. These include ensuring 'that all employees can work effectively within an appropriate framework of defined procedures that is reasonable, fair and compliant with current employment legislation' as

well as ensuring that 'all employees have the knowledge, skill, experience and confidence to meet the required standards of occupational performance, together with the opportunities for personal advancement and development'. The Staff Development Policy sets out the principles and mechanisms of staff development the Academy adopts which include induction of new staff; teaching observation and performance review processes and the development of an institutional staff development plan following a training needs analysis arising from these processes and external requirements; the provision of continuing professional development opportunities and evaluation of learning including the completion of a reflective log. Staff development activities include attendance at conferences, workshops and seminars; research and study visits; secondments and work placements; online learning, mentoring and peer review activities or studying for external qualifications.

174 The Academy has credible and robust plans for ensuring that there are sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality learning experience because the Staff Recruitment and Selection Procedure is detailed and comprehensive describing the Academy's plans for recruitment and provides sample templates for job descriptions, person specifications, process for sending adverts to administration, shortlisting forms and the procedure for monitoring the recruitment and selection process, thus facilitating an effective staff recruitment process. The review team found that the Strategic Plan, Human Resource Policy, Staff Development Policy and the Staff Recruitment and Selection Procedure form a robust framework for the recruitment, appointment, induction and support of staff.

175 According to the Staff and Selection Procedure all posts must be advertised, and appointments will be made on merit and according to defined selection criteria. A record of the decision-making process will be kept. All job roles must have a job description, which is prepared to a standard template, as well as a person specification which details requirements in terms of knowledge, skills and abilities, experience and aptitudes. The details of 'further particulars' of a post must include any other important information that a potential applicant needs to decide whether to apply. Vacancies are advertised on the Academy's website and on dedicated internet sites. Shortlisting and interview panels consist of a minimum of three people, including the immediate line manager of the vacant post, a colleague who is familiar with the area of work and a third person, preferably from outside the department to balance the panel's perspective. Panel staff must have received training in fair recruitment and ideally at least one member must have received disability awareness training. The panel must also reflect a sex and ethnicity balance wherever possible. Candidates may be asked to give a presentation to test skills that cannot be tested through the application, CV and interview. The Academy monitors the ethnic origin of applicants for all posts, those shortlisted and appointees, and has also decided to monitor sex and disability status. Based on the above, the Academy's approach to recruitment is comprehensive and robust and meets the requirements of the awarding organisations as set out in their quality procedures.

176 The recruitment of appropriately qualified and skilled staff is supported by the Academy's comprehensive staff induction programme, a probation period and a mandatory staff development programme. For academic staff, the induction programme includes a professional development session on course regulations, assessment, feedback and mitigating circumstances, and the Academy ensures that all completed induction activities are recorded. Mandatory teaching observations and performance reviews to standardised assessment criteria help the Academy to monitor the quality of staff recruited. The probation form captures and monitors performance against job description criteria. The performance review is conducted by the immediate line manager and aims to assess the employee's strengths and achievements and any areas which may need development. The latter leads to a personal development plan. The elements of the review include the employee's self-assessment statement, an observation by the reviewer of the employee's work activities, any other relevant and agreed information and the review meeting itself. Programme

Leaders and the Principal will formally observe teaching staff at varying frequencies, depending on how long the teacher has been at the Academy and also according to the nature of student feedback. Observations will be performed twice per term for staff under probation and once per term following successful completion of the probation. Teachers will also have the opportunity to undertake peer review. Although peer review is not mandatory, it is considered appropriate that all active teachers should participate in this process at least once or twice a year. Both the tutor observation and peer review forms enable the provision of constructive feedback and commentary about good practices and areas for improvement of teaching staff. A mandatory continuous development programme helps to ensure that the currency of staff skills is maintained.

177 The Academy's organogram which illustrates the different staff roles shows that the Academy has a sufficiently large pool of dedicated higher education staff consisting of the Higher Education Coordinator, Programme Leaders, teaching staff and an Admissions and Enrolment Officer who is also the Student Welfare Officer. In addition, there are roles at senior (Principal, CEO) and at middle management level in quality assurance; human resources, operations and finance; marketing and development which are shared with the further education entity of the Academy. At the time of the review, apart from the senior managers, the Academy had 15 academic and one faculty support staff in post as well as the Higher Education Coordinator, the Student Welfare Officer and an Administration Officer.

178 Job descriptions for these roles are clear and fit for purpose outlining the purpose of the job, list key areas of responsibilities and give a summary of tasks the role holder is expected to perform. Management roles such as Higher Education Coordinator and the Human Resource Systems and Operations Manager, Programme Leaders and Student Welfare Officer also contain a person specification.

179 The CVs of the appointed senior management, academic and professional support staff demonstrated that the Academy recruits appropriately qualified and skilled staff as they contained the required qualifications and experience pertinent for their roles. Appointed academic staff have sufficient prior teaching and external examination experience in higher education institutions and are members of the Higher Education Academy and relevant professional bodies. Ten out of the 15 academic staff members also have a recognised teaching qualification and two have a Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement. The teaching qualifications and experience of staff delivering the Diploma in Education and Training meets the requirements of the awarding organisation as specified in the qualifications handbook. In view of all this, staff are appropriately skilled and qualified to deliver a high-quality academic experience and their recruitment is in accordance with the Academy's principles and criteria for the recruitment of staff as set out in the Academy's policies and procedures.

