

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

College of Legal Practice

Review Report

November 2020



Working as the Designated Quality Body for England

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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	Moderate	From the evidence provided, the review team considers that the standards set for the College's draft programme will be in line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS regulatory framework. The evidence scrutinised by the team demonstrates that the standards described in the draft programme documentation available is set at levels that are consistent with these sector-recognised standards and the College's academic regulations and policies should ensure that standards are set appropriately. The team considers that 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 evidence provided as part of this review. The team considers that the evidence seen demonstrates that the College's academic regulations and policies should ensure that these standards are maintained. The review team considers that staff fully understand the College's approach to setting and maintaining these standards and are committed to implementing this approach. The team concludes, therefore, 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	Low	The review team determined that, based on the evidence seen, the standards that will be achieved by the College's students beyond the threshold are expected to be reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers. The team considered that the College's academic regulations and policies should ensure that standards beyond the threshold are maintained. Based on the detailed scrutiny of the

				evidence, the team considered that while the staff at the College fully understand the College's approach to maintaining such standards, there is no evidence that they have opportunities for engagement with peers and external experts in teaching and assessment activities. The team considers the College's plans for maintaining comparable standards appropriate and that these are understood by staff members. 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.
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.	N/a	N/a	This Core practice is not applicable as the College has not entered into any partnerships.
S4	The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.	Met	High	The College will use external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent. This is because the College has clear, comprehensive and credible policies specifying the requirements for using external expertise in setting and maintaining academic standards. It also has credible plans to monitor these processes. The College's processes for assessment and classification are outlined in academic regulations in a clear and transparent way and they are likely to be effective when implemented. There are also clear plans for using external expertise in programme validation and evaluation, as well as in

				<p>processes overseeing assessment and classification, that should be effective. Staff understand the requirements for the use of external expertise and are aware of related policies and processes, including responding to such feedback. They also understand the planned assessment and classification processes. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.</p>
Q1	The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.	Met	Low	<p>The College will have a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system. This is because it has clear policies for the recruitment and admission of students which are reliable, fair and inclusive. The College's plans for admissions were not complete at the time of the review visit and staff directly involved in admissions have yet to be recruited. However, representatives from the Senior Executive, the Board and the programme articulated how the admissions process will work, how the College plans to train and support its admissions staff and how it will monitor the performance of the admissions system through regular reporting and its academic governance arrangements to ensure that it is fair and reliable. The team saw evidence of the development of forms, some of which the College acknowledges need further work, and processes that should support and encourage an inclusive approach to admissions. The team was also able to examine the College's ongoing development of appropriate information for prospective students and templates for its communications with prospective students to ensure they will be transparent and accessible. Although plans for admissions are incomplete, the team agreed that the College's timescales are achievable and, on balance, conclude that this Core practice is met.</p>

Q2	The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.	Met	Moderate	<p>The College designs and will deliver high-quality courses. This is because its policies for course design and delivery facilitate the design and delivery of high-quality courses. These policies are supported by plans and processes involving externality and student involvement in course approval and review. The College's approach to designing and delivering high-quality courses is credible and staff who met the team were able to articulate what 'high quality' means in the context of a flexible and personalised online provision for legal students. The review team's observations of the College's proposed learning platform, although limited, supported the view that the College has a sound approach, good delivery and appropriate content for the delivery of high-quality courses. The review team, therefore, concludes that this Core practice is met.</p>
Q3	The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.	Met	Low	<p>The College should have sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience. The College's policies for the recruitment, appointment, and induction for staff should provide for appropriately qualified and skilled staff. At the comparatively early stage in its development the College is delivering only a small number of pilots; however, job descriptions and CVs examined by the team show that there are sufficient appropriately skilled and qualified staff to continue to develop its first programme effectively in readiness for the autumn of 2021. However, the College still has to address the issue of the number of supervisors that will be required to ensure the delivery of a high-quality academic experience. Staff met by the review team confirmed that they had been recruited, appointed, and inducted according to the College's policies in place at the time of their appointment. However, the College acknowledges</p>

				that further planning is necessary to ensure the effectiveness of its recruitment, appointment, induction and support of staff. These plans were unclear at the time of the review visit although the team could see that draft documentation is being developed to support inductions and support for staff. The review team concludes, therefore, that, on balance, 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	Low	The College will have sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience. The College has a strategy in place to provide facilities, learning resources and student support for students that is appropriate to the online context of its delivery. Its plans are reliant on a significant amount of development of the online platform taking place during the first six months of 2021. However, senior staff and representatives from the College's parent organisation were able to articulate that this was achievable due to the maturity of many of the planned resources being used already by the College's parent organisation. Staff currently in place demonstrated that they understand their responsibilities and the team noted that Student Services staff are due to be recruited during the spring of 2021. The review team's limited assessment of the online pilots and associated learning resources suggests that they will provide a high-quality academic experience. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.

Q5	The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.	Met	High	<p>The College will actively engage students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience. This is because the College has a clear approach through its Student Partnership Framework, to engaging students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience that the team found to be appropriate to the College's mode of course delivery and that should prove effective if implemented as set out. The College plans to actively engage students individually through module and programme evaluations and collectively through its governance structures, including the SSLC and the Programme Committee. While the College could not provide any specific examples of changes or improvements to its provision as a result of student engagement, as it has yet to commence delivery, its pilot activity suggest that it is committed to working closely with students and actively responding to their concerns, suggestions and feedback. The review team, therefore, concludes that this Core practice is met.</p>
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Q6	The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.	Met	High	The College has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which should be accessible to all students. This is because these policies and processes are definitive, fair and transparent. They are easy to understand and should deliver timely outcomes. Students should have access to the policies through multiple channels, including the student handbook, through the learning platform and the College website which will ensure that they are accessible. The stages for complaints and appeals are specified with clear timeframes to deliver timely outcomes, and it is made explicit how students can appeal a decision. The Programme Committee will receive annual reports about the level and nature of complaints and appeals so that these can be effectively monitored. The College's plans for handling complaints and appeals are credible and likely to be robust. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.
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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.	N/a	N/a	The College chose not to address this Core practice because it asserts that it does not work in partnership with other organisations.
Q9	The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.	Met	Moderate	The College will support all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes. This is because its approach creates structures for identifying and monitoring student needs from enrolment through the duration of their studies, with key role-holders in Student Services having clearly articulated responsibilities for student support. Important professional competencies, including writing skills, will be built into module design and delivery through feedback from practitioners at the module design stage. The College has plans to provide comprehensive, helpful and timely feedback to students through its learning platform and individual tutorials. Further support in developing relevant professional skills is provided by supervisors assigned to each student for each module they study. In these respects, the College's plans to support all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes are credible. Staff demonstrate that they understand their role in supporting student achievement and how student needs will be identified. Staff explained how support structures will be offered to students as well as providing information about their proposals for careers services that will be provided through the College's learning platform. 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 2020, for the College of Legal Practice.

A Quality and Standards Review (QSR) is a method of review QAA uses to provide 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 providers' 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: Dr Margaret Carran
Institution: City, University of London
Role in review team: Subject reviewer: Law

Name: Dr Nina Seppala
Institution: University College London.
Role in review team: Institutional reviewer

Name: Dr Andrew Redford
Institution: Independent
Role in review team: Institutional reviewer

The QAA Officer for the review was: Mr Damon Lane.

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 College'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 College prior to the review to identify and resolve any possible conflicts of interest.

About the College of Legal Practice

The College of Legal Practice (the College) is a provider intending to offer a range of online postgraduate courses at Level 7. The initial proposal is for three courses, for pre-qualification trainee solicitors or paralegals, newly qualified solicitors with up to five years' post-qualification experience (PQE), and for solicitors with over five years' PQE to associate partner level respectively. The timing of the College's entry to the sector is partly in response to changes, by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA), to the qualification of solicitors in England and Wales that will be centred on a common assessment that all prospective solicitors will take before qualifying. The College's first course, Developing Legal Professionals, is planned to provide a master's qualification but is also being designed to meet the professional competencies that will be tested in the new Solicitors Qualifying

Examination (SQE), which is due to be introduced from 1 September 2021 and will become the sole route for solicitors to qualify to practice in England and Wales. The College's expectation is that students will be studying part-time as they will also need to complete at least two years' full-time (or equivalent) qualifying work experience in order to be able to qualify as a solicitor. The College is exploring an extension of the range of courses offered beyond the above initial proposal. However, at the time of the review visit, Developing Legal Professionals was the only course in active development, scheduled for internal approval in the summer of 2021.

The College intends to operate as an online provider offering distance-learning. It will operate without a physical campus and staff and students will access all services, meetings and tutorials through the College's learning platform and associated technologies. The College has stated its core focus is to provide engaging, flexible, adaptable and personal legal training to students. The College asserts that it has adopted a cautious approach towards student numbers during its first five years, allowing for enrolment to an individual instance of a module being as low as five students.

The College is wholly owned by the College of Law (CoL), a not-for-profit provider of higher education in Australia. The College will make use of CoL's existing online delivery systems and adapt them for the UK context to provide reliable and effective systems in a relatively short development period between December 2020 and August 2021.

The College is incorporated in the UK. Its governing board is vested with full authority and accountability for its activities in the UK and it is the ultimate decision-making body under its governance arrangements. The Board has oversight of the Senior Executive Team which is responsible for day-to-day operations of the College and the Programme Committee, to which is delegated the authority to ensure the maintenance of academic standards. At the time of the QSR the College was an 'in-prospect' provider, approximately 10 months away in its preparations from enrolling its first cohort of students. The College at this time employed a small core team of senior and management staff, including a Head of Curriculum Design and Development, as well as some consultant staff. The College plans to instigate its recruitment of permanent academic and professional support staff from February 2021 onwards.

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 College 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).

The College does not plan to work with any partners as it intends to develop and deliver its entire provision. For this reason, the College chose not to address 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). The College briefly addressed S3 in its submission (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). The intended outcomes of this Core practice were also discussed during the review. The College's intention is to seek degree-awarding powers upon successful registration with OfS and confirmed that it has no

contingency for this plan. Therefore, no partnerships have been entered into and this Core practice is not applicable.

To form its judgements about the College'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. The review visit was undertaken during November 2020 and, in line with guidance from government at the time and considering the context of the College's online provision, the review team and staff at the College were working from home. For this reason, the review visit meetings were conducted online. To ensure that the review team focused on the principles embedded in the Core practices, and that the evidence it considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews, the team utilised 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. In this review it was not necessary to sample any of the documentary evidence provided as The College has yet to commence delivery and it had only one course in development at the time of the review visit. Exhaustive consideration could therefore be given to all the evidence submitted.

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 to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the College 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 utilised that matrix to ensure that the evidence it 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 Self-Assessment on Management and Governance
- b Solicitors Regulation Authority Solicitors Qualifying Examination Briefing July 2020
- c The College Meeting Board of Directors Papers 13 August 2019 FINAL
- d The College Outline Curriculum - Board Meeting May 2020
- e Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations
- f Statement of Solicitor Competence
- g The Solicitors Threshold Standards
- h Attachment A Developing Legal Professionals
- i Accredited Attachment B Banking and Finance Pilot Unit
- j Accredited Attachment B Dispute Resolution Pilot Unit
- k Grading Criteria
- l Guide to Good Practice for External Examiner
- m Practitioner Feedback Email (Dispute Resolution)
- n Mapping of PLOs Against a Module Outcomes and External Framework
- o Terms of Reference for Assessment Panels
- p Assessment Scrutiny Form
- q Marking and Moderation Form

r	The College Banking and Finance Pilot Materials for Practitioner Review
s	External Examiner Confirmation Report (Module Panels)
t	SME Guide and Induction for SMEs
u	The College New Course Development Process
v	Programme Development and Approval
w	Programme Committee Terms of Reference
x	Mitigating Circumstances Policy
y	Template Proposal to the CDDG for internal review or substantial change to an existing programme
z	Approval Event Report Template
aa	Approval Panel Submission document template
bb	Student Disciplinary Policy
cc	Role and Responsibility - Quality Assurance Officer
dd	Programme Handbook content guide
ee	Flow diagram Student Disciplinary Process Policy (Academic Matters)
ff	Programme Committee Meeting Minutes 4th August 2020
gg	Programme Committee Agenda and Papers January 2020
hh	Quality Framework Diagram
ii	External Examiner Report Template
jj	Responsibilities for Academic Quality
kk	Programme Manager and Coordinator Responsibilities
ll	Module Leader Job Description
mm	Outline to Reasonable Adjustment
nn	Attachment B Banking and Finance module
oo	Banking and Finance Marking Guidance
pp	Indicative Assessment and template for B and F
qq	Practitioner Opinion on B and F materials
rr	List of Programmes and Modules
ss	SME and Supervisors start dates
tt	Clarification and comments
uu	Meeting with representatives from Board and Programme Committee and Senior Executives
vv	Meeting with representatives from Programme and Content Development Team and Operation
ww	Meeting with supervisor and Subject Matter Expert

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:

- because the College has yet to commence delivery and its first course is still in the early stages of development, it was not possible for the team to scrutinise external examiner reports, assessed student work or third-party endorsements.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

6 The review team did not sample any further evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

7 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the College 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 College'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.

8 To identify the College's approach to assessment design, marking and moderation, requirements for awards and approaches to classification as the underlying basis for the standards of awards, the team reviewed the College's assessment regulations, Guide to Good Practice for External Examiners, Assessment Scrutiny Form, Marking and Moderation Form, Mitigating Circumstances Policy, Student Disciplinary Policy, Flow Diagram Student Disciplinary Process Policy, Programme Handbook content guide, Quality Framework Flow diagram, Responsibilities for Academic Quality, External Examiner Report Template, and met representatives of the College.

9 To identify the College's approach to course design and test that specified threshold standards are consistent with national qualification frameworks in its piloted unit and module specifications, the team examined the College Outline Curriculum Board Meeting, unit and module specifications, Grading Criteria, Mapping of Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs) against Module Outcomes and External Frameworks, the College Banking and Finance Pilot Materials for Practitioner Review, Banking and Finance marking guidance, Indicative Assessment and Template for Banking and Finance and the Practitioner Opinion on Banking and Finance material.