180 The Academy has appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver and support the programmes. This is because senior staff who met the review team explained the staffing strategy which confirmed that all higher education staff are separate from those in further education. Administrative roles are permanent posts as will be Programme Leaders after course delivery has started. Currently, academic staff are freelancers and there are no plans for this to change in the immediate future. There is a three-month probation period for new permanent staff and a one-month period for non-permanent staff after which a first performance review takes place. In addition, all staff will have an annual performance review which is documented. Academic staff will also have observations of teaching once per term with the outcomes documented. These arrangements were confirmed by newly appointed academic and support staff who met the team.

Conclusions

181 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

182 The review team concludes that the Academy has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience. This is because the Academy's strategies, policies and procedures for the recruitment of staff provide for a sufficient number of appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience. Its plans and approaches for the recruitment, appointment, induction and support for staff are comprehensive, robust and credible. The Academy has recruited sufficient staff for the start of delivery in 2020 in accordance with the predicted first cohort of 25 students for each programme, who are all appropriately qualified and skilled to deliver a high-quality academic experience. The Academy is fully committed to the development of both academic and support staff to ensure they receive the support required to fulfil their roles. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.

183 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects some of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix for this Core practice. The lack of evidence from students' views, observation of teaching and learning and meetings with students, while reflecting the Academy's current stage in the programme delivery cycle, means that the effectiveness of the approaches to staff recruitment and support could not be tested. However, the Academy's plans are credible and robust. Therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

Q4 The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience

184 This Core practice expects that the provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.

185 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

186 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Strategic Plan 2019-23
- b Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy
- c Student Support and Engagement Policy
- d Tutorial Support Arrangements
- e Approval of New Programmes Procedure
- f Submission to Board of Governance for the Approval to Deliver the HNC/D in Computing
- g Approval of New Programmes Checklist for Pearson HND in Computing
- h Student Handbook
- i Class Timetables for HND Computing and Diploma in Education and Training
- j Annual Programme Report Template
- k Student Feedback Form Templates
- l Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment
- m IT Equipment and Physical Resources Lists
- n Job descriptions
- o DET Work Placement Procedure
- p Guide to Mentoring and Observing DET Student Teachers
- q Views of Academic and Professional Support Staff
- r Observation of Facilities, Learning Resources and Support Services and the VLE
- s Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing
- t Matrix Initial Assessment Report.

187 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

188 Third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

189 The review team did not meet with students or consider students' views as no students had been recruited at the time of the review visit.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

190 As the provider had not commenced delivery no sampling activity was undertaken.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

191 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider was considered by the review team either prior to the visit, or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the provider's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

192 The review team considered the Strategic Plan 2019-23, the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy and the Student Support and Engagement Policy to identify how the Academy's facilities, learning resources and student support services contribute to delivering a high-quality academic experience.

193 The team considered the tutorial support arrangements, the Approval of New Programmes Procedure, the submission to Board of Governance for the approval to deliver the HNC/D in Computing, the approval of new programmes checklist for Pearson HND in Computing, the Student Handbook, the class timetables for the HND Computing and the Diploma in Education and Training, the annual programme report template and student feedback form templates to assess whether the Academy has credible, robust and evidence based plans for ensuring that it has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.

194 The review team considered the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment 2019-20, the Student Handbook and the IT equipment and physical resources lists to identify the Academy's facilities, learning resources and student support services.

195 The review team examined the job descriptions, the DET Work Placement Procedure, the Guide to Mentoring and Observing DET Student Teachers to determine whether the roles are consistent with the delivery of a high-quality learning experience.

196 The review team met with academic and professional support staff to test whether staff are appropriately qualified and skilled, and understand their roles and responsibilities.

197 The review team considered the Matrix Initial Assessment Report to identify other organisations' views about facilities, learning resources and support services.

198 The review team directly assessed the Academy's facilities, learning resources and support services and the VLE and considered the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing to test that the facilities, resources and services under assessment deliver a high-quality academic experience.

What the evidence shows

199 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

200 The Academy has clear policies for facilities, resources and student support

services with the Strategic Plan setting the context for the Academy's resources strategy. It commits the Academy to develop appropriate IT resources to facilitate online learning and assessment and 'engage proactively with funding agencies to identify and obtain additional resources to support student learning'. The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy describes how the Academy's learning resources will contribute to delivering a high-quality academic experience. It states that the Academy will 'deliver teaching and organise learning resources in such a way as to ensure that every student can attain the learning outcomes'. The Student Support Policy commits the Academy to ensuring that all students 'receive effective support, appropriate to their individual needs'. This includes general pastoral support, learning and tutorial support, participation in social activities and education and advice and guidance about careers and progression.

201 The Academy's plans for delivering student support are robust and credible because they ensure that resource planning and the provision of student support are considered strategically. Strategic resource allocation for higher education programmes is noted by the Board of Governance. For example, the approval of new programmes procedure requires consideration of resources for every proposal. The submission to Board of Governance for the approval to deliver the HNC/D in Computing demonstrates that the Academy appropriately implemented its procedure. Available staff resources, access to learning resources and student support arrangements were considered.

202 The Academy's plans for ensuring that it has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience are evidence-based because the annual monitoring process will include a review of student guidance and support as well as learning resources leading to risk rated action plans, where necessary, in order to ensure the facilities continue to be sufficient and appropriate. The annual review of facilities, learning resources and student support services will also include feedback from students. For example, the induction survey asks students to comment on whether they have received appropriate information about student support and learning resources, and the end-of-course evaluation requests students to indicate their satisfaction with IT facilities, library and the quality of the tutorial system.

203 The Student Handbook examined by the review team provides information on the available learning and IT resources, academic and pastoral support arrangements including support for students with disabilities. Planned academic support arrangements are robust and will include weekly timetabled group tutorials as well as personalised individual tutorial guidance with a record of discussions being maintained and supported by individual learning plans. Similarly, the planned pastoral support is appropriate to the nature of the student body and the programmes delivered and will signpost students to specialist services such as counselling, health and welfare services and regulated financial advice. The Academy will provide some assistance with accommodation and provide careers guidance. The Academy's plans for facilities are in place to deliver the new higher education programmes from January 2020. Evidence of this is that suitable rooms have been timetabled and the approval of new programmes checklist for Pearson HND in Computing confirms that all classrooms are prepared, and the necessary learning technology and equipment has been installed.

204 The Student Handbook details the resources available to students which includes a Learning Resource Centre (LRC) and the IT lab. Both the LRC and the IT lab are accessible during the Academy's opening hours. Students on the HND Computing also have access to learning resources through HN Global, an online resource where 'students can search, share, comment, rank and sort a vast range of learning resources through an online digital library'. The IT equipment list shows that the Academy has sufficient IT equipment and resources available consisting of 45 laptops and 36 desktops together with a range of networking devices such as servers and switches, routers, access points and firewalls as

well as simulation software for networking and cyber security, programming and web development, and data management. The physical resources list shows that the Academy has appropriate teaching space for the number of higher education programmes it intends to run with the three available classrooms having capacity for more than 25 students each. There is also a student quiet room and social space.

205 The job descriptions for senior, academic and professional support staff demonstrate that the roles are consistent with the delivery of a high-quality learning experience. For example, the Principal is responsible for ensuring effective arrangements are in place for learning and student support with equality of opportunity in all aspects of service delivery. At operational level the HE Coordinator ensures that students have access to appropriate learning resources such as the library, IT resources and the VLE, and Programme Leaders act as personal tutors, provide academic guidance and identify extra support needs. Finally, the Student Welfare Officer monitors student wellbeing and support, signposts relevant external support services to students through student surveys and liaises with academic and other support staff in the provision of student support.

206 Academic and professional support staff who met the review team are appropriately qualified and skilled to support students (see paragraph 180). They understand their roles and responsibilities with respect to the provision of learning resources. Academic staff reported that they develop the course learning materials and have the opportunity to identify additional resources needs. They also explained the role of the Student Welfare Officer in supporting student placements with regard to the DET Work Placement Procedure as well as their role in personal tutoring to support students and monitor their progress.

207 Matrix in its Initial Assessment Report 2018 comments positively on the Academy's policies, frameworks and processes for the provision of information, advice and guidance to students on apprenticeships and professional short courses. It identified some areas for development such as the further development of individual learning plans to capture professional development goals and the provision of career and future study options through individual consultation and signposting. The Academy has acted on the latter through the provision of the employability skills workshops discussed in paragraph 299.

208 The IT laboratories and the classrooms seen by the review team are appropriately equipped with computers and software because there are sufficient numbers of classrooms, PCs and software available for the expected cohorts to start in January 2020. The LRC houses a range of books and reference materials and computing facilities with internet access, scanning and photocopying. The VLE provides useful resources such as application and assignment submission tools but is still under development. Students also have access to online libraries through the EBSCO portal. The two IT labs which are also used as classrooms include 45 laptops and 36 PCs between them with relevant software described above. The Academy meets Pearson's requirements for the provision of library facilities, access to research papers and journals as well as utilising a VLE to support learning and teaching as detailed in the BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing. The office space includes an administration office where the Student Welfare Officer is based.

Conclusions

209 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

210 The review team concludes that the Academy has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience. This is because the Academy has sufficient and appropriate strategies and policies with regard to the development of facilities, learning resources and student support services that will facilitate the provision of appropriate facilities, resources and services. The Academy's plans for learning resources and student support services are robust, credible, realistic and evidence-based, taking into account the nature of the student body and the higher education programmes to be delivered, and are closely linked to the delivery of successful academic and professional outcomes for students. The review team's assessment of teaching facilities and learning resources confirmed that they are sufficient, appropriately equipped for the programmes to be delivered and are likely to provide a high-quality academic experience. Academic and professional support staff understand their roles and responsibilities for student support and the provision of learning resources. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.

211 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects most of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix for this Core practice. The lack of evidence from students' views including meetings and third-party endorsements, while reflecting the Academy's current stage in the programme delivery cycle, means that the effectiveness of the Academy's approaches to the provision of facilities, learning resources and student support services could not be fully tested. However, the Academy's approaches and plans are credible and robust. Therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

Q5 The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience

212 This Core practice expects that the provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.

213 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

214 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Student Support and Engagement Policy
- b Student Engagement Procedure
- c Terms of Reference and Membership of Boards and Committees
- d Quality Assurance Calendar
- e Quality Assurance Procedure Student Feedback
- f Student Feedback Form Templates
- g Student Induction Programme
- h Academic Board minutes
- i Views of senior staff.

215 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

216 Third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

217 Examples of the provider changing or improving provision as a result of student engagement.

218 The review team did not meet with students or consider students' views as no students had been recruited at the time of the review visit.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

219 Sampling of student views was not applicable for this Core practice as programme delivery had not yet commenced.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

220 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider was considered by the review team either prior to the visit, or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the

provider's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

221 The review team considered the Student Support and Engagement Policy and the Student Engagement Procedure to identify how the Academy will actively engage students in the quality of their educational experience.

222 The review team considered the Student Engagement Procedure, the terms of reference and membership of boards and committees, the quality assurance calendar, the Quality Assurance Procedure on student feedback, student feedback form templates, the student induction programme and Academic Board minutes and met with senior staff to assess whether the Academy has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for engaging students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.

223 The review team did not consider student views or meet with students as none had been recruited yet. For the same reason the team did not consider examples of the Academy changing or improving provision as a result of student engagement.