10 To interrogate the robustness and credibility of the College's plans for ensuring threshold standards, the team reviewed the Self-Assessment on Management and Governance, Board papers, Board Guide to Good Practice for External Examiners, External Examiner Confirmation Report, Subject Matter Experts (SME) Guide and Induction for SMEs, the College's new Course Development Process and Owners, Programme Development and Approval Process, Programme Committee terms of reference, agenda and papers, a template proposal to the Curriculum Development and Delivery Group (CDDG) for internal review or substantial change to an existing programme, Programme Evaluation report template, Approval Event Report template, Approval Panel Submission document template, Role and Responsibility - Quality Assurance Officer, Quality Assurance Framework flow diagram, an Indicative Assessment and template, Practitioner Opinion on the Threshold Standards on B and F materials and SME and Supervisors Start dates.

11 To test whether staff understand and will apply the College's approach to setting and maintaining standards, the team met representatives from the College.

What the evidence shows

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

13 The College's approach to ensuring that the sector-recognised standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications' frameworks can be found in its Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations. This document sets out the role of the Programme Committee in being responsible for setting and maintaining all academic standards and quality control matters. It also details how the programmes of study and awards, modules, academic credit, assessment and external examiners are managed within the overall aim of securing sector-recognised standards.

14 The College plans to offer Level 7 postgraduate online professional programmes in law with the intention of enhancing the professional practice of solicitors, paralegals and other legal practitioners. The College has therefore established that the sector-recognised standards for its qualifications will be underpinned by the FHEQ descriptors and also by the Statement of Solicitor Competence, the Solicitor Threshold Standards and the Solicitor Regulation Authority (SRA) plans for legal education.

15 Students will be admitted onto a course only upon successful completion of a prior undergraduate degree in law, or the equivalent. The College's proposed credit framework is in keeping with sector norms. Each module is equivalent to 20 credits and 200 notional learning hours. Students must complete all credits for their qualifications (60 credits for postgraduate certificate, 120 credits for postgraduate diploma and 180 credits for a master's degree). The team agreed that this complies with the volumes of credit typically associated with qualifications at Level 7 in the sector. Students will be permitted to study for individual modules in order to aggregate credits; the overall programme of study must be completed within a maximum period of four years from initial registration.

16 The ultimate responsibility to ensure that the College's sector-recognised standards reflect FHEQ national qualifications frameworks is vested in the Programme Committee. Minutes of Programme Committees confirm that meetings take place, but the team noted that existing minutes viewed did not include specific discussions of national qualifications frameworks.

17 The process for developing new courses is outlined in the New Course Development Process and Owners mapping document. Stages in this process relevant to the setting and maintenance of sector-recognised standards include a detailed review of content, materials and assessments. The discussions with senior staff and those involved with programme and content development confirmed that module developers, referred to as Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), will design modules to a detailed brief/guide that will include reference to national qualification frameworks. The SMEs will use this information to support adherence to the correct standards for all modules. This approach can be seen in the SME Guide and Induction document. Compliance with sector-recognised standards is currently checked by the Head of Curriculum Design and Development and the Chief Executive Officer. At present, the College has not recruited a team of permanent academic staff. It has recently agreed contracts with a team of SMEs, who have relevant subject expertise, to design the modules for its first course and some of this work has already commenced. Once the College expands its academic staff numbers and overall infrastructure, the above process will be overseen by the Programme Committee that will have the ultimate responsibility to ensure that the College's threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with sector-recognised standards.

18 The Responsibilities for Academic Quality document states that the Programme Committee will act upon any recommendations regarding the setting and maintenance of standards made by the Programme Approval Panels and the Progression and Awards Panel. The Head of Curriculum Design and Development will retain the responsibility to ensure alignment of courses with sector-recognised standards but will also be assisted by the module and programme leaders and Quality Assurance Officer. It will be the Programme Approval Panel's responsibility to ensure that these standards are considered before any approval of a new module, or changes to existing modules, is granted. Adherence to standards is also planned to be assured through other formal processes and review mechanisms. These include an annual evaluation review, periodic reviews, and the approval and amendment of new programmes or modules. Senior and academic staff confirmed that the need for the ongoing reflection of national frameworks is planned to be reinforced through staff induction, training and staff development.

19 The Progression and Award Panel is empowered by the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations to ensure that students are only awarded their qualification upon achievement of threshold standards that compare with the sector. Assessments for each module will be subject to internal moderation and approval from an external examiner. Both internal and external scrutiny of assessments is therefore planned to be carried out by individuals with subject expertise and both internal and external scrutiny must be completed before the assessment is deemed to be approved. This approval will be used to confirm that

the assessments are designed with reference to the appropriate level of the FHEQ and in compliance with the stated learning outcomes. Students' work will be marked with reference to the marking schemes and grading criteria used. Grades will be moderated internally prior to formal confirmation being sought from the external examiners. Moderation forms require internal moderators first to ensure that marking has been carried out consistently and with reference to appropriate levels of the FHEQ. All marks will then be reviewed by external examiners who will confirm whether 'the academic standard and achievement of students are comparable with those in other UK institutions of which the External Examiner has experience'. All marks will be subject to the final formal confirmation at the Assessment Board that will have the overall governance over the assessment process and over the conferring of awards. The team agreed that this process aligns with practice in the sector and demonstrates that the College has a credible approach to setting and maintaining the appropriate sector-recognised standards.

20 The College is in the early stages of developing its first master's degree course, Developing Legal Professionals. It plans to complete and approve the full specifications for this programme in the summer of 2021. The College was only able to provide limited draft programme documentation for the team to inspect in the days prior to the review visit. These consisted of an overview of the course structure, a specification and marking guide for the Banking and Finance module, pilot unit specifications for two modules and some further documentation illustrating how the assessment for the Banking and Finance module would be managed. Modules will be divided into eight learning units, each designed around specific practice or skills areas. Learning units will be designed to be notionally of 20 hours with students also expected to spend 40 hours on the module assessment. The team agreed that this framework should provide for a consistent approach to the estimated time it would take an average learner to complete all activities within a specified programme of learning. Two of these units were being piloted with volunteers who have been recruited from several firms of solicitors.

21 The team agreed that the programme outcomes contained in the course structure correspond to the Level 7 descriptors in the FHEQ. Appropriate levels are also reflected in the learning outcomes for the pilot unit specifications, in the Banking and Finance Module specification as well as in the College's general grading criteria and in the Banking and Finance marking guidance. This guidance also includes an example of feedback that will be given to a student. The limited documentation scrutinised represents only a fraction of the overall number of modules that will ultimately be offered to students on this course. The team agreed, however, that the threshold standards for the course in development are consistent with sector-recognised standards.

22 The College plans to ensure that its module designs are evaluated during the design process. The team viewed some of the feedback that has been received for the pilot learning units from module supervisors who are industry practitioners and tutors. The team also noted that the Programme Development and Approval Process requires the involvement of two external panel members to inform the process, including an external examiner. External examiners are required by the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations to be 'familiar with current standards and procedures of programmes at the same level in the UK and will have relevant experience of examining student work in accordance with the expectations of the QAA Quality Code'.

23 The team noted that several terms are used within the course documentation to refer to students' outcomes. These include 'learning outcomes', 'performance indicators' and 'competencies', depending on the document used. The team agreed that this may be confusing, but staff acknowledged that this was an issue they are aware of and that these inconsistencies would be removed from course documentation prior to its planned approval.

24 Discussions with staff involved in the design and delivery of the pilot modules confirmed that national frameworks have been referred to when modules are being written and are expected to underpin module content, delivery and assessment. SMEs demonstrated clear awareness and understanding of what is expected under the national framework and how those need to be translated into module design and delivery.

Conclusions

25 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the College 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. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

26 From the evidence provided, the review team considers that the standards set for the College's draft programme will be in line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS regulatory framework. The evidence scrutinised by the team demonstrates that the standards described in the draft programme documentation available is set at levels that are consistent with these sector-recognised standards and the College's academic regulations and policies should ensure that standards are set appropriately.

27 The team considers that 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 evidence provided as part of this review. The team considers that the evidence seen demonstrates that the College's academic regulations and policies should ensure that these standards are maintained. The review team considers that staff fully understand the College's approach to setting and maintaining these standards and are committed to implementing this approach. The team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.

28 The College has yet to commence delivery of its first course which means that the team was unable to examine assessed student work or external examiner reports. In addition, only very limited draft course documentation was submitted by the College at the time of the visit and this had yet to go through the College's internal approval process. Moreover, while the College confirmed that the Programme Committee has ultimate responsibility to ensure that the College's sector-recognised standards reflect FHEQ national qualifications frameworks, this was not reflected in the meeting minutes of the Committee. The team therefore has a moderate degree of confidence in its 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

29 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.

30 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

31 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the College 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 utilised that matrix to ensure that the evidence it 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 Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations
- b Attachment A Developing Legal Professionals
- c Accred Attachment B Banking and Finance Pilot Unit
- d Accred Attachment B Dispute Resolution Pilot Unit
- e Example of styles of Summative Assessment for Dispute Resolution module
- f Grading Criteria
- g Assessment Panels Terms of Reference (Module and Award Panels)
- h Assessment Scrutiny Form
- i Marking and Moderation Form
- j External Examiner Confirmation Report (Module Panels)
- k SME Design Guide
- l Module Assessment Panel Agenda
- m Programme Evaluation Report Template
- n Student Disciplinary Process Policy
- o Programme Handbook content guide
- p External Examiner Report and Guidance
- q Summary of Assessment Task and Methods
- r Attachment B Banking and Finance module
- s Banking and Finance Marking Guidance
- t Banking and Finance Annotated student submission
- u Indicative Assessment and Template for Banking and Finance
- v Meeting with representatives from Board and Programme Committee and Senior Executives
- w Meeting with representatives from Programme and Content Development Team and Operation
- x Meeting with consultant involved in programme design and the delivery of a pilot unit
- y Final meeting with representatives from Senior Executive

32 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:

- because the College has yet to commence delivery and its first course is still in the early stages of development, it was not possible for the team to meet students, scrutinise approved course documentation, external examiner reports, assessed student work or third-party endorsements.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

33 The review team did not sample any further evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

34 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the College 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 College'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.

35 To identify the College's approach to the requirements for awards and approaches to classification as the underlying basis for the standards of awards, the team reviewed Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations, Grading Criteria, Summary of Assessment Tasks and Methods, the SME Design Guide, Student Disciplinary Process Policy and Programme Handbook content guide.

36 To interrogate the robustness of the College's plans for setting and maintaining comparable standards and to ensure that plans are credible and evidence-based and to test that specified standards beyond the threshold for courses are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers, the team evaluated Assessment Scrutiny Form, Moderation Form, External Examiner Module Panel Approval form, External Examiner Report Template and Guidance, Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations, Grading Criteria and Terms of Reference for Assessment Panels. The team also scrutinised the Banking and Finance marking guidance, Programme Evaluation Report Template, Module Review form, Attachment A Developing Legal Professionals, Accredited Attachment B Banking and Finance Pilot Unit, Accredited Attachment B Dispute Resolution Pilot Unit and Attachment B Banking and Finance module.

37 To test that staff understand and apply the College's approach to setting and maintaining comparable standards, the team met representatives from the Board and Programme Committee and Senior Executives, the Programme and Content Development Team and Operation and a consultant involved in programme design and the delivery of a pilot unit and took part in a final meeting with representatives from the Senior Executive.

What the evidence shows

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

39 The College's approach to course and assessment design, marking and moderation, the requirements for awards and approaches to classification as the underlying basis for the standards of awards can be found in the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations. This document defines the structure of programmes, including the minimum

credit requirements for awards and the regulatory requirements for module design and credit weighting. It also sets out the percentage marking scale for modules, clearly defining the rules for determining award classifications above the threshold pass level of 50%. The proposed differentiation of Pass (50%-59%) Commendation (60%-69%) and Distinction (70% or over), for awarding different classifications to students achieving grades beyond the minimum requirements at Level 7 of the FHEQ, provide clear rules for the differentiation of student achievement and for the determination of the award classifications. An average of module marks will determine the award classification. The College's Student Disciplinary Policy and Process should mitigate against the possibility of academic malpractice. The review team agreed that these regulations support the setting and maintenance of academic standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.

40 The Summary of Assessment Tasks and methods and SME Design Guide expand on the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations approach to module assessment. Formative tasks are designed into all modules with both written and verbal feedback being provided by supervisors to help students understand how to improve their performance and then apply this understanding to subsequent tasks. The team viewed the information about Grading Criteria that will inform all individual modules and noted that students will be provided with information about this in a programme handbook. Handbooks have yet to be produced; however, the College has developed a content guide for these. The review team examined this and noted that grading criteria is included in the list of information to be provided.

41 The College's Assessment Scrutiny Form, Moderation Form, External Examiner Module Panel Approval form and External Examiner Report Template and Guidance are produced by the College to support the operation of draft assessment approval, standardisation, marking and moderation, and external examiner scrutiny to confirm comparability of sector-recognised standards referred to in the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations. The Assessment Scrutiny Form is designed to support the internal moderation and commentary from external examiners regarding proposed module assessments. It requires the internal moderator to confirm that a draft assessment will provide students with a reasonable opportunity to meet the learning outcomes and that the marking scheme for the assessment aligns with the task set, as well as the College's standard Grading Criteria. The Moderation Form requires the internal moderator to confirm that marking is fair and consistent. In both forms external examiners are required to add their comments before they can be approved by the module leader. The College operates a two-tier assessment panel (exam board) model; that is, the External Examiner Module Panel Approval form requires external examiners to confirm that they agree with the decisions of the Module Panel for the award of grades before these can be confirmed by the Progression and Awards panel.

42 The above processes do not explicitly require that external examiners consider or comment as to whether standards at the College beyond the threshold level are reasonably comparable with those in other UK providers, and credit and qualifications are awarded only where those standards have been met. They also do not ask their judgement regarding the College's classification standards across the full range of marks. External examiners are required to submit an annual report to the College and the template for this does invite them to assess and comment on academic standards and whether these are comparable with those in other UK institutions of which they have experience. But, again, external examiners are not asked explicitly to comment on whether students have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level. The review team noted, however, that each of these templates also offers external examiners the space to add their own comments as they see fit.

43 The review team was provided with a draft marking guidance document for the Banking and Finance pilot being run by the College at the time of the review visit. The team noted that, as an example of a guide for staff with sample submissions and feedback, there was no reference to grading or classification. The team noted that this example appeared to be for a formative submission and agreed that the feedback provided was developmental. The guidance suggested that the student would have the opportunity to review the feedback and then revise their work before including an updated version of it in their portfolio submission. This would provide the student with an opportunity to improve their work and potentially achieve a higher grade. The team therefore concluded that a grade might not be appropriate on such feedback but that as an example of marking guidance this was not clear.

44 The review team noted that some processes that will support the setting and maintenance of standards did include references to achievements beyond the threshold level. The team examined the programme evaluation template and noted that this annual monitoring process requires that annual programme reviews must include evaluations of students' achievements and consider the range of classifications achieved, eventually taking into account evaluations of trend analysis over a period of three years. This analysis will be required at both programme level and for each individual module taught. The Module Review form also requires teaching staff to evaluate the effectiveness of the module assessment (formative and summative) and feedback, and to analyse the attainment of students. The team agreed that, although some College process documents could do more to explicitly highlight measures to secure standards beyond the threshold level, overall, there were opportunities for staff and external examiners to reflect on and analyse the College's performance in these areas.

45 Based on the evidence seen, the review team concluded that the College has clear and comprehensive academic regulations in place to support the setting and maintenance of academic standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers. However, the team was keen to explore with staff at the College how, using the frameworks detailed above, they could ensure that students would have opportunities to reach standards beyond the threshold level.

46 The College's senior staff confirmed that the College has plans to articulate different grades in the module assessments and module specifications as they are developed. They were also able to articulate how, through the provision of further guidance and training of staff in module and assessment design, and through moderation processes, staff will ensure that the awards and classifications achieved by College students would be comparable to other UK providers. Senior staff placed a significant emphasis on the role of the external examiners in this process. They drew the team's attention to the regulations that allow external examiners to have remedy to the Programme Committee and senior staff should they feel that their feedback has not been adequately acknowledged and, if necessary, acted upon in order to safeguard standards.

47 Discussions with staff working as either an SME (module designer) or as supervisors (tutors) on the pilots also confirmed this approach and staff were able to articulate the way modules will be structured to allow students to demonstrate the professional competencies required as well as to achieve standards beyond the threshold level. An example was provided of the assessment for the Banking and Finance pilot, included in the draft module outline, which involves two linked assessment tasks, each with a formative stage that was described as similar to a portfolio assessment. Students are presented with the first task which is designed primarily to allow them to demonstrate that they can achieve the threshold standard for the module. After receiving formative feedback, they then have the opportunity to complete a summative submission allowing them to reflect on the feedback they have received. They are then set a second task that is more advanced

and presents the opportunity to demonstrate skills and knowledge that go beyond the threshold level. During this task they again receive feedback to a formative submission before completing their portfolio assessment. In this way, staff assert that students have the opportunity to progress through the module and to develop and then demonstrate their skills and knowledge so as to have the opportunity to achieve higher grades.

48 The team noted that the above approach was not clearly reflected in the pilot course and learning unit specifications that it viewed or in the pilot marking guide, but the team could see that the marking guide reflected the formative stage of feedback suggested by staff in this assessment model. College staff acknowledged that this is an outcome from the pilot that will require further development to embed processes effectively.

49 The team agreed that College staff who it met have a firm understanding of the College's approach to setting and maintaining standards and of the need for the further development of some processes to ensure that they will be robust.

Conclusions

50 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the College meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in the 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. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

51 The team determined that, based on the evidence seen, the standards that will be achieved by the College's students beyond the threshold are expected to be comparable with those achieved at other UK providers. The team considered that the standards described in the limited draft programme documentation and in the College's academic regulations and policies should ensure that such standards are maintained appropriately.

52 The review team determined that, based on the evidence seen, the standards that will be achieved by the College's students beyond the threshold are expected to be reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers. The team considered that the College's academic regulations and policies should ensure that standards beyond the threshold are maintained. Based on the detailed scrutiny of the evidence, the team considered that while the staff at the College fully understand the College's approach to maintaining such standards, there is no evidence that they have opportunities for engagement with peers and external experts in teaching and assessment activities. The team considered the College's plans for maintaining comparable standards appropriate and that these are understood by staff members. 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.

53 The College has yet to commence delivery of its first course which means that the review team was unable to examine assessed student work or external examiner reports. In addition, only very limited draft course documentation was submitted by the College at the time of the visit and this had yet to go through the College's internal approval process. Moreover, documentation submitted did not explicitly require that external examiners consider or comment as to whether standards at the College beyond the threshold level are reasonably comparable with those in other UK providers, and credit and qualifications are awarded only where those standards have been met. In addition, the team was not provided with evidence that staff will have opportunities for engagement with peers and external experts in teaching and assessment activities. The team had to place reliance on the

College's oral testimony in relation to staff ensuring that the awards and classifications achieved by College students would be comparable to other UK providers. Similarly, while the College discussed its approach to formative and summative assessment that would give students the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold, this has yet to be set out formally. The team therefore has a low degree of confidence in its judgement.

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

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

56 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

57 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the College 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 utilised that matrix to ensure that the evidence it 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 Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations
- b Grading criteria
- c Guide to good practice for external examiners
- d Terms of reference for assessment panels
- e Assessment scrutiny form
- f Moderation form
- g External Examiner Module Panel Approval
- h Programme development and approval process
- i Programme Committee terms of reference
- j Staff Student Liaison Committee Terms of Reference
- k Proposal form for the CDDG for programme change
- l Programme evaluation report template
- m Module assessment panel template
- n Programme Committee Agenda and Papers 4th August 2020
- o Programme Committee Meeting Minutes 4th August 2020
- p Programme Committee Agenda and Papers January 2020
- q External Examiner Report Template and Guidance
- r Meetings with representatives from Programme and Content Development team and from Operations

58 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:

- because the College has yet to commence delivery and its first course is still in the early stages of development, it was not possible for the team to meet students, scrutinise approved course documentation, external examiner reports, records of course approval, or third-party endorsements.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

59 The review team did not sample any further evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

60 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the College 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 College'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.

61 To identify how external experts will be used in setting and maintaining academic standards, the review team examined the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations, Terms of Reference for Assessment Panels and the Programme Development and Approval Process. It also examined the Guide to Good Practice for External Examiners.

62 To identify how the College's assessment and classification processes will operate, the review team considered the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations, grading criteria, the Staff Student Liaison Committee Terms of Reference, the External Examiner Report Template and Guidance, the External Examiner Module Panel Approval, and templates for programme changes and evaluation and assessment scrutiny and moderation.

63 To interrogate the use of external examiners or verifiers and that the College considers and respond to externals' reports regarding standards appropriately, the review team consulted Programme Committee minutes.

64 To test that staff understand the requirements for the use of external expertise and the College's assessment and classification processes, the review team met members of academic and professional staff.

What the evidence shows

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

66 The policies for appointing and using external examiners in the setting and maintaining of academic standards are specified in the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations. External examiners will be appointed by the Programme Committee for a period of four years. Clear and detailed guidance and criteria is provided in the regulations for the appointment of external examiners. For example, they should have no prior relationship with the College or its students in the previous five years and a limit of two simultaneous external examiner appointments during their term. They must also have expertise in the area(s) to be examined and be familiar with standards of programmes at Level 7 in the UK and have relevant experience of examining student work.

67 An induction event will be organised for new external examiners and a guide to good practice will be provided so that they have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. The scope of external scrutiny in assessment design and the marking and feedback of assessments is explicitly defined in both the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations and the Guide to Good Practice. External examiners must be present and provide feedback at all College assessment boards. External examiners are required to submit an annual report to the Programme Committee. The College will provide templates for examiners to use for both assessment boards and annual reports. The team noted that

the annual report template is particularly detailed and explicitly asks external examiners to indicate the level of their confidence in academic standards and the achievements of the students, asking them to add comments if they have limited or no confidence. External examiner reports and the College's responses to them will be made available to students on the online learning platform and will also be received and considered by the Staff Student Liaison Committee, according to its terms of reference.

68 The academic regulations specify how an external examiner can escalate any concerns they may have to the Chief Executive Officer should they have concerns about the response from the College to their reports. There is evidence from assessment and programme evaluation templates that feedback from external examiners should be included in future reviews of academic standards and programme quality. These regulations are clear and comprehensive in the setting and maintaining of academic standards.

69 External expertise will also be used in programme validation with each validation event having external members on the validation panel. The Programme Development and Approval Process specifies that one of the panel members must be an external examiner. Overall, the College has clear and comprehensive policies for using externals in the setting and maintaining of academic standards. Its plans for using external expertise in both setting and maintaining academic standards and assessment and classification are credible.

70 The operation of the College's assessment and classification processes begins with the design of assessments. This is led by a named module leader and then draft assessments are scrutinised internally and externally, making use of the College's Assessment Scrutiny Form, against programme-level learning outcomes. External examiners will be asked to receive and comment upon assessment tasks at the draft stage. Student work will be marked in alignment with the general grading criteria and an assessment-specific marking scheme. Assessed work will first be internally moderated and then reviewed by an external examiner. Clear guidance is given in the assessment regulations about the scope of moderation, including how student work should be sampled.

71 The external examiner will be asked to review the standard of marking to ensure that it corresponds to the quality of student work and is comparable with sector-recognised standards. Templates exist for assessment scrutiny and moderation, including a section for feedback from the external examiner. Templates also exist for programme changes and programme evaluation with sections for considering feedback from external examiners. Classifications will be determined in relation to student performance in achieving programme learning outcomes and the grading criteria and should therefore be fair. Rules for classification are specified in detail in the academic regulations, making the classification process transparent. Overall, the College has clear and comprehensive regulations concerning assessment design, scrutiny and marking. The team agreed that these should be reliable, fair and transparent.

72 The College has plans for monitoring the use of external expertise, assessment and classification processes through its annual monitoring processes. The Programme Evaluation Report Template requires the programme leader to report on the performance of the course, including a trend analysis of grading classifications and a review of reports from external examiners. The template includes an action plan with requirements that actions are tracked with completion dates, and responsibilities assigned staff, to enable these to be tracked. The template also requires evidence to be provided that the views of external examiners are responded to and, if necessary, acted upon. This report will be received and must be approved by both the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) and the Programme Committee, the latter of which has authority for all academic matters at the College. The team agreed that this process should ensure effective monitoring of its performance in these areas. The terms of reference for the Programme Committee detail its responsibility to

commission actions, as appropriate, to address any issues arising from College review processes and ensure effective monitoring arrangements are in place for these.

73 Minutes from the meetings of the Programme Committee show that programme development is taking place, but it has not yet progressed to a stage where external expertise is required as specified in the College's academic policies. The review team was therefore not able to confirm that that external expertise will be used according to the College's regulations. The College will not have any records of course approval until the summer of 2021 when its first course, Developing Legal Professionals, is scheduled for this process.

74 In the meetings with the review team, staff articulated an understanding of how the College plans to use external expertise by referring to the College's policies and plans to recruit external examiners at an appropriate stage of programme validation, assessment, and classification. As the College has yet to deliver its first course, the review team was not able to establish the views of students, external experts or other organisations about the role of external scrutiny or the reliability, fairness and transparency of assessment and classification processes.

Conclusions

75 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the College meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in the 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. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

76 The College will use external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent. This is because the College has clear, comprehensive and credible policies specifying the requirements for using external expertise in setting and maintaining academic standards. It also has credible plans to monitor these processes. The College's processes for assessment and classification are outlined in academic regulations in a clear and transparent way and they are likely to be effective when implemented. There are also clear plans for using external expertise in programme validation and evaluation, as well as in processes overseeing assessment and classification, that should be effective. Staff understand the requirements for the use of external expertise and are aware of related policies and processes, including responding to such feedback. They also understand the planned assessment and classification processes. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.

77 The team's judgement is based on the College's policies and plans, that the team agreed should be effective, and its meetings with staff because the College has yet to approve or deliver any programmes. The College does not have any students or external examiners at present who can comment on assessment and classification processes and the team was not able to interrogate assessed student work, external examiner reports, or any records of course approval. However, because the College's policies are clear, comprehensive and credible the team considers that the implementation of those plans should result in the intended outcome. Therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

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

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

79 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

80 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the College 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 utilised that matrix to ensure that the evidence it 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 Business Plan
- b Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations
- c Selection and Admission of Students draft policy
- d Programme Committee Terms of Reference
- e Student Enrolment Form exemplar
- f Material Information Exemplar
- g Overview of Learning Portal and Digital Systems
- h Student Contract
- i Job role description - Student Services Manager draft
- j Job Description - Student Services Officer draft
- k Job Description Programme Leader draft
- l Programme Handbook content guide
- m Student Terms and Conditions
- n Refund and Compensation Policy
- o Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning Form
- p Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning Form
- q Examples of Communications for Admissions
- r Admissions Process for Award Programmes
- s Policy Approval and Communication Policy
- t Policy Approval and Communication Procedure
- u Information for prospective students
- v Example of a College of Law Programme Handbook
- w Meeting with representatives from Board and Programme Committee and Senior Executive
- x Meeting with representatives from Programme and Content Development team and from Operations

81 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:

- because the College has yet to commence delivery and its first course is still in the early stages of development, it was not possible for the team to meet students, to scrutinise generic information for applicants, approved course documentation or admissions records. It was also not possible to meet the staff who will be directly involved in the admissions process as they are to be recruited in early 2021.

82 The team did not scrutinise arrangements with recruitment agents because the College informed the team that it will not work with agents.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

83 The review team did not sample any further evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

84 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the College 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 College'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.

85 To identify institutional policy relating to the recruitment, selection and admission of students (including roles and responsibilities of staff involved in the admissions process, support for applicants, how the College will verify applicants' entry qualifications, how it will facilitate an inclusive admissions system, and how it will handle complaints and appeals) the review team considered recruitment and admissions regulations, job descriptions, programme information and Committee terms of reference.

86 To assess whether the College has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for ensuring that admissions systems are reliable, fair and inclusive, the review team considered policy and process documentation and the College's Business Plan.

87 To test whether the information given to applicants is transparent, inclusive and fit for purpose the review team considered relevant policies and regulations, terms and conditions for students and information or draft materials that would be available to applicants.