What the evidence shows

224 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

225 The Academy has a clear policy for the engagement of students. Its Student Support and Engagement Policy states that the Academy 'will engage appropriately with the student body about all significant changes in policy or academic direction'. It sets out the Academy's approach to engage students individually and collectively in the quality of their educational experience through arrangements for effective student representation, including the briefing and training of elected student representatives and the use of student surveys and discussion groups. Students can make individual and collective views known through the Student Committee and as members of boards and committees, including the Board of Governance. The Student Engagement Procedure, which supports the policy, sets out the operation of the Student Committee and the gathering and evaluation of student feedback through module and programme surveys and student satisfaction surveys.

226 The Academy has credible plans for engaging students individually and collectively in the quality of their educational experience; however, these plans are not robust. This is because there is no documented information for students both on the election of student representatives and their training as well as the student feedback system, and it is therefore unclear how the Academy would fulfil its commitment expressed in the Student Support and Engagement Policy to 'ensure students are fully informed as to how they might become engaged as elected representatives, providers of feedback, members of the Student Committee and as participants in formal structures'. The Student Engagement Procedure states that the Student Welfare Officer will make arrangements for the nomination and election of student representatives and senior staff who met the review team explained that the Student Welfare Officer would provide a briefing for elected student representatives but no further details on either are available. Senior staff also reported that student representatives would be elected during student induction; however, the student induction programme seen by the review team does not confirm this.

227 The collective engagement opportunities of students will be supported by the Academy's deliberative committee structure. The terms of reference and membership for the Board of Governance, the Academic Board and the Student Committee show that a student representative will be a member of the Academic Board and the Disciplinary Committee. A student representative will also be invited to the Board of Governance meetings, although it

is unclear from the document whether student representatives are full members of the Board. Finally, a student representative will be invited to attend Standardisation Meetings when necessary, however, the document does not define the circumstances when this would apply. According to the committee terms of reference and membership document all student representatives will be members of the Student Committee together with the Student Welfare Officer and plans for the operation of this committee are credible. It will be chaired by a student representative and have a standard agenda. The quality assurance calendar shows that it is scheduled to meet three times a year which is in line with the frequency of meetings stated in the terms of reference document and the Student Engagement Procedure.

228 The Academy's plans to engage students individually in the quality of their educational experience are credible because the Academy intends to use a range of survey forms where it will evaluate responses and action. This will include induction, end of module, end of programme and annual Academy evaluations. In addition, students will always have the opportunity to provide informal feedback to senior, academic and support staff during regular teaching sessions and interaction with staff. Finally, student feedback will also be gathered through any formal complaints received. Student feedback will inform the annual programme monitoring report which will be considered by the Academic Board. Senior staff who met the review team claim that a weekly newsletter and 'You Said – We Did' posters will be used to feed back actions and changes to higher education students but there was no evidence of plans to do this.

229 The Academy's plans for the engagement of students are evidence-based because the analysis of formal student feedback by the Student Welfare Officer will form part the quality monitoring process, feed into the Academy's annual self-evaluation with actions arising from student feedback being monitored by the Academic Board on a bi-annual basis. Although this is not made explicit in its terms of reference, the minutes of the October 2019 meeting noted that the Board discussed all student feedback from their current Level 3 students which demonstrates an already established consideration of student feedback at committee level. Student Committee meetings will have a formal record of proceedings in the form of minutes, which will be formally received by the Board of Governance and, for information, by the Academic Board.

Conclusions

230 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

231 The review team concludes that the Academy will actively engage students individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience. The Academy is committed to improving the student learning experience as a result of student engagement and has policies and procedures in place to facilitate this, supported by appropriate resource and infrastructure. While the Academy's plans for the engagement of individual and collective engagement of students are credible, they are not robust and lack information for students on the set up and operation of engagement channels such as the election and training of student representatives and the feedback system through surveys. The lack of information for students could impact on the effectiveness of the process. The review team concludes, therefore, that on balance, this Core practice is met.

232 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects some of the evidence described

in the QSR evidence matrix for this Core practice. The lack of evidence from the views of students and evidence of the Academy acting upon student feedback, while reflecting the provider's current stage in the programme delivery cycle, means that the effectiveness of the student engagement system could not be tested. Additionally, the absence of robust plans in respect to informing students of opportunities to engage individually and collectively in the quality of their educational experience lead the review team to have a moderate degree of confidence in this judgement.

Q6 The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students

233 This Core practice expects that the provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.

234 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

235 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Complaints and Grievances Procedure
- b Student Handbook
- c Academic Regulations
- d Terms of Reference of Boards and Committees
- e Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment
- f Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing
- g City & Guilds Centre Manual
- h Student Support and Engagement Policy
- i Academy website
- j Views of Senior Staff.

236 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

237 Examples of complaints and appeals and meeting with students as the Academy has yet to commence delivery of its higher education programmes.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

238 Sampling of complaints and appeals was not applicable for this Core practice as there were none because the Academy had not yet started to deliver its higher education programmes.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

239 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider was considered by the review team either prior to the visit, or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the provider's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision making and to

ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

240 The review team considered Complaints and Grievances Procedure and the Student Handbook to identify the Academy's processes for handling complaints and appeals and to confirm that these processes are fair and transparent.

241 The review team considered the Academic Regulations, terms of reference of boards and committees, the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment, Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing, the City & Guilds Centre Manual, the Student Support and Engagement Policy and met with senior staff to assess whether the Academy has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for developing and operating fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.

242 The review team considered the Student Handbook and the Academy's website to assess whether information for potential complainants and appellants is clear and accessible.