What the evidence shows

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

89 The College's approach to the admission of students is articulated in the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations and the Selection and Admission of Students draft policy. These are a clear set of policies for the recruitment and admission of students which are reliable, fair and inclusive. This is because the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations articulate a set of principles that is based on the provision of clear information for prospective students, clear entry requirements, an impartial selection process that is based on the academic merit and the potential of students, details of accreditation of prior learning for students with non-standard qualifications and dedicated admissions complaints and appeals mechanisms.

90 The draft Selection and Admission of Students policy and Admissions process flow chart provide more detailed information regarding the various elements of the admissions

process. The policy makes clear that application decisions are made based on academic merit. The policy also acknowledges the College's obligation to provide accurate and easily understood information that is accessible to applicants. The College has identified its website as the location for prospective students to find up-to-date information about the courses that will be available. Responsibility for providing information to prospective students and supporting applications through the process is held by the Student Services team, according to the College's process flow chart. However, the team noted that the draft job descriptions supplied for the Student Services Team do not currently include admissions as part of their duties. The draft job description for the College Registrar, however, does include the oversight of admissions processes.

91 The Selection and Admission of Students draft policy provides information about how to make a complaint about the admissions service or process and how to appeal against an admissions decision. Applicants are encouraged to seek further information if they want to understand how an admissions decision was arrived at in the first instance. Formal appeals should be sent to the Student Services team if an applicant believes that their admission decision has not been reached in accordance with the College's published admissions criteria or the principles set out in the policy. The draft policy seen by the team had yet to identify specifically where applicants should send a complaint. However, information was provided about what would constitute grounds for a complaint as well as a timescale for a response from the College. The Chief Operations Director is identified as being responsible for final decisions.

92 The Selection and Admission of Students draft policy makes clear that original certificates and transcripts must be provided by applicants to confirm their eligibility prior to enrolment at the College.

93 The draft Selection and Admission of Students policy details how applicants who are disabled, have a long-term medical or mental health condition or a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia are encouraged and supported to apply to the College. Declarations of such needs are encouraged as early in the application process as possible so that suitable support and advice can be provided by the Student Services team. Once the offer of a place has been made students are then invited to provide further details about any specific support they might need, so that this can be assessed, and arrangements can be made as early as possible.

94 Prospective students will apply using an online application form and will be able to include information about their conventional qualifications as well as any non-standard qualifications or their work or life experience that they consider relevant. These applications will be processed according to the College's entrance requirements that will be published on its website and the process allows for Student Services staff to contact applicants to request more information where gaps or ambiguities in an application are identified. Admissions decisions will then be communicated to applicants in writing through the online portal that the College is developing. The Admissions Process flow chart shows that unsuccessful applicants will be provided with the reasons for the College's decision in an email. The College will also write to successful applicants, listing any conditions of the offer that is made.

95 The College provided for the review team some examples of communications templates that are in the process of being developed for the online admissions portal. These included templates for a variety of scenarios, including replies to enquiries, a follow-up communication to an enquiry, and templates for rejections and offers to applicants.

96 Staff acknowledged that these templates require further development and that they were submitted to provide examples of the development work underway at the time of the

review visit. The draft offer template, for example, does not include a date by which the student should accept the offer, or any information about a cooling-off period. It also does not refer to the student terms and conditions or specifically to the complaints process for admissions. The team agreed with College staff that these drafts would need further development to be fit for purpose.

97 The team also viewed template forms for staff to use for the processing of the recognition of prior certificated and experiential learning. The team agreed that these were more fully developed and already fit for purpose as they would allow for relevant details to be included for consideration as well as for academic staff to be able to contribute their opinion of the application. Decisions about the ratification of these more complex applications are taken by academic staff in the Progression and Awards Panel for those requesting prior certificated learning or the Module Assessment Panel for applications that include the consideration of experiential learning.

98 The admissions policy and process will be overseen by the Programme Committee whose terms of reference in this regard are clear and include monitoring the effectiveness of the admissions process and to commission actions as appropriate to address any issues arising.

99 At the time of the review there was no approved programme documentation available, so the team could not test that detailed admissions requirements for courses reflect the College's overall policy. However, general College and English language requirements are included in the draft admissions policy. These admissions requirements are consistent with the College's Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations.

100 The Material Information Exemplar illustrates the College's development of appropriate information for applicants, which is ongoing. The exemplar outlines a basis for the generic institutional information and some course information that the College intends to provide to prospective students, primarily on its website. This document reflects the current stage in the College's development towards the delivery of its courses and, while not complete, does contain relevant information that would be required by the relevant consumer legislation including fees, contact details of the course provider and information about the complaints policy for admissions. At the time of the review visit, the College had yet to develop or publish any information on its website regarding courses or applications. However, the review team could see that the College Business Plan shows that this provision of information is scheduled to be developed during the spring of 2021.

101 When meeting staff, the review team wished to establish which job roles would have responsibility for making admissions decisions. Representatives from the Senior Executive explained how the College plans to assess applications on the basis of the published admissions criteria and that this will be the responsibility of the Student Services team. However, as student services and academic staff have yet to be employed, the team was not able to test that those directly involved in these processes will understand their role. Senior executive staff did demonstrate a clear understanding of the importance of the appropriate training and support for staff involved in admissions. Although these plans have yet to be formulated, senior executive staff articulated their approach to the establishment of a culture of ongoing training of staff, the monitoring of the admissions process, reflection and resulting actions. They also articulated how prospective students would be provided with appropriate information, primarily through the website, and the need to ensure that this information is systematically checked and approved for publication.

102 When questioned about the detailed process for admissions, senior executive staff confirmed that the College does not have plans to make use of either a written statement, interview or other confirmed process in addition to the scrutiny of the online application. They

did articulate that this process would provide an opportunity for applicants to declare any need for additional support or a requirement for prior learning to be considered. Their expectation was that the system would allow for more detailed conversations to then take place between prospective students on a case-by-case basis and the College to ensure the process will be inclusive and that individual students will be effectively supported.

103 Staff from the Programme and Content Development team and Operations provided further information about the process, explaining that entrance requirements for a course would be set by academic staff as part of the programme approval process. They also confirmed that, while Student Services staff will process applications, the programme leader will have the final decision regarding whether a student should be accepted onto a course, while the Chief Operations Director will make the final decision if assessment of an application is inconclusive. Staff were able to articulate the difference in principle between a complaint and appeal as they relate to the admissions process and referred the team to the correct policy document which details this process.

104 The senior executive staff and representatives from Board and Programme Committee also confirmed their commitment to inclusivity. They acknowledged that the Board was in the early stages of developing its plans for this aspect of operations. However, they asserted that the nature of the proposed online delivery was suited to these aspirations and directed the review team to the College's Equality and Inclusion Policy for Students which makes clear the College's commitment to, and responsibility for, providing an environment where students, employees, and others are treated fairly and with dignity and respect.

105 The ability to monitor the effectiveness of the College's admissions will be provided by metrics supplied regularly through the online application system. Performance will be monitored by the Programme Committee which will report to the College's Board. The College plans to make use of the online admissions system already being used by its parent institution (CoL) in Australia and to adapt it to provide reporting appropriate for its UK context and the demands of UK regulatory bodies. Staff were therefore confident of the efficacy of the system that will be implemented and their ability to introduce this during the first half of 2021.

106 The team noted that the College's Business Plan refers to the establishment of the Student Services team in January to March 2021, and that of admissions systems, support systems, complaints and appeals procedures from July 2021. This timescale fit with the information provided during the meeting with representatives from the Senior Executive staff and appeared to the team to be achievable, based on the information provided.

Conclusions

107 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the College meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in the 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. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

108 The College will have a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system. This is because it has clear policies for the recruitment and admission of students which are reliable, fair and inclusive. The College's plans for admissions were not complete at the time of the review visit and staff directly involved in admissions have yet to be recruited. However, representatives from the Senior Executive, the Board and the programme articulated how the admissions process will work, how the College plans to train and support its admissions

staff and how it will monitor the performance of the admissions system through regular reporting and its academic governance arrangements to ensure that it is fair and reliable. The team saw evidence of the development of forms, some of which the College acknowledges need further work, and processes that should support and encourage an inclusive approach to admissions. The team was also able to examine the College's ongoing development of appropriate information for prospective students and templates for its communications with prospective students to ensure they will be transparent and accessible. Although plans for admissions are incomplete, the team agreed that the College's timescales are achievable and, on balance, concludes that this Core practice is met.

109 The evidence underpinning the judgement reflects the current stage of the College's development. The team was unable to speak with students, scrutinise admissions records, fully developed applicant information or full and approved course documentation. The team was also unable to speak with staff who will be directly involved in the admissions process as they have yet to be recruited. It is also unclear from the evidence who will be responsible for the admissions process as, although there is evidence that Student Services is to be involved, this is not articulated in job descriptions. The team had to place reliance on the College's oral testimony in relation to the College's approach to appropriate training and support for staff involved in admissions and the monitoring of the admissions process. Similarly, as yet the detailed processes for admission have not been fully formulated. The team therefore has a low degree of confidence in its judgement.

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

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

111 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

112 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the College 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 utilised that matrix to ensure that the evidence it 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 Self-Assessment on Management and Governance
- b The College Outline Curriculum - Board Meeting May 2020
- c Curriculum Statement Board Meeting May 2020
- d Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulation
- e Attachment A Developing Legal Professionals
- f Accredited Attachment B Banking and Finance Pilot Unit
- g Accredited Attachment B Dispute Resolution Pilot Unit
- h Assessment exemplar Dispute Resolution pilot unit
- i Practitioner Feedback Email (Dispute Resolution)
- j Feedback Document (Banking and Finance)
- k CVs of Subject Matter Experts and Practitioner Supervisors
- l The College Banking and Finance Pilot Materials for Practitioner Review
- m SME Guide and Induction for SMEs
- n The College/CoL New Course Development Process and Owners
- o Curriculum Development and Delivery Group Terms of Reference
- p Programme Development and Approval Process
- q Programme Committee Terms of Reference
- r Principle of Teaching and Learning Policy
- s Banking and Finance pilot outline with competency framework
- t Information Sheet for Potential Pilot Organisation
- u Information for Pilot Organisation
- v Template proposal to the CDDG for internal review or substantial change to an existing programme
- w Commissioning Information sent to each Subject Matter Expert
- x Approval Event Report Template
- y Approval Panel Submission document template
- z Role and Responsibility - Quality Assurance Officer (draft)
- aa Quality Assurance Framework flow diagram
- bb Responsibilities for Academic Quality
- cc Summary of Assessment Tasks and Methods
- dd Attachment B Banking and Finance module
- ee Banking and Finance Marking Guidance

- ff Meeting with Representatives from Board and Programme Committee and Senior Executives
- gg Meeting with Representatives from Programme and Content Development Team and Operation
- hh Meeting with consultant involved in programme design and the delivery of a pilot unit
- ii Demonstration of the College pilot version of the College learning platform

113 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:

- because the College has yet to commence delivery and its first course is still in the early stages of development, it was not possible for the team to scrutinise approved course documentation (although some limited draft documentation was made available), external examiner reports, students' views or third-party endorsements. It was also not possible to meet students or third parties such as employers. The team was also unable to conduct observations of teaching and learning of students.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

114 The review team did not sample any further evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

115 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the College 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 College'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.

116 To identify the College's approach to designing and delivering high-quality courses, the review team scrutinised the Programme Development and Approval Process, Curriculum Development and Delivery Group Terms of Reference, Programme Committee Terms of Preference, Template proposal to the Curriculum Development and Delivery Group (CDDG) for internal review or substantial change to an existing programme, Module Review Form, Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations and Quality Assurance Framework flow diagram, Responsibilities for Academic Quality, Approval Event Report template and Approval Panel Submission template.

117 To assess whether the College has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for designing high-quality courses, the review team examined Board Papers, Principles of Learning and Teaching, Principles of Engagement with the Profession and Community and SME Design Guide, and Induction for SMEs and Banking and Finance Marking Guidance.

118 To test that all elements of the courses will be of high quality and that the teaching, learning and assessment design will enable students to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes, the review team examined Outline Curriculum Board Papers, available unit and module specifications, Practitioner Engagement Email (Dispute Resolution), Feedback Document (Banking and Finance), The College Banking and Finance pilot materials for practitioner review, Banking and Finance pilot unit with competency framework, Exams of Styles of Summative Assessment for the Dispute Resolution module and Banking and Finance Marking Guidance.

119 To assess how staff ensure courses are high quality, the review team met representatives from the Board and Programme Committee and Senior Executives, the Programme and Content Development Team and Operations and a consultant involved in programme design and the delivery of a pilot unit.

What the evidence shows

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

121 The ultimate responsibility for ensuring that all courses are of high-quality rests with the Programme Committee which is assisted by the Programme Approval Panel and Curriculum Development and Delivery Group. The Programme Approval Panel will have responsibility for the approval and re-approval of programmes of study and withdrawing or suspending an existing programme of study. The Curriculum Development and Delivery Group will have lead responsibility for developing the curricula. In a progress report to the Board of the College the team noted references to the College's pedagogic approach that intends to embed the concept of 'transactional learning' with a high level of individual supervision and feedback. The collaboration between practitioners and subject matter experts (SMEs) is intended to provide students with courses that combine the required academic understanding with current practice in the legal profession. The team agreed that this was a credible approach to the design and delivery of high-quality courses.

122 The team noted that the College makes use of some specific terms to describe the various roles in the design and delivery of its courses and these were clarified at the team's request and discussed with senior executive staff. Courses and course modules are authored by SMEs who have an academic background, qualifications and industry experience and are responsible for the provision of the synchronous teaching resources in advance of these being delivered. During the design process, feedback is sought from practitioners, who will check the course materials as they are designed for currency in the profession.

123 During the delivery of courses, module leaders will be responsible for running the modules in the programme. Supervisors are teaching staff who will provide one-to-one and group tutorials and who will be responsible for working with students and providing feedback for formative and summative assessments. Senior executive staff explained that their expectation was that an SME would assume the role of module leader during the delivery of modules and that they also would be likely to fulfil the role of supervisor on those modules. Where modules have a larger enrolment of students it may be that several supervisors will work with a module leader in the delivery of that module.