243 The review team did not consider numbers, types and outcomes of complaints and appeals received or any specific examples of complaints and appeals as there were none. This was because the Academy had not yet commenced programme delivery. For the same reason the team also did not meet with students.

What the evidence shows

244 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

245 The Academy's Academic Regulations outline a credible and robust approach to the handling of complaints and appeals. The approach includes the publication of clear procedures for the handling of student complaints and academic appeals, ensuring that complaints and appeals procedures are conducted in a fair, reasonable and timely manner and that appropriate action is taken following a complaint or appeal. The Academy ensures the provision of appropriate guidance and support to be available for students and staff. The Academy also has plans for the monitoring of the operation and effectiveness of the complaints and appeals procedures and reflection on the outcomes and their broad implications.

246 The Academy has clear and definitive procedures for the handling of academic appeals and student complaints. The Complaints and Grievances Procedure which applies to students and staff describes a three-stage resolution process including an informal, formal and final or adjudication stage. The Academy expects all complaints to be made in writing through a complaints template for recording purposes. Similarly, the Academic Appeals Procedure describes a three-stage process consisting of a clarification stage, followed by a formal re-assessment of the student's work and, if necessary, a formal hearing by an Appeals Panel. The complaints and appeals processes described are transparent and should allow for a fair resolution of complaints and appeals within a reasonable timeframe as completion periods for the formal and adjudication stages are clearly specified.

247 The Academic Board will consider outcomes of academic appeals and complaints and the Student Committee will consider informal student complaints not raised through the procedure and inform students about the academic appeals process. The Academy will maintain confidential records of all complaints in a complaints log with data on numbers and issues raised but not the names of the individuals. However, it is unclear how it intends to monitor the effectiveness of the appeals and complaints procedures as no committee or

group has been assigned responsibility for the review of policies and procedures.

248 The Academy's processes for handling complaints are transparent and evidence-based because they clearly state what students can complain about and what is excluded (such as funding, criminal matters, other areas dealt with by the Academy's disciplinary procedures), the possible outcomes of complaints, a detailed description of the various complaint stages with the supporting evidence required, and timelines for the resolution and the decision-making authority. However, the current Complaints and Grievances Procedure lacks robustness as it omits important information for students about their rights to escalate complaints. It makes no reference to students' final right to complain to Pearson and City & Guilds once the Academy's procedures have been fully used or if the student is dissatisfied with the outcome. Senior staff confirmed plans to become a member of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator which, once granted, will enable students to request that the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) review their complaint.

249 Similarly, the processes for handling academic appeals are transparent as they detail a three-stage process for the consideration of appeals with timeframes for the resolution at each stage and the decision-making authorities. They also refer to students' right to escalate appeals to the awarding organisations once internal processes have been exhausted. However, the procedure does not clearly define the grounds and scope for appeals and any exclusions beyond stating that students 'have the right to appeal any assessment decision at any stage of the assessment process'. While Pearson states the appeals 'may relate to assessment decisions being incorrect or assessment not being conducted fairly'. In relation to the City & Guilds programme, the awarding body directs students to use the Academy's complaints and appeals procedures in the first instance.

250 Information on complaints and appeals in the Student Handbook is clear and accessible to all students as it contains relevant excerpts from both policies. The full Complaints and Grievances policy is also easily accessible to students on the Academy's website but this is not the case for the appeals procedure. There is no further information in the Student Handbook or on the website about where to go for advice and guidance should students wish to make a formal complaint or academic appeal and it is therefore unclear how the Academy would fulfil its commitment to students 'to ensure that appropriate guidance and support is available for learners who make a complaint or appeal'.

Conclusions

251 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

252 The review team concludes that the Academy has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students. The Academy's procedures for handling complaints and appeals are definitive and transparent and should allow timely outcomes to be delivered. There are clear processes with different stages for the resolution of complaints and appeals with appropriate resolution periods and decision-making authorities. The Academy's procedures for handling complaints and appeals are accessible to students. However, they lack robustness, with the complaints procedure omitting students' right to escalate complaints to the awarding organisations and the appeals procedure is ambiguous in its scope. The Academy's plans to develop fair, transparent and accessible complaints procedures are credible but also lack robustness as it is unclear how the Academy will monitor the effectiveness of procedures and there is no documented

information for students where to go for advice and guidance should they wish to make a formal complaint or academic appeal. The review team concludes, therefore, that on balance, this Core practice is met.

253 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects some of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix for this Core practice. The lack of evidence relating to student views and numbers and types of complaints and appeals received together with the review of complaints examples, while reflecting the Academy's current stage in the programme delivery cycle, means that the effectiveness of the Academy's approaches to handling appeals and complaints could not be tested. Additionally, the absence of robust plans in respect to monitoring the effectiveness of procedures, the lack of advice and guidance should students wish to make a formal complaint or academic appeal or make use of the awarding organisations' procedures and the ambiguity of the scope of the appeals procedure leads the team to have a moderate degree of confidence in this judgement.

Q8 Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them

254 This Core practice expects that where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.

255 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

256 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Policies and Procedures Framework
- b Quality Assurance Procedure
- c Management and Committee Structure
- d Boards and Committee Terms of Reference and Membership
- e Higher Education Delivery Plans
- f Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment
- g Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing
- h Work Placement Procedure
- i List of Placement Providers
- j Guide to Mentoring and Observing DET Student Teachers
- k Approval of New Programmes Procedure
- l Programme Delivery Approval Letters Pearson and City & Guilds
- m Pearson Centre Agreement
- n City & Guilds Centre Manual
- o City & Guilds Qualification Handbook Diploma in Education and Training
- p Views of senior staff, academic and professional support staff.

257 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

258 External examiner reports as there were none to consider because the Academy had not yet commenced programme delivery.