124 In the design of its first course, the College has referred to the Solicitors Regulation Authority's Statement of solicitor competence which defines the continuing competences that are required of all solicitors in England and Wales and is therefore the authoritative document for describing the professional competencies required of students on the course to be able to pass the Solicitors Qualifying Examination. The review team agreed that this should ensure that the professional outcomes that students require of this course will be included in its design.

125 The Principles of Learning and Teaching set out clear and coherent principles that should be followed in all modules. These principles include the need for the content to be current and relevant, reflect up-to-date practice, adhere to professional ethics, and the need for teaching to be underpinned by research and scholarship. The team found evidence of this approach explained in the design guide prepared for SMEs. Adherence to these principles and course design guidance will be checked by the Quality Assurance Officer and the Head of Curriculum Design and Development who will report to the Curriculum

Development and Delivery Group. This Group has responsibility for making recommendations for the continuous improvement of programmes to the Programme Committee. This was articulated to the team in the meeting with representatives from the Board and Programme Committee and Senior Executives and from the Programme and Content Development Team and Operations.

126 The College's first course is due to go through a course approval event in the summer of 2021 that will make a recommendation to the Programme Committee whether to approve the programme for delivery. The College has established plans for these processes to ensure the approval of high-quality courses. These are detailed in the Programme Development and Approval Process. The team viewed some of the documentation that will support this process, including an Approval Event Report Template and the template for the submission document for these events which includes a detailed agenda and terms of reference for College approval panels. The process requires the consideration of the rationale for development, basic programme structure, professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements, as well as resource, marketing and financial considerations. The process itself makes use of a panel format to discuss the validity of the proposals and to incorporate external academic input, including an external examiner, and student participation. A successful course validation event would result in a recommendation being made by the chair of the Approval event to the Programme Committee confirming that the academic stage of the development process has been successfully concluded. The review team also examined documentation designed to support the consideration of adjustments and enhancements to programmes, including a proposal template. This process is also detailed in the Programme Development and Approval Process. Proposals for changes to programmes will originate with the programme leader and include similar processes and safeguards to ensure the quality of courses if they are altered. The review team agreed that the above approach should facilitate the design and delivery of high-quality courses.

127 The College has detailed plans for the periodic evaluation and annual monitoring of courses. These are detailed in the Programme Development and Approval Process as well as in the Terms and Reference of the Programme Committee. Significant changes to a programme will result in a periodic review of a course. Without any such changes, periodic reviews will take place every three years for each programme and will follow a similar format to the approval events. Annual monitoring is the responsibility of the Programme Committee that will receive a report from the programme leader, a template for which was reviewed by the team. Programme evaluations make use of performance data, external examiner feedback as well as collective and individual student feedback to evaluate the course, identify issues and form an action plan to address any changes or enhancements required. The format will make use of trends in data over a period of three years to monitor longer-term performance of a programme and these reports will be received by the Programme Committee so that it can interrogate and monitor the response of the programme to this evaluation. The team agreed that these processes and the accompanying documents were evidence that the College's plans for maintaining the delivery of high-quality courses is robust.

128 The course is structured around a series of nine 20-credit modules. Modules are divided into learning units to provide a structure for students to progress through. Each unit has its own individual learning outcomes and objectives, and each is designed around specific practice or skills areas. These are designed to require a notional 20 hours for an average student to complete. The plans for the development of modules were explained during the meeting with the representatives from the Board and Programme Committee and Senior Executives and during the meeting with the Programme and Content Development team and Operations. Prior to module development, SMEs will be issued with a design guide which contains a detailed statement of the College's curriculum philosophy, framework of learning, and how the module should link to performance criteria and descriptors that are set

out in the FHEQ. During the design process, feedback on the module design will be sought from a relevant practitioner to ensure that the module content and the proposed assessment framework is appropriate and reflects current practice in the profession. This will allow for further refinements to be made before modules are approved. The review team was able to scrutinise the design guide for the course, as well as examples of feedback from practitioners for the piloted learning units to understand how they contribute to course design. They observed that the feedback provided detailed commentary on the appropriateness of assessment tasks, the use of terminology and the skills that would be developed by students. Practitioners also provided comments regarding how assessment tasks compare to real-world practice to support the refinement of the modules prior to their delivery. In these respects, the team agreed that this approach would contribute to the provision of a high-quality course.

129 At the time of the review visit, the College was in the early stages of developing its first course, Developing Legal Professionals. The College was approximately midway through the process of testing the delivery of pilot learning units from two modules which were made available to the review team. Volunteers, who have been recruited from several firms of solicitors, for the pilots were studying the content of the pilot units to provide detailed feedback on the effectiveness and quality of the provision. Staff reported that they had received some informal feedback; however, the volunteers had yet to complete the assessment and more formal feedback was planned to be sought at the end of the pilots. The pilots were being hosted on the CoL's learning platform as the College's own platform had yet to be established. CoL uses the same software as that planned for the College which is a commercial installation of the Canvas learning management system. The review team was provided with a detailed presentation of the platform as well as access to the pilot course materials to assess the planned provision.

130 The team could see that course materials were provided in the form of asynchronous prerecorded videos, with relevant supporting resources and interactive activities for students to complete. In this way, modules are designed to be flexible for students and information about the pilot suggests that the College expected their volunteers to take two to three weeks to complete a learning unit alongside their employment. Staff from the College who work with the pilots explained how the learning units build through the module to introduce students to, and prepare them for, the module assessment with planned opportunities for formative feedback in much the same way as a conventional portfolio assessment. This feedback also includes synchronous online tutorials with module supervisors who can provide detailed advice to support the written formative feedback as well as other support. The team viewed the online delivery of units from two modules: Banking and Finance, and Dispute Resolution. The team was also able to inspect a module specification for the Banking and Finance module, as well as a marking guide for assessment from the same module and the pilot unit specifications from the two modules. The team noted that the pilots followed the format for the suggested design and delivery of the course. It found the teaching and learning resources on the platform to be appropriate for the delivery of the modules and the team agreed that these plans, if replicated across the entire module and programme, would provide the flexibility and individual support for students that the College intends and, therefore, support the delivery of high-quality courses.

131 Although the College's pilot was being hosted on the learning platform of its parent organisation, the team was informed on the second day of the review visit that its own platform had just been established. The College will begin in January 2021 to populate this with the full range of planned resources prior to the planned autumn delivery of its first course. This information tallied with the College's Business Plan. Students at the College will therefore be provided with a bespoke platform with resources designed for the context of the delivery of higher education in England.

132 The review team met staff to assess how they will ensure courses are high quality. At the time of the review visit, the College has yet to recruit its full complement of academic staff, which is planned for the first and second quarter of 2021. Conversations with staff revolved around the specific challenges of designing and delivering online distance learning. The team was keen to understand how the College plans to provide appropriate levels of academic and professional expertise as well as the individualised support in a wholly online context. Staff from the senior executive were able to articulate how the College's online offer was designed to offer students the flexibility to pursue their studies at the same time as working. Their expectation is that the majority of students will be working in firms of solicitors as they pursue their studies with the College. This is because students will also need two years' full-time (or equivalent) qualifying work experience to qualify as a solicitor with the SRA. However, students would not have to be working to take the course as there is no work-based learning component.

133 Senior staff also explained how modules are to be designed by the College's SMEs who have the academic understanding and skills to design the course to the required standards. However, this effort is to be supported by the input of practitioners who will check the course materials for currency within the legal profession. The expectation of staff was that the SME would then work as the module leader, running the modules in the programme and reporting to the programme leader. The College has also introduced the role of supervisors who are expected to have a practice background. This role is designed to provide one-to-one tutoring to students through the course of the module to ensure the level of individualised support that the College views as key to student success with its online model of delivery. Supervisors are envisaged to be the key staff members to have regular contact with each student to ensure the quality of the academic experience. In cases of modules with a small number of enrolments there is an expectation that the module leader would also function as the supervisor. The College has planned, in its first five years of operation, that modules will run with individual module enrolments as low as five students and the team noted that this is also mentioned in the Student Protection Plan.

134 The team was able to speak with staff who have been fulfilling the roles of SME and supervisor during the visit. Module leaders are not required for the pilots that are based around only a single learning unit. The College plans to recruit its programme leaders in the spring of 2021. Staff who have worked on the pilots were able to articulate how their units worked and their responsibilities within them. They were also able to explain their understanding of how their pilots constituted a high-quality learning experience for students, as well as how the design of the course would meet both the academic and practice-based requirements of the course.

135 In conversations with the team, staff from the Senior Executive confirmed that the College's plan was to employ a mixture of permanent and fractional staff, as appropriate, for the delivery of high-quality courses. The College will recruit permanent programme leaders to ensure the quality of delivery of the course. However, staff maintained that the provision would benefit from employing SMEs and supervisors who are also practitioners to ensure that students benefitted from the experience of those currently working in the legal profession.

Conclusions

136 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the College meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in the 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. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

137 The College designs and will deliver high-quality courses. This is because its policies for course design and delivery facilitate the design and delivery of high-quality courses. These policies are supported by plans and processes involving externality and student involvement in course approval and review. The College's approach to designing and delivering high-quality courses is credible and staff who met the team were able to articulate what 'high quality' means in the context of a flexible and personalised online provision for legal students. The review team's observations of the College's proposed learning platform, although limited, supported the view that the College has a sound approach, good delivery and appropriate content for the delivery of high-quality courses. The review team, therefore, concludes that this Core practice is met.

138 The College has yet to commence delivery of its first course which means that the review team was unable to meet students or consider their views, examine external examiner reports or conduct a full observation of teaching and learning. Moreover, few staff have been recruited and only very limited draft course documentation was submitted by the College at the time of the visit and this had yet to go through the College's internal approval process. While this reflects the College's current stage in its preparations, the review team had to place reliance on the College's oral testimony regarding its plans for the design and delivery of high-quality courses which cannot yet be tested. The team therefore has a moderate degree of confidence in its judgement.

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

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

140 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

141 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the College 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 utilised that matrix to ensure that the evidence it 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 Business plan
- b Accredited Attachment B Banking and Finance Pilot Unit
- c Accredited Attachment B Dispute Resolution Pilot Unit
- d CVs of Subject Matter Experts and Practitioner Supervisors
- e The College Organisation Chart
- f SME Design Guide
- g Staff Student Liaison Committee Terms of Reference
- h Student Feedback Questionnaire Module
- i Student Feedback Questionnaire Programme
- j Short CVs of Board members Programme Committee Chair and Senior Exec
- k DLP pilot SME commissioning email Dispute Resolution 210720
- l Job Description - College Registrar draft
- m Job role description - Student Services Manager draft
- n Job Description - Student Services Officer draft
- o Role and Responsibilities Quality Assurance Officer draft
- p Job Description Programme Leader draft
- q Practitioner Supervisor Induction Pack
- r Flexible Working Policy
- s HR Grievance Policy
- t Unsatisfactory Performance Policy
- u Employee Handbook
- v Recruitment and Selection Policy
- w Staff Development framework and Policy
- x On-Boarding Checklist for New Employees
- y Induction Outline for all Employees
- z Example of Induction Programme
- aa Module Leader Job Description
- bb Head of Curriculum Design and Development JD
- cc Peer Observation Scheme
- dd Clarification and Comments
- ee Employment Status of team

- ff Meeting with representatives from Board and Programme Committee and Senior Executive
- gg Meeting with representatives from Programme and Content Development team and from Operations
- hh Meeting with consultant involved in programme design and the delivery of a pilot unit

142 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:

- because the College has yet to commence delivery and its first course is still in the early stages of development, it was not possible for the team to scrutinise third-party endorsements or students' views. It was also not possible to meet students or to conduct observations of the teaching and learning of students.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

143 The review team did not sample any further evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

144 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the College 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 College'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.

145 To identify how the College recruits, appoints, inducts and supports staff, the review team examined the College's Flexible Working Policy, HR Grievance Policy and Unsatisfactory Performance Policy as well as the Employee Handbook, Recruitment and Selection Policy and its Staff Development framework and policy. The College also has a peer observation scheme, and the team also examined relevant student feedback mechanisms such as the Staff Student Liaison Committee Terms of Reference and student feedback questionnaires.

146 To assess whether the College has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for ensuring that they have sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality learning experience, the team scrutinised the College's business plan, Recruitment and Selection Policy and Staff Development framework and policy.

147 To identify the roles or posts the College has to deliver a high-quality learning experience and assess whether they are sufficient, the review team examined the College's Business Plan, and the staff organisational chart as well as a clarification document that detailed the different academic roles at the College.

148 To assess whether the staff the team met are appropriately qualified and skilled to perform their roles effectively and that they were recruited according to the College's policies and procedures, the team examined job descriptions and staff CVs provided by the College.

149 To cross-check the outcomes identified by desk-based activities relating to the College having appropriately qualified and skilled staff, the team met staff from the Programme and Content Development team and from Operations.

What the evidence shows

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

151 The College's approach to the recruitment, appointment, induction and support for staff can be found in a number of policies. These include a Recruitment and Selection Policy that describes how the College will define roles that are required, advertise, and select and check the qualifications of staff. It describes a merit principle of recruitment that aims to recruit staff based on their skills and qualifications and a commitment to a policy of equal opportunity, including reasonable adjustments being made for applicants under the Equality Act. The College has a Flexible Working Policy that supports the employment of full-time and part-time staff in having flexible work arrangements, although the team noted that there was no specific mention of the online nature of the College's offer and working conditions. There is also an HR Grievance Policy, an Unsatisfactory Performance Policy and several other policies designed to support staff in the performance of their duties, including complaints, business travel and privacy.

152 The College is developing a digital handbook for employees which is intended to provide information with relevant links to sections from the College's Policies and Procedures to provide them with easy access to the resources and policies they will require as employees of the College. The College provided the team with an overview of the policies that will be provided. The overview includes policies, such as the Principles of Teaching and Learning Policy, the Principles of Engagement with the Legal Profession and the Community Policy and a Curriculum Statement that the team agreed should contribute to the establishment of a culture within the staff body that supports the delivery of a high-quality academic experience. There was no indication in this document of what other information would be included in the handbook.

153 The College also has a Staff Development Framework and Policy which is in an early draft form. This provided brief details of the College's approach to the induction of staff as well as performance management, including brief details of the staff annual review process and peer review of teaching, and its approach to maintaining links with practice in the legal profession. At present, this draft seems more appropriate for academic staff than all those who will work at the College. The team agreed that these plans would need much further development. The team also noted that, at present, there are only brief references to explain how staff will be supported in their scholarly activities and it was not possible to discern the College's approach to this aspect of its operations. Although the team noted that among the current staff there are those who work as external examiners and in other external roles, there was no evidence of a systematic approach to such activities.

154 The team noted that the College has recruited consultant staff, both SMEs and supervisors, to support the piloting and design of its first programme but has yet to recruit the permanent staff and professional support staff that will be required for delivering the College's offer. The team could see in the Business Plan that there will be a significant increase in permanent staff recruited during the spring of 2021. These will include three programme leaders, a Registrar, a Student Services Manager, a Student Services Officer, a Programme Manager and Programme Co-ordinator. The Business Plan does not suggest what relationship there will be between the level of staffing and the number of students recruited although it includes reference to the planned consideration of the acquisition of supervisors required to meet student enrolment numbers. However, the team noted that the College has taken what it believes to be a cautious approach to student numbers in its early

years, anticipating enrolment to individual modules being as low as five. Although specific numbers had not been established at the time of the review visit, the team noted that the SME Design Guide includes learning unit design parameters that stipulate the number of hours of interaction between supervisors and each individual student, from which staffing levels can be calculated for a set enrolment of students to that module. The team agreed that this would provide a template for the College to calculate how many supervisors would be required to support a given enrolment of students.

155 However, the review team wanted to assure itself that there are plans in place to ensure sufficient staff will be recruited to deliver a high-quality experience. In terms of the number of staff to be recruited, senior executive staff commented that the College wanted to achieve a balance between permanent staff, particularly at programme level and above, to ensure the quality of the provision, and fractional and consultant staff to bring with them the currency of working in the legal profession to their student-facing teaching roles. Senior Executive staff explained that their intention was to build a flexible pool of supervisors, who would also be working in the legal profession to maintain their currency, with whom they would be able to work.

156 Although some of the College's resources for employing staff are still in need of development, the review team agreed that resources for inducting new staff to academic roles are more complete. This appeared to the team to be due to the College's approach in recruiting consultants working to design the pilot modules and other early development of the College's first programme. These resources include an On-Boarding Checklist for New Employees to ensure that staff are provided with appropriate work facilities, including the IT equipment required to work in a wholly online environment, the SME Design Guide, induction material for Practitioner Supervisors, draft guidance for personal tutors and an induction for supervisors to the learning platform. These resources provide relevant information to allow a qualified staff member to understand and perform their role to support the provision of a high-quality academic experience. The team noted that the College Business Plan refers to plans to develop and refine the induction process for new employees based on the experience of staff who have been recruited for the pilots during the early part of autumn 2020.

157 The team also wanted to learn more about the College's plans for supporting both academic and professional support staff regarding their induction and professional development. In meetings with representatives from the Board and Senior Executive there was an acknowledgement that the College had still to fully develop its plans in both areas. Senior staff explained that some of the online systems that will be introduced would be adapted from existing systems used by the College's parent institution to the UK context of the College's delivery. These would include, but not be limited to, training resources for academic and professional support staff tailored to the delivery of courses, using the learning platform and providing student services online. Senior staff also detailed how staff development would be tailored to the needs of individuals and consider a number of factors. These will include the balance of their commitments to the College and working as a practitioner within the profession, their overall level of experience and academic qualifications, their annual performance review at the College and their own career aspirations. The College is committed to supporting staff in pursuing professional recognition, including fellowships of the Higher Education Academy. Senior staff also confirmed a commitment to providing developmental support equally to both permanent and contract staff to support the delivery of a high-quality academic experience.

158 Roles that are to be recruited in the next months will include a permanent programme manager for the College's first course. Senior Executive staff explained to the team that there was an expectation that SMEs who design modules would become the module leader, ensuring continuity in terms of the design and delivery of that module. Where

this was not possible, staff explained that a detailed handover would ensure the quality of the academic experience for students.

159 The review team reviewed draft job descriptions for a range of roles at the College. The draft job description for Programme Leader includes a requirement that the role be filled by a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy or someone with a comparable qualification as well as a thorough understanding of their academic discipline. A PhD or professional doctorate in an appropriate subject, or equivalent senior professional experience in teaching and learning, is listed as being desirable but no minimum qualification level is stipulated. The draft job description for Registrar is less prescriptive regarding qualifications but does require the successful applicant to be able to demonstrate significant experience in a senior registrar position or similar role. The draft descriptions of the roles of Student Services Manager and Student Services Officer suggest that their roles will be to address a wide range of non-academic needs of students from pastoral support, to assistance to the Registrar, and to coordinating Staff-Student Liaison meetings. Although these are draft documents, they support a conclusion that the College plans to appoint staff with appropriate experience and qualifications to undertake the roles required. The team noted that although, particularly in the case of the professional support roles, there appeared to be a requirement to meet a wide range of needs, this was in keeping with the current stage of development of a College prior to enrolling students and with the expectation of relatively small student numbers initially.

160 The review team examined the CVs of eight persons who have been contracted to the College in consultative roles as Subject Matter Experts and Practitioner Supervisors. Their qualifications and experience were clearly appropriate for them to fulfil these roles. All those who work as SMEs designing modules and learning units have considerable expertise in the UK higher education sector with appropriate academic qualifications to underpin their teaching roles. Those employed as practitioners have considerable and current expertise in the practice of law. The team found that these staff were well qualified with sufficient experience to design and deliver the College's first course, Developing Legal Professionals. This includes the pilots being run at the time of the review visit. They also agreed that the number of SMEs was sufficient to design the required number of modules for the programme. Overall, the above evidence gave the team confidence that the College's plans should ensure that staff appointed will be appropriately skilled and qualified to deliver a high-quality academic experience.

161 Representatives from the Programme and Content Development team involved in the delivery of pilot learning units confirmed that they had been hired and inducted to the College according to the processes in place at the time. As the College has only been in operation since April 2019, one noted that these had changed over time and that their relatively early recruitment had resulted in an induction that took place in Australia at the College's parent organisation. The team concluded that, considering the proportion of academic staff that have been recruited as consultant SMEs and the current stage of development of some of the College's processes, that staff have been recruited, appointed and inducted according to the College's policies.

Conclusions

162 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the College meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in the 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. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

163 The College should have sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience. The College's policies for the recruitment, appointment, and induction for staff should provide for appropriately qualified and skilled staff. At the comparatively early stage in its development the College is delivering only a small number of pilots; however, job descriptions and CVs examined by the team show that there are sufficient appropriately skilled and qualified staff to continue to develop its first programme effectively in readiness for the autumn of 2021. However, the College still has to address the issue of the number of supervisors that will be required to ensure the delivery of a high-quality academic experience. Staff met by the review team confirmed that they had been recruited, appointed, and inducted according to the College's policies in place at the time of their appointment. However, the College acknowledges that further planning is necessary to ensure the effectiveness of its recruitment, appointment, induction and support of staff. These plans were unclear at the time of the review visit although the team could see that draft documentation is being developed to support inductions and support for staff. The review team concludes, therefore, that, on balance, this Core practice is met.

164 The College has yet to commence delivery of its first course which means that the review team was unable to conduct observations of teaching and learning or speak with students. In addition, the College did not provide evidence that sufficient supervisors would be in place at the time of commencement of delivery. Moreover, plans for the induction and support of staff have yet to be set out formally at the time of the review visit and the team had to place reliance on the College's oral testimony in relation to it ensuring that it will have sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience. The team therefore has a low degree of confidence in its judgement.

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

165 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.

166 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

167 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the College 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 utilised that matrix to ensure that the evidence it 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 IT Support Framework for the College students
- b Student Introduction to Learning Portal (Canvas)
- c Programme Development and Approval Process
- d Staff Student Liaison Committee Terms of Reference
- e Staff Student Liaison Committee Meeting Agenda
- f Student Feedback Questionnaire Module
- g Student Feedback Questionnaire Programme
- h Student Enrolment Form exemplar
- i Student Protection Plan
- j Programme Evaluation Report Template
- k Overview of Learning Portal and Digital Systems
- l Student Services Offer - draft for discussion
- m Programme Induction learning support and feedback - info for clients
- n Job role description - Student Services Manager draft
- o Job Description - Student Services Officer draft
- p Programme Handbook content guide
- q CoL Business Continuity Management Policy
- r Outline of Approach to Reasonable Adjustments
- s Draft guidance for personal tutors
- t IT Support for Students
- u Example of Course Guide
- v Financial Proposal to CDDG
- w Meeting with representatives from Board and Programme Committee and Senior Executive
- x Meeting with representatives from Programme and Content Development team and from Operations
- y Meeting with representatives from the College of Law Group, Australia
- z Demonstration of the College pilot version of the College learning platform

168 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:

- because the College has yet to commence delivery and its first course is still in the early stages of development, it was not possible for the team to meet students, scrutinise students' views or third-party endorsements.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

169 The review team did not sample any further evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

170 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the College 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 College'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.

171 To identify how the College's facilities, learning resources and student support services will contribute to delivering a high-quality academic experience and to assess whether the College 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, the review team considered policies, process documentation such as the Programme Development and Approval Process and Evaluation, Student Enrolment Form exemplar Outline of Approach to Reasonable Adjustments and a financial proposal to the Curriculum Development and Delivery Group, Staff Student Liaison Committee terms of reference. The team also examined student and staff guidance documents such as the IT Support Framework for CoLP students, Student Introduction to Learning Portal (Canvas), Overview of Learning Portal and Digital Systems, Student Services Offer - draft for discussion, Programme Induction learning support and feedback, Draft guidance for personal tutors, IT Support for Students and Example of Course Guide. The team also examined student feedback mechanisms, including Staff Student Liaison Committee Terms of Reference, Staff Student Liaison Committee Meeting Agenda, Student Feedback Questionnaire Module and Student Feedback Questionnaire Programme.

172 To determine whether the roles are consistent with the delivery of a high-quality learning experience, the review team considered job descriptions of relevant roles.

173 To test that the facilities, resources or services under assessment deliver a high-quality academic experience, the review team received a demonstration and login access to the pilot of the College's learning platform

174 To test whether staff are appropriately qualified and skilled and understand their roles and responsibilities, the team met representatives from the Programme and Content Development team and from Operations.

What the evidence shows

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

176 The College proposes to teach solely online and will have no physical campus. Therefore, the resources that students will make use of during their studies are all provided through the learning platform. The review team was provided with a documentary overview that details the systems and resources that are planned. Students will be provided with access to the College learning platform, Canvas, a learner management system. This resource will facilitate video communications between student and supervisor, provision of marked work and feedback, peer-to-peer interactions and web conferencing. The system will allow users to access the full range of learning materials as well as access to online libraries and online legal research databases, including Westlaw and LexisNexis. The College is in discussions with the Oxford University Press to acquire Solicitors Qualifying Examination preparation materials.

177 The College has considered the risk of technology failure in the College's Student Protection Plan. This has been assessed by the College as being extremely unlikely; however, in the event of such an issue there is an acknowledgment that any synchronous teaching that might be lost due to such issues would be rescheduled.

178 Student support services are planned to be delivered through the learning platform. The draft Student Services Offer is designed to explain to students what services will be provided and how to access them. The College plans to offer student support through two main avenues. Firstly, supervisors will provide a point of regular contact for students through the module they are studying. Secondly, the College is planning a system of personal tutors to provide pastoral support and is in the process of drafting guidance to support those performing this role.

179 The Student Services team will be accessible by phone or email. Planned support will include fielding general enquiries about the College's programmes, applications and enrolments, wellbeing support, support and advice regarding changes in personal circumstances, including ill health or other mitigating circumstances, complaints and appeals, and information and advice about transfers, deferments or withdrawal. IT support will also be available. Student Services will initially be staffed by a Student Services Manager and Officer. The College plans to recruit these staff in the spring of 2021 and the team was able to view job descriptions for both roles. The team noted that part of the role described in the description is to signpost appropriate welfare options to support a student's needs.

180 Where students require expert advice and support, for example, with issues related to mental health or wellbeing that are impacting their ability to study, they may be referred on to counselling services. The draft Student Services Offer also includes links to LawCare, which is a charity that provides information, guidance and support to those in the law profession experiencing mental health and wellbeing problems. The team agreed that links to such a service are appropriate given the College's law-focused provision.

181 The team was informed by staff that the College's intention is for students to have a personal tutor who will be trained by the College. A personal tutor will be a supervisor who is not working on the module currently being studied by their assigned students to provide a degree of detachment from the staff with whom students are currently studying. Signposting to further support will be provided in a programme handbook. The template for the handbook is currently being developed by the College and the team noted that, with this being provided to students online, the College was planning to make use of hyperlinks to allow students to easily find and access resources from this location.

182 At the time of the review visit, the College was making use of its parent organisation's installation of Canvas to test and pilot its first units. However, the College plans for its own installation to be customised and populated with appropriate resources by

the commencement of the first full cohort. These preparations commenced on the second day of the review visit with confirmation that the College installation of Canvas had been established. The team was informed that a budget has been established for this development work and the team could see in the Business Plan that this will continue through to the summer of 2021 with the build of the learning platform scheduled for completion before March 2021.

183 As the review team was unable to view the College's learning platform and associated structures at the time of the review visit, it met staff to understand how staff envisaged these working. The team was particularly interested in the management of student records and grades, how students would be supported to access a purely online provision and how student services would be provided in practice given the exclusively online context of the College's offer.

184 The team was informed by staff that the College will use a commercial customer relationship management software package in conjunction with Canvas to manage student records, including the management of assessment and examination board documentation and the provision of grades and associated transcript information to students. The management of student records will be part of the Registrar's role, which the College was in the process of recruiting to at the time of the review visit, with an expected start date in early 2021. Although the software is not yet in place, and the team was therefore unable to view how it works, staff from CoL were able to confirm that this is a solution that is employed by the parent organisation and that they have found it to work well. Senior Executive staff from the College explained that their aim is to use this software and adapt the reports that can be generated to suit the purposes of the College and the reporting requirements of regulatory bodies.