259 Third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

260 The review team did not meet with students or consider students' views as no

students had been recruited at the time of the review visit.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

261 The review team did not sample any partnership agreements as there were only two. The team considered all agreements to gain a full understanding of the partnerships under review.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

262 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider was considered by the review team either prior to the visit, or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the provider's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

263 The review team considered the policies and procedures framework, the Quality Assurance Procedure, the management and committee structure and the boards and committee terms of reference and membership to assess how the Academy ensures courses are high quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.

264 The review team considered the Academy's higher education delivery plans, the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment, the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Qualification Specification Computing, the Work placement procedure, the list of placement providers, as well as the Guide to Mentoring and Observing DET Student Teachers to assess whether the Academy has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for ensuring a high-quality academic experience in partnership work.

265 The review team considered the Approval of New Programmes Procedure, the programme delivery approval letters from Pearson and City & Guilds, the Pearson Centre Agreement, the City & Guilds Centre Manual, the City & Guilds Qualification Handbook for the Diploma in Education and Training and met with senior staff to test the basis for the maintenance of high quality within specific partnerships, and that those arrangements are in line with the Academy's regulations or policies.

266 The review team met with senior and academic and professional support staff to test whether staff understand and discharge effectively their responsibilities to the awarding organisations.

267 The review team did not consider external examiner reports and third-party endorsement. There were none to consider because the Academy had not commenced programme delivery. For the same reason the team did not consider student views or meet with students.

What the evidence shows

268 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

269 The Academy ensures that the courses it has approval to deliver are high quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them. The Academy does this through a series of documented policies and procedures that constitute its policies and procedures framework. They are supported by the Quality Assurance Procedure and their implementation is monitored by the deliberative committees such as the Academic Board

and the Student Committee.

270 The Academy has robust and credible plans for ensuring a high-quality academic experience for the students undertaking the awarding organisations' courses at the Academy because the delivery of higher education programmes is well planned and progress monitored at regular intervals as is evident from the Academy's delivery planning documents and the Academy takes account of the quality assurance requirements of its awarding organisations. For example, for Education and Training students undertaking teaching practice at an external placement provider the Work Placement Procedure will support a high-quality experience. A detailed and helpful guide for placement mentors sets out the placement standards required by City & Guilds including the skills student teachers should be able to demonstrate, the qualifications and characteristics placement mentors should have, their responsibilities and that of the trainee teachers, the requirements for observed and assessed practice and their recording as well as ways to raise and resolve concerns about trainee teachers.

271 The Academy's plans are evidence-based because for the HND Computing the Academy works with the awarding organisation's external examiners to ensure a high-quality academic experience for students. The Academy assists the external examiner through verification by providing to the external examiner requested samples of assessments, completed assessed student work and associated documentation. The Academy will also produce an annual programme monitoring report in line with the awarding organisation's requirements as set out in its Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment. This written annual review contains an analysis and reflection on the previous teaching year and will be used by the awarding organisation in collaboration with the Academy to ensure the quality of provision and share good practice. In addition, to ensure the quality of the teaching and learning experience HND Computing students will complete the Pearson Higher Nationals Student Survey and this will be used by the awarding organisation to inform the future design of the qualifications and to support the development of resources. With regards to the Diplomas in Education and Teaching, City & Guilds appointed External Quality Assurers visit the Academy to sample assessment with ongoing activities such as a monitoring visit decided by the awarding organisation to ensure quality assurance of the programme is managed. The Academy is also expected to develop an Internal Quality Assurance Strategy for City & Guilds once delivery has commenced which will show how the Academy will implement and monitor the DET programme.

272 There is a signed centre agreement between the Academy and Pearson and approval to deliver BTEC Level 4/5 Higher National Certificate/Diploma in Computing until 2022. The Academy also has approval from City & Guilds to deliver the Diploma in Education and Training. There is a written and enforceable agreement with City & Guilds comprising the centre approval application, the City & Guilds centre manual, policies, procedures and regulations including City & Guilds' quality assurance requirements and the qualification approval and qualification handbook. The responsibilities of each party for the maintenance of a high quality academic experience are detailed in each agreement. The agreements also include details on the regulations and policies that govern the programmes and how programmes will be assessed, monitored, resourced and administered. The arrangements in place with the awarding organisations are in line with the Academy's procedures for the approval of new programmes. The review team found that the programmes approved for delivery are congruent with the Academy's mission and values and fulfil the Academy's academic planning criteria; that is, they are appropriate in terms of level, content, and current practice in their discipline, meet the needs of the sector for which it is designed and the necessary learning resources can be made available.

273 At the time of the review the Academy was in the process of signing a partnership agreement with North East Surrey College of Technology (NESCOT) which will allow the

Academy to deliver its approved courses by subcontracting delivery on its campus to NESCOL. The Academy confirmed that they already have an existing established relationship with NESCOL in delivering digital IT Apprenticeships (BCS Level 3 Digital Marketing Apprenticeship). The Academy claims that the students will be NESCOL students but will study and use the resources of the Academy and would be taught by the Academy's teachers. NESCOL would oversee all aspects with monthly meetings with Academy staff and conduct teaching observations for the first six months of delivery. The Academy will be required to produce a six-monthly report which would be fed into the College's overall annual report of the programmes. The Academy admits that they are not reliant on the NESCOL relationship for the delivery of higher education in terms of student numbers and once registered with the OfS they may not need the relationship with NESCOL with regards to recruiting students.