185 Senior staff explained to the review team a key benefit in their approach, that of being a constituent college owned by CoL. This is that the College will be able to make use of established approaches to the provision of online facilities, learning resources and student support services that are tried and tested in Australia and at other constituent colleges. Staff emphasised that they had the authority and freedom to choose only those approaches and facilities that staff would want to make use of. These can then be adapted to the context of the College's provision within a relatively short development period and ensure scalability as the College grows over time.

186 Staff informed the team that the College will provide IT support to students seven days a week. Information designed to be provided to students about IT and studying at the College includes contact details for IT services and instructional documentation for how to access Canvas. The College has prepared example communications to be sent to students regarding the operation of Canvas. This includes a link to an introductory video explaining how to use the platform. It also indicates that further information, for example a web conferencing user guide to support participation in tutorials and other meetings, will also be available in the future. Some of these resources have been produced but were not available to be viewed by the team because the College's learning platform is not yet functional; the College's use of hosting on CoL's platform was limited to the pilot learning units. The team was able to view the introductory video, however, and agreed that it is helpful and gives an indication of what some areas of the learning platform, such as programmes and modules, may look like.

187 Staff confirmed their intention that, in addition to personal tutors and Student Services, it is envisaged that information will be available on the learning platform and College website to provide a framework for support with signposting to further advice and guidance. Staff explained that some of these resources will be available on the learning platform and some on the website depending on which location is deemed to be more

appropriate and accessible. Senior staff envisage that the Student Support team, who are being recruited in the early part of 2021, will be trained on College processes so that they can provide connectivity between all staff, ensuring that teaching teams or other relevant staff are aware of individual students' needs. The College acknowledged that, from the outset, the Student Services Team will be required to cover a very broad area of support. However, senior staff expect that, as the College grows, some specialisation will be possible as additional professional support roles are recruited.

188 The College has a programme development and approval process which includes the consideration of the resourcing for new programmes. This is overseen by the Curriculum Development and Delivery Group. The College has an annual programme evaluation process which is intended to be used to capture information on resourcing if raised by one of the evidence areas in the template, for example, the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC).

189 The College has plans in place to introduce mechanisms that will enable student feedback on learning resources and student support through student programme and module surveys and the SSLC. The SSLC will provide a forum for the discussion of matters relating to the running of programmes, including resources, and enabling students to raise issues for consideration/action. Its Terms of Reference show that it will report directly to the Programme Committee, which is the ultimate committee in the academic governance so that issues raised will be brought to the attention of senior members of the College.

190 The team was able to see some of the proposed provision for students using the pilot version of Canvas which is being hosted on its parent organisation's learning platform. The full range of facilities, including library and student support services, was not part of this pilot. These will be installed on the College's own installation of its learning platform. The team's assessment of facilities and learning resources was therefore very limited, but it noted that what was provided through the pilots worked well. The learning units were accessible and provided asynchronous resources for students to understand the content of the unit. The team was unable to observe any of the asynchronous sessions taking place; however, it was satisfied that the platform was equipped to provide these sessions and that it should work effectively to provide an exclusively online provision.

Conclusions

191 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the College meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in the 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. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

192 The College will have sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience. The College has a strategy in place to provide facilities, learning resources and student support for students that is appropriate to the online context of its delivery. Its plans are reliant on a significant amount of development of the online platform taking place during the first six months of 2021. However, senior staff and representatives from the College's parent organisation were able to articulate that this was achievable due to the maturity of many of the planned resources being used already by the College's parent organisation. Staff currently in place demonstrated that they understand their responsibilities and the team noted that Student Services staff are due to be recruited during the spring of 2021. The review team's limited assessment of the online pilots and associated learning resources suggests that they will

provide a high-quality academic experience. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.

193 While the review team was able to view an installation of the pilot units being run by the College and understand the plans for its development, the College's learning platform is still in the very early stages of being constructed and its structure and content could not be fully assessed by the team. It is also the case that the team was unable to speak with the staff who have yet to be recruited to support the delivery of the College's first programme, third parties who could inform whether they find facilities to be sufficient and appropriate, or students who are not yet registered with the College. This evidence comprises the majority of that suggested by Annex 4. Therefore, the review team has a low degree of confidence in this judgement.

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

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

195 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

196 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the College 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 utilised that matrix to ensure that the evidence it 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 Programme Committee Terms of Reference
- b Staff Student Liaison Committee Terms of Reference
- c Staff Student Liaison Committee Meeting Agenda
- d Student Feedback Questionnaire Pilot 2020
- e Student Feedback Questionnaire Module
- f Student Feedback Questionnaire Programme
- g DLP Pilots Information sent to potential pilot organisations
- h Information for pilot organisations
- i Approval Event Report Template
- j Approval Panel Submission document template
- k Student Partnership Framework Policy
- l Student Contract
- m Programme Committee Agenda and Papers 4th August 2020
- n Student Charter and Code of Conduct
- o Programme Committee Meeting Minutes 4th August 2020
- p Programme Committee Agenda and Papers January 2020
- q Training for Student Representatives
- r Meeting with Representatives from the Board, Programme Committee and Senior Executive
- s Meeting with Programme and Content Development Team and Operations

197 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:

- because the College has yet to commence delivery and its first course is still in the early stages of development, it was not possible for the team to meet students, scrutinise examples of the College changing or improving provision as a result of student engagement or students' views.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

198 The review team did not sample any further evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

199 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the College 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 College'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.

200 To identify how the College will actively engage students in the quality of their educational experience, the review team scrutinised the College's Student Partnership Framework Policy, the Terms of Reference of the Programme Committee and the Staff Student Liaison Committee Terms of Reference. The team also met representatives from the Board, Programme Committee and Senior Executive as well as from the Programme and Content Development Team and Operations.

201 To assess whether the College has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for engaging students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their education experience, the review team examined the Staff-Student Liaison Meeting Terms of Reference and agenda, Programme Committee Terms of Reference and relevant minutes, Approval Event Report Template, Approval Panel Submission document, Programme Evaluation Report Template, proposed feedback questionnaires, DLP Pilot Information sent to potential pilot organisation and information for pilot organisations and met representatives from the Board, Programme Committee and Senior Executive as well as from the Programme and Content Development Team and Operations.

What the evidence shows

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

203 The College's approach to engage students is contained in the Student Partnership Framework Policy. The partnership framework clearly outlines the principle of student collective engagement through formal student representation, and individually through a formal student feedback mechanism.

204 The principal body for collective student engagement is the College Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) which will include two Student Programme Representatives from each programme. The framework document does not mention any of the other College governance structures, but the team could see that the Terms of Reference for the Programme Committee, the College's highest academic governance committee, show that its membership will include a representative of the student body who may be either a current student or a recent graduate. The Student Partnership Framework Policy also states that there will student representation in programme approval events, recruitment activities, College Disciplinary Panels and regulatory amendments. Although the framework does not explain how student representation will be achieved, it does provide students with clear guidance regarding the purpose of student representation and feedback mechanisms to engage with, and feed back to, the collective student body. It also provides detailed information about student involvement in programme annual monitoring through the SSLC.

205 The SSLC Terms of Reference show that this Committee's membership includes staff from all areas of the College, including senior, academic, professional support and IT staff. The SSLC will have access to and consider course data, including that on admissions applications, student numbers, module performance and graduation rates, as well as receiving external examiners reports and reports about the running of programmes from staff so that it can discharge its function to ensure that the programme is run in accordance with the aims and objectives determined by the programme approval process. The SSLC's minutes will be received by the Programme Committee and its function and membership support the conclusion that it will be a functional committee in the College's academic governance structure to support effective collective engagement between students and the College.

206 Individual engagement will be sought through a variety of mechanisms, including regular course and module evaluations. The Student Partnership Framework Policy provides information about the topics that will be explored through evaluation questionnaires, such as course resources, the timeliness and usefulness of assessment feedback and the quality of teaching and organisation on modules. It describes how this feedback will be used to inform annual programme and institutional monitoring activities. The framework also highlights the use of informal feedback to tutors and supervisors through tutorials and other engagement with College staff to the SSLC.

207 The framework provides information about closing the feedback loop with information being relayed back to students by their representatives but also through the online learning platform so that this information is accessible to all students who will be able to see what changes have been made to the provision in response to the feedback that they provide.

208 The team agreed that the Student Partnership Framework Policy contained the essential elements for an approach to engaging students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience that is clear and that should be effective if implemented as set out. The team noted that, as the College has no campus, committee meetings will take place online using the same software with which students engage with their courses. The team agreed that attendance should therefore be a relatively straightforward matter for students, regardless of their location as distance learners. While this approach to student engagement might seem to be akin to a traditional approach taken by on-site providers, the team agreed that the nature of the proposed engagement, the logistics involved, and the relatively small student numbers made for a credible approach to effective collective and individual engagement, given the context of the provision. The Student Partnership Framework Policy also acknowledges the potential problems of recruiting student representatives and suggests a strategy to overcome this by addressing the entire cohort collectively regarding the importance of student engagement, with regular appeals to the student body to encourage volunteers and a process of recording informal feedback to report to committees in the absence of student representatives being appointed.

209 In its plans for student engagement, the College has developed an outline of training to be offered to student representatives. This shows that they should receive training regarding student engagement at the College, their role and responsibilities, and coverage of some of the ethical considerations that can accompany such a role, such as dealing with difficult requests from fellow students and safeguarding. The team agreed that this outline was appropriate, although details of the actual training have yet to be developed.

210 The team reviewed the agenda and papers for the Programme Committee. These show that the College has already co-opted one of the volunteers from the pilots that are being run for some of the modules to act as a student representative on this Committee. However, the minutes from this Committee lack sufficient detail for the team to evaluate the

extent of the impact that this contribution has had. The team was also able to view a sample agenda for the SSLC which replicated the functions of the Committee as stated in the Terms of Reference. The team also reviewed the questions that have been developed for module and programme questionnaires as well as those developed for the module pilots. In each of these cases the questionnaire will be accessed by students through their online portal, which is not yet functioning. Consequently, the team was not able to view the survey itself. However, the team was satisfied that the questions in these documents reflected the purpose of the engagement with students set out in the Student Partnership Framework Policy.

211 In discussions with representatives from the Board, Programme Committee and senior executive staff articulated their awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by higher education providers when seeking students' engagement and provided more detail regarding practical strategies that the College aims to implement to overcome those challenges. For example, staff are considering the possibility of creating special networking events for existing and alumni students and a mentoring scheme in order to build a better sense of community and to enhance overall engagement. It is also considering offering small financial incentives to encourage participation. Staff confirmed that the College currently has one volunteer, participating in the pilot, fulfilling the role of a student representative prior to the registering of students, which is planned for the autumn of 2021, and pointed to this as evidence of the College's ethos regarding engagement with the student body.

212 Senior Executive staff and representatives from the Programme and Content Development Team and Operations explained how student feedback will be monitored and acted upon through annual programme evaluations and how that feedback loop will be closed through announcements on the learning platform to all students but also through formal reports in the SSLC meetings, Programme Committee meetings and in Annual Evaluation Reports. They detailed how the College's learning platform will support engagement with students and argued that the flexibility of the approach to courses could also translate to a greater level of engagement because of the flexibility offered and familiarity that students will have with systems that are used. Staff could also point to examples of individual informal feedback that they had received from volunteers on the pilots as evidence that such individual engagement was realistic in the College's approach to distance learning.

213 Staff also confirmed that the College has plans to engage with students on its pilots to obtain feedback on the quality of their experience and the quality of the units. This feedback is intended to inform module design and curriculum development. This further supports the team's view that there is a clear commitment to engage students in the quality of educational experience.

Conclusions

214 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the College meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in the 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. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

215 The College will actively engage students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience. This is because the College has a clear approach through its Student Partnership Framework, to engaging students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience that the team found to be appropriate to its mode of course delivery and that should prove effective if implemented as set out. The College plans

to actively engage students individually through module and programme evaluations and collectively through its governance structures, including the SSLC and the Programme Committee. While the College could not provide any specific examples of changes or improvements to its provision as a result of student engagement, as it has yet to commence delivery, its pilot activity suggests that it is committed to working closely with students and actively responding to their concerns, suggestions and feedback. The review team, therefore, concludes that this Core practice is met.

216 The College has yet to commence delivery of its first course which means that the review team was unable to see evidence of students' views or of the impact of the College's approach to student engagement. However, the College has a clear approach to collective and individual engagement through its Student Partnership Framework which, if implemented as set out, should result in the intended outcome. The team therefore has a high degree of confidence in its judgement.

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

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

218 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

219 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the College 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 utilised that matrix to ensure that the evidence it 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 Self-evaluation statement
- b Business Plan
- c Flow diagram for students - student complaints
- d Programme Committee terms of reference
- e Students complaints policy and procedure
- f Programme Handbook content guide
- g Programme Committee agenda and papers January 2020
- h Student terms and conditions
- i Meeting with representatives from the Board, Programme Committee and Senior Executive
- j Meeting with Programme and Content Development team and Operations

220 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:

- because the College has yet to commence delivery and its first course is still in the early stages of development, it was not possible for the team to meet students, scrutinise information for students, records of the numbers and types of complaints and appeals received or examples of specific complaints and appeals.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

221 The review team did not sample any further evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

222 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the College 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

College'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.

223 To identify the College's processes for handling complaints and appeals and to confirm the processes are fair and transparent, the team scrutinised the College's policies and processes concerning complaints and appeals.

224 To assess whether the College has credible, robust, and evidence-based plans for developing and operating fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals, the team examined policies relating to complaints and appeals and Programme Committee Terms of Reference and met representatives from the Board, Programme Committee and Senior Executive as well as from the Programme and Content Development team and Operations.

225 To assess whether information will be clear and accessible to all students, the team examined a flow diagram for students about student complaints, the Programme Handbook content guide, and student terms and conditions.

What the evidence shows

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

227 The College's approach for handling complaints is set out in the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure. The term 'complaint' is defined with reference to information provided by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). Four specific areas of complaints are specified, and this document also clarifies what would not constitute a valid complaint. The complaints process consists of three stages: an informal stage, a formal stage, and, finally, a review. Timelines are provided for each stage. Students will be encouraged to raise concerns informally with relevant members of staff in the first instance and, if this does not resolve their concerns in a satisfactory manner, to submit a formal complaint that will be considered by the Chief Operations Director who will collect evidence and decide about the complaint. The formal stage will result in a formal written outcome to the student(s) within 60 days of the acknowledgement of the complaint, which is within the timeframe of 90 days suggested by the OIA. Should the complainant(s) not be satisfied, there is the option for a review of the outcome that is made by the College's Chief Executive Officer (or nominee) within 14 days. This will result in a Completion of Procedures Letter that will confirm that the College's internal complaints procedure has been exhausted. The policy and process for handling complaints is definitive, fair and transparent, and should deliver timely outcomes.

228 The College's approach to academic appeals is set out in its Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure. This policy was submitted to the review team as Appendix 5 to the minutes of the Programme Committee meeting from January 2020 that approved both this and the College's Complaints Policy. The concepts of appeal and academic judgement are clearly explained, making it clear what would constitute an academic appeal and what grounds would make for an academic appeal. As with the Complaints Policy, there is a three-stage process involving an initial informal request to a tutor or programme leader before a formal appeal. The policy makes clear how this should be submitted. Clear timelines are stated for each stage of the process, and the policy provides confirmation that students would be supported by the Student Services Officer. Once a student has submitted an appeal, evidence is collected from the relevant tutor and programme leader in addition to any existing minutes from the relevant assessment board by the Chief Operations Director who will respond in writing to the student within 30 days. Similarly, to the complaints

process, where a student is left dissatisfied with the outcome, communicated to them in writing by the Chief Operations Director, it is possible to request a review which is considered by the College's Chief Executive Officer (or nominee), normally with 14 days. After the written notification to the student of the review, a Completion of Procedures letter is issued to confirm that the College's internal appeals procedure has been exhausted. The review team agreed that policy and process for handling academic complaints is definitive, fair and transparent, and should deliver timely outcomes.

229 In the case of both appeals and complaints, where students are left dissatisfied with the outcome, they have recourse to the OIA. The policies provide links to the appropriate pages of the OIA website where students can obtain further information about this recourse. The College will be required to subscribe to the OIA scheme on confirmation of successful registration with the OfS.

230 The Programme Committee is responsible for developing plans for both procedures and monitoring these. The Programme Committee will receive a report about the complaints and appeals policies and their operation on an annual basis. The Terms of Reference of the Programme Committee cover many policies and areas, but it can establish operational groups to focus on specific issues that might emerge from any trends or feedback regarding the provision as a result of complaints or appeals. The team agreed that these are credible and evidence-based plans for developing and operating fair and transparent complaints and appeals procedures. Staff explained to the team that the College has identified specific roles in the Student Services team with the responsibility for supporting students should they wish to make formal complaints or appeals. This is to ensure that staff who support students are separate from those roles involved with assessing a complaint or appeal.

231 The team examined a Flow Diagram for Student Complaints that is to be provided for students to assist with their understanding of the process. Staff informed the team that this will be made available on the College's online platform, in their Programme Handbook and during induction. The diagram is clear and consistent with the more detailed policy. The Programme Handbook content guide, provided corroboration that information about complaints and appeals should be included in programme handbooks. There is also a reference to the complaints process and an ultimate right of referral to the OIA in the Student Terms and Conditions which is a further way that the College will make information about complaints and appeals accessible to the students from the beginning of their student journey. Staff confirmed to the team that information about complaints and appeals will also be provided on the College website. The team agreed that information for potential and actual complainants and appellants should therefore be easy to find and understand.

Conclusions

232 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the College meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in the 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. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

233 The College has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which should be accessible to all students. This is because these policies and processes are definitive, fair and transparent. They are easy to understand and should deliver timely outcomes. Students should have access to the policies through multiple channels, including the student handbook, through the learning platform and the College website which will ensure that they are accessible. The stages for complaints and appeals are specified with clear timeframes to deliver timely outcomes, and it is made explicit how

students can appeal a decision. The Programme Committee will receive annual reports about the level and nature of complaints and appeals so that these can be effectively monitored. The College's plans for handling complaints and appeals are credible and likely to be robust. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.

234 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects, with the exception of the views of students and examples of appeals and complaints, the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix. It is the view of the review team that the College's plans for dealing with complaints and appeals are credible and robust and when implemented will result in the intended outcomes. The review team, therefore, has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

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

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

237 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

238 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the College 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 utilised that matrix to ensure that the evidence it 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 Practitioner comments Dispute Resolution review
- b Practitioner comments Banking and Finance review
- c IT Support Framework for the College students
- d Principles of teaching and learning
- e Principles of engagement with the profession and community
- f Banking and Finance pilot outline with competency framework
- g Mitigating circumstances policy
- h Student services offer - draft for discussion
- i Student partnership framework policy
- j Student contract
- k Programme Induction learning support and feedback - info for clients
- l Student Services Manager
- m Student Services Officer draft
- n Practitioner Supervisor Induction Pack
- o Fitness to Study Policy
- p Meeting with representatives from Board and Programme Committee and Senior Executive
- q Meeting with representatives from Programme and Content Development team and from Operations
- r Final meeting with representatives from the Senior Executive
- s Demonstration of the College pilot version of the College learning platform

239 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:

- because the College has yet to commence delivery and its first course is still in the early stages of development, it was not possible for the team to meet students, scrutinise students' views or assessed student work.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

240 The review team did not sample any further evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

241 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the College 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 College'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.

242 To identify The College's approach to student support, including how it identifies and monitors the needs of individual students, the review team examined the IT Support Framework for the College's students, Student Services Offer - draft for discussion, Student Partnership Framework Policy, Student Contract, Mitigating Circumstances Policy, and draft job descriptions for the Student Services Manager and Student Services Officer.

243 To assess whether the College has credible, robust, and evidence-based plans for ensuring that all students will be supported to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes, the team scrutinised practitioner comments on modules, Principles in Teaching and Learning, Principles of Engagement with the Profession and Community, Banking and Finance pilot outline with competency framework, Student Services Offer - draft for discussion, and Programme Induction learning support and feedback - info for clients as well as viewing the piloted learning units.

244 To test whether staff understand their responsibilities and are appropriately skilled and supported, the review team met senior, programme and student services staff.

What the evidence shows

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

246 The College has policies and plans in place to support all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes through several mechanisms. Firstly, each student will be allocated a supervisor for each module they take to provide individual support and feedback. The supervisor provides individual feedback on student performance at least once every two weeks through one-to-one meetings initiated by the supervisor and held online. Secondly, each student will have a personal tutor. Personal tutors will be members of the teaching staff who are not directly involved in the delivery of a module or modules being studied by the student. It is intended that personal tutors will organise a termly meeting with students to ensure that they understand their role as personal tutors, the support they can provide, how to contact them and to check if there are any issues or topics that the student wishes to raise. The College is developing guidance for personal tutors, a draft of which the team examined in which personal tutors are directed to signpost students to relevant staff depending on the issues raised and to identify needs specific to their students including additional learning support. Senior staff confirmed that training will also be organised for staff undertaking this role. Finally, the College will have a Student Services Team, and students will be able to contact them about general queries, including wellbeing issues and mitigating circumstances. The College also has plans to provide links to LawCare, an independent charity designed to support mental health and wellbeing for legal professionals. All support mechanisms will be accessible through email and telephone, and online chats will also be offered.

247 The Student Contract details that students will be encouraged to disclose any special support needs so that the College can consider and provide reasonable adjustments for them to be able to succeed. The Outline of Approach to Reasonable Adjustments provides more information about the process of referral for assessment in order to determine additional learning support and includes a template of the Individual Study Adjustment that will result from this. This mechanism will be used to support students with a disability or those who need additional learning support. The College staff reported that they intend that any further needs will be identified by supervisors and personal tutors in their regular meetings with the students.

248 Student attendance and participation will also be monitored, through the College's learning platform, to identify students who may not be progressing as expected. Staff explained that the metrics offered by the learning platform will allow staff to track student engagement with all elements of the course and that one of the roles of the Registrar will be to regularly track the engagement of students to ensure that the College is able to proactively address any concerns it has regarding individual students' progress as soon as possible. The first stage of any intervention to support students will be for their module supervisor to make contact and to discuss with the student any concerns that have been raised. In this way, College staff intend that existing support structures can then be used to assess any actions that will need to be taken. Overall, the College's approach to student support, including how it identifies and monitors the needs of individual students, is comprehensive and credible if implemented as set out.

249 Students will be supported in achieving successful academic outcomes through formative and summative feedback at module level. As noted, each student will have a supervisor for every module they take. The role of the supervisor is to discuss a student's progress with them and to provide feedback on their progress on a biweekly basis. The SME Design Guide includes detailed information about how supervisors should provide prompt 'positive and constructive developmental feedback' to students which will be supported through the scheduled tutorials through the course of the module to support the written feedback provided to students through the learning platform. Senior Executive staff pointed to this approach as being a key element of the College's stated intention to ensure one-to-one support for students. The College staff envisage that potential support needs are likely to be identified in meetings with supervisors who will then be responsible for directing students to relevant student support resources, where appropriate, usually by putting them in contact with the Student Services team.

250 The team identified that some academic skills are being built into learning units of the College's first course through the development of a writing skills learning unit and that some of this content was being included in the pilot. Senior Executive staff articulated to the team that further academic support is something they envisage to be provided by supervisors as, at Level 7, students' needs are likely to be very specific. The team concluded that the College has credible and evidence-based plans for ensuring that all students are supported to achieve successful academic outcomes.

251 Students are supported in achieving successful professional outcomes through a programme and module design structure that facilitates linkages between theoretical content and professional skills and competencies. At module level, course designers will identify the professional skills and competencies that students will acquire from successfully completing that module. There is evidence that practitioners with current experience in the profession have been consulted at the module development stage to ensure that materials are current and relevant for professional practice. The College also seeks to develop strong relationships with relevant professional legal associations and bodies so that students can benefit from these relationships with networking and other similar events being planned for students. In meetings with the team, College staff emphasised that the practitioner-focused

aspects of the course design are based on the professional competencies published by the Solicitors Regulation Authority. Staff also articulated how the College's first course, Developing Legal Professionals, is being designed to meet the professional competencies that will be tested in the new Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE), which is due to be introduced from 1 September 2021 and will become the sole route for solicitors to qualify to practice in England and Wales.

252 In meetings with staff, the team wanted to explore the College's understanding of how it will support distance-learning students and what they feel the challenges are for students studying online or at a distance. The team also wanted to explore what plans the College might have for careers support and advice. Senior Executive staff explained that the College intends to maximise the benefits it sees that come from the flexibility and opportunities for one-to-one support offered through an exclusively online provision that will appeal to legal professionals looking to improve their qualifications and advance their careers. They asserted that the design of courses allowed students to progress in their studies at the same time as balancing existing work commitments and that the online provision would facilitate this objective. They emphasised the importance of the individualised support that would be offered through the model of using supervisors to monitor and guide each student through the module and to provide feedback regarding their assessments. They also suggested that the online model would make it easier for the College to offer students the flexibility within and between modules as work or other pressures intervened than a conventional provider.

253 Staff highlighted that the College's learning platform has several accessibility features built into the software to support students with additional learning needs. These include font resizing, high contrast user interface options, screen readers and a tool that checks for common accessibility errors when pages are being designed or updated. They explained how some of the metrics available to them on the learning platform will be an aid in the identification of issues such as a lack of engagement with course materials or other resources. They plan to use these tools to provide a systematic way to monitor students to help identify any support issues that can then be highlighted and explored with students through contact with their supervisors. In this way, Senior Executive staff pointed out that their approach matched up to the ways in which solicitors work in the modern profession.

254 Staff who have worked as supervisors in the pilot modules confirmed that the platform allowed them to provide feedback to volunteer students in writing and in online tutorials to support them in developing the work on their assessments in order to be successful on the course. They also supported the assertion of senior staff that one-to-one and group sessions allowed them to speak with the volunteers to check on their progress and about any issues that may have arisen. They noted that, because they were working on a pilot, this interaction had only included feedback on the way the learning units worked but that this model would work for raising other issues with students in the future. The team could see evidence of this communication through their access to the pilot learning platform where the tools referred to were easily accessible.

255 The College staff also explained that, although they expect many of their students will already be working in the sector, the College intends to provide a careers portal on the learning platform to support students' professional development, networking and career aspirations. They acknowledged that students would likely want to develop their job and career options on the successful completion of the course and were keen to support this career development with suitable advice and resources.

256 Meetings with College staff established that the College has given thought to the potential student support issues it is likely to encounter, given the context of its delivery to most students who are expected to be in full-time or part-time employment. The Supervisor

Induction Pack provided evidence that training resources for staff inductions should ensure that staff will be informed about the support framework the College will provide for students and their role in this aspect of the provision. Academic and operations staff demonstrated an awareness of the way in which student needs are identified through an initial disclosure from students and later through the monitoring of student attendance and activity online as well as through supervisors and personal tutors. Staff responsible for teaching on the pilot courses whom the team met were also aware of their responsibilities relating to student support needs and how to direct students to appropriate resources such as LawCare. Senior staff articulated how teaching and professional support staff would be appropriately trained to support students. The team was not able to assess how staff would be skilled and supported on an ongoing basis as the College has not reached a stage where it delivers programmes and has yet to recruit the teaching staff who will be tasked with these responsibilities.

Conclusions

257 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the College meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in the 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. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

258 The College will support all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes. This is because its approach creates structures for identifying and monitoring student needs from enrolment through the duration of their studies, with key role-holders in Student Services having clearly articulated responsibilities for student support. Important professional competencies, including writing skills, will be built into module design and delivery through feedback from practitioners at the module design stage. The College has plans to provide comprehensive, helpful and timely feedback to students through its learning platform and individual tutorials. Further support in developing relevant professional skills is provided by supervisors assigned to each student for each module they study. In these respects, the College's plans to support all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes are credible. Staff demonstrate that they understand their role in supporting student achievement and how student needs will be identified. Staff explained how support structures will be offered to students as well as providing information about their proposals for careers services that will be provided through the College's learning platform. The review team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.

259 The College has yet to commence delivery of its first course, which means that the team was unable to examine examples of assessed student work or identify students' views about student support mechanisms. Many of the staff, particularly supervisors, who will be directly involved in providing academic and non-academic support have yet to be recruited and the learning platform through which many of these services will be accessible has yet to be put in place. The review team had to place heavy reliance on the College's oral testimony in relation to its plans to support all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes. The team therefore has a moderate degree of confidence in its judgement.

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