274 Senior and academic staff who met the review team showed a good understanding of their responsibilities to the awarding organisations. Academic staff were able to describe what their role would be with regard to programme delivery, assessment and monitoring including placements. Senior staff explained the role of the Academy's policies and procedures and the role of students in maintaining a high-quality learning experience that meets the awarding organisations' requirements for quality assurance. In particular, they highlighted the role assessment verification, individual learning plans and programme annual monitoring play in this regard. Academic staff reported how they use the awarding organisations' qualification specifications in the design of appropriate learning tasks and assessments and explained how they support placement learning through teaching observations.

Conclusions

275 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

276 The review team concludes that the Academy has clear and comprehensive policies for working in partnership with its awarding organisations to ensure the quality of academic experience of the students. Its plans for ensuring a high-quality academic experience for students on the programmes it is approved to deliver are credible and robust and the arrangements for teaching practice placements are secure. The partnership agreements with the awarding organisations are clear and comprehensive and reflect the Academy's policies for working with its awarding partners. The staff understand their responsibilities towards the awarding organisations. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.

277 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects most of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix for this Core practice. The lack of evidence relating to student views and external examiners' reports while reflecting the Academy's current stage in the programme delivery cycle, means that the effectiveness of the approaches could not be fully tested. However, the Academy's approaches and plans for partnership working are credible and robust. Therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

Q9 The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes

279 This Core practice expects that the provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.

280 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

281 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy
- b Student Support and Engagement Policy
- c Policies and Procedures Framework
- d Work Placement Procedure
- e Tutorial Arrangements Procedure
- f Strategic Plan 2019-13
- g Quality Assurance Procedure
- h Student Induction Programme
- i Formative and Summative Assessment Feedback Forms
- j Guide to Mentoring, Observing and Coaching DET Student Teachers
- k Teaching Placement Monitoring Sheet
- l Student Handbook
- m Individual Learning Plan Template
- n Student Achievement Tracking Template
- o Initial Assessment Tests for literacy, numeracy, English language and ICT
- p Careers Workshop Timetable
- q Annual Monitoring Procedure
- r Annual Programme Report template
- s Student Feedback Form templates
- t Terms of Reference Academic Board and Student Committee
- u Matrix Initial Assessment Report
- v Staff CVs
- w Staff Induction Programme
- x Views of senior, academic and professional support staff.

282 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

283 The review team did not meet with students or consider students' views as no students had been recruited at the time of the review visit.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

284 Assessed student work was not applicable as the Academy had not yet commenced programme delivery.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

285 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider was considered by the review team either prior to the visit, or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the provider's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

286 The review team considered the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, the Student Support and Engagement Policy, the Policies and Procedures Framework, the Work Placement Procedure and the Tutorial Arrangements Procedure to identify the Academy's approach to student support, including how it identifies and monitors the needs of individual students.

287 The review team considered the Strategic Plan 2019-13, the Quality Assurance Procedure, the Student Induction Programme, Formative and Summative Assessment Feedback Forms, the Guide to Mentoring, Observing and Coaching DET Student Teachers and the Teaching Placement Monitoring Form, the Student Handbook, tutorial arrangements, the Individual Learning Plan template, the Student Achievement Tracking template, Initial Assessment Tests for literacy, numeracy, English language, ICT, the careers workshop timetable, the Annual Monitoring Procedure, the Annual Programme Report template, Student Feedback Form templates and the terms of reference of the Academic Board and the Student Committee to assess whether the Academy has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for ensuring that all students are supported to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.

288 The review team considered the Matrix Initial Assessment Report to identify other organisations' views about facilities, learning resources and support services.

289 The review team had meetings with senior, academic and professional support staff and considered staff CVs, the staff induction programme and the mandatory staff training list to test that staff understand their responsibilities and are appropriately skilled and supported.

290 The review team did not consider student views, assessed student work or meet with students as programme delivery had not yet commenced.

What the evidence shows

291 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

292 The Academy's clear and comprehensive approaches to student support are encapsulated in its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy and the Student Support and Engagement Policy. The former outlines the Academy's approach to academic support and includes regular and planned engagement between students and teaching staff in order to monitor progress and reflect on development needs; the adoption of good academic conduct in assessment; the use of formative assessment to support student learning; and the use of timely and supportive feedback on assessed work within 10 working days. The Student Support Policy sets out the principles for the provision of student support 'on the basis of equity and fairness'. In particular, the Academy aims to provide 'appropriate academic

support and guidance for disabled students, facilitate their access to, and use of, information and communications technology and ensure that they have full access to student support services'. To ensure this, all students will be 'fully informed about their programmes, pastoral care provision and mentoring arrangements' and this is done on the induction day which is planned a week before the start of teaching. This approach is supported by having welfare services staff dedicated to supporting students on a range of issues from health to finance. The policies are facilitated through procedures for tutorial support, academic misconduct, student pastoral support, information advice and guidance and work placements. The tutorial arrangement procedure sets out the arrangements for the identification and monitoring of individual students' needs through timetabled group and individual tutorials and the use of individual learning plans. The work placement procedure details the arrangements for securing, allocating and auditing teaching placements for the Diploma in Education and Training.

293 The DET Work Placement Procedure and the Academy's Guide to Mentoring and Observing DET Student Teachers also show that the Academy's support roles are consistent with the delivery of a high-quality learning experience with a dedicated member of staff (Student Welfare Officer) having responsibility for the organisation and management of placement learning. Staff mentoring student teachers are expected to meet clearly specified qualification and experience requirements as well as person characteristics. Placements with local training providers had already been identified, vetted and approved by the Placement Coordinator.

294 The Academy's plans for ensuring that all students are supported to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes are credible and robust because the Academy uses a range of targeted measures to identify and monitor students' support needs and uses appropriate interventions. Students will be given a comprehensive induction that covers aspects related to policies and procedures, the academic regulations and the assessment framework applicable to their programme of study including feedback on assessed work, attendance requirements and monitoring, student welfare arrangements and professional development. A range of diagnostic skills tests will be used to help identify individual students' support needs. These include initial assessments to test competency in literacy, numeracy, English language and ICT. Students' ongoing support needs will be monitored through a system of timetabled weekly group tutorials as well as monthly individual tutorials with a Personal Tutor. Students can also approach Personal Tutors on an informal basis as the Academy operates an open-door policy.

295 To support students with special educational needs the Academy will make special assessment arrangements for students with known disabilities, to compensate for the restrictions imposed by the disability, without affecting the validity of examinations and assessments, and where appropriate, in consultation and agreement with outside organisations. Where the Academy uses assessment materials from external organisations or students sit assessments provided by such organisations, it undertakes to monitor such assessments for conformity to equal opportunities practice. The Academy claims that most disabilities are identified during the admissions process where appropriate support is then put in place and lecturers are notified. The Welfare Coordinator has welfare focused meetings with staff including the Principal to highlight any issues with support being put into place.

296 A record of the individual tutorials will be kept in the form of an individual learning plan which captures skills development and assessment targets and their achievement and actions to be completed for future improvements. While the plan will support the achievement of successful academic outcomes it does not record professional outcomes. The student achievement tracking sheet which contains an action plan, where required, will also be used to help identify and monitor any support that might be required for students to

achieve positive academic outcomes.

297 Good academic practice is supported by the Academy's plagiarism policy contained in the Student Handbook, which educates students on appropriate referencing in assessment and provides examples of acceptable practice. To support student learning, coursework feedback forms for both formative and summative assessments will be used for the Diploma in Education and Training which allow for the provision of feedback on the achievement of each unit learning outcome as well as helpful developmental feedback to improve.

298 Pastoral support will be provided through the Student Welfare Officer who will signpost students to external services that provide personal counselling, health and welfare services and regulated financial advice.

299 The Academy's approach to supporting the achievement of successful professional outcomes involves extensive support for students on teaching placements. The comprehensive Guide to Mentoring and Observing, Mentoring and Coaching DET Student Teachers sets out in detail what mentors will do to support students to achieve the required placement outcomes in a range of assistance, guidance and review activities. There are clear protocols for supporting students who may give rise to concerns during placement involving meetings between students, placement mentors, teaching and support staff and the development of improvement plans that set out expectations, timelines for completion and the method for evaluation of progress. The Placement Monitoring Form provides for the opportunity to identify trainee teachers who need a support action plan. The Academy also supports the achievement of successful professional outcomes through a range of employability skills workshops, which include career drop-in sessions, sessions on negotiating job offers, psychometric testing and how to turn yourself into the right job applicant.

300 The Academy's plans for ensuring all students are supported are evidence-based because it will gather and analyse student feedback on student support arrangements and use the annual monitoring process to evaluate student support arrangements at programme level including student retention, progression and achievement data and at institutional level through the Academic Board and the Student Committee. The Academy has yet to set out exact performance measurements; however, annual monitoring reports are expected to comment on noticeably strong or weak performance from particular cohorts, marked variance in performance across terms or differences in performance from the previous year and how these might relate to any actions from the previous year.

301 Matrix in its Initial Assessment Report 2018 comments positively on the Academy's policies, frameworks and processes for the provision of information, advice and guidance to students on apprenticeships and professional short courses. It identified some areas for development such as the further development of individual learning plans to capture professional development goals and the provision of career and future study options through individual consultation and signposting. The Academy has acted on the latter through the provision of the employability skills workshops discussed below.

302 Senior, academic and professional support staff who met the review team understand their responsibilities for supporting students. Senior staff highlighted the role of timetabled group and individual tutorials and individual learning plans in identifying support needs and monitoring progress. They also referred to the importance of the employability skills workshops in supporting successful professional outcomes and expressed their conviction that these will help prepare students for employability. Together with the opportunity for students to undertake placements they are seen as part of the Academy's employability strategy. Academic staff described how they will use formative and summative

feedback to support student learning and reported that they will support the development of employability skills through CV writing, mock job interviews and applications. Students with disabilities can be supported through the provision of specialist equipment. Academic and professional support staff also highlighted the use of diagnostic testing in identifying individual support needs and the development of individual learning plans and use of progress tracking sheets in monitoring student support needs.

303 The Academy appropriately supports staff in fulfilling their support roles through providing relevant staff development which includes sessions on mental health and wellbeing; equality and diversity; academic malpractice and information, advice and guidance.

Conclusions

304 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

305 The review team concludes that the Academy will support all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes. This is because the policies and support mechanisms that the Academy has in place for student support will facilitate the achievement of successful academic and professional outcomes. The Academy's approaches to and arrangements for academic, pastoral and employability support are robust and credible and support the creation of an environment which supports student development and achievement. In their capacity as personal tutors, teachers, placement or welfare officers, staff whom the review team met understand their role in supporting student achievement. Their roles are complemented through systems that help identify, monitor and evaluate students' academic and pastoral support needs. There are credible plans for the achievement of professional outcomes with a focus on work placements for the DET students and a comprehensive menu of employability skills workshops to help students improve their employment prospects. The review team, therefore, concludes that this Core practice is met.

306 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects most of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix for this Core practice. The lack of evidence relating to student views and feedback on assessed student work, while reflecting the Academy's current stage in the programme delivery cycle, means that the effectiveness of the approaches could not be fully tested. However, the Academy's approaches and plans for supporting students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes are credible and robust. Therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

QAA2568 - R10892 - Dec 20

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2020
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01452 557000
Web: www.qaa.ac.uk