



Designated Quality Body
in England

Assessment for New Degree Awarding Powers

College of Legal Practice



Review Report

May 2021

Contents

Summary of findings and reasons	1
About this report	1
Provider information	1
About the College of Legal Practice	2
How the assessment was conducted	3
Explanation of findings	5
Criterion A: Academic governance	5
Criterion A1 - Academic governance.....	5
Criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance	14
Criterion B1 - Regulatory frameworks.....	14
Criterion B2 - Academic standards.....	20
Criterion B3 - Quality of the academic experience.....	27
Criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff	41
Criterion C1 - The role of academic and professional staff	41
Criterion D: Environment for supporting students	48
Criterion D1 - Enabling student development and achievement	48
Criterion E: Evaluation of performance	57
Criterion E1 - Evaluation of performance.....	57
New Degree Awarding Powers overarching criterion	62
Proposed changes to the New DAPs Plan	64
Annex	65
Evidence	65

Summary of findings and reasons

New DAPs test components	Underpinning DAPs criteria						
	A	B1	B2	B3	C	D	E
The provider has demonstrated a full understanding of this criterion (meets the criteria now or in prospect)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
The provider has a credible New DAPs Plan for ensuring the criterion is met in full by the end of the probationary period	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
The standards set for the proposed courses are at an appropriate level	Y						
	Overarching New DAPs criterion						
The provider is an emerging self-critical, cohesive academic community with a clear commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective (in prospect) quality systems	Y						

About this report

This is a report of a New Degree Awarding Powers (New DAPs) assessment of the College of Legal Practice conducted by QAA in May 2021 in accordance with the process outlined in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*.

Assessment of degree awarding powers (DAPs) is the process QAA uses to provide advice to the Office for Students (OfS) about the quality of, and the standards applied to, higher education proposed to be delivered by a provider in England under a New DAPs authorisation and on a provider's readiness to operate with a New DAPs authorisation.

Provider information

Legal name	College of Legal Practice Ltd
Trading name	The College of Legal Practice
UKPRN	10082828
Type of institution	Higher education institution
Date founded	2019
Start date of proposed higher education provision	6 August 2021
Application route	New DAPs
Level of powers applied for	Up to and including Level 7
Subject(s) applied for	CAH16-01

Location(s) of teaching	Online delivery only (no physical campus)
Number of current programmes as at May 2021	3 master's programmes in development
Number of students as at May 2021	0
Number of staff as at May 2021	Total: 8 (Academic: 3; Operational: 5)
Current awarding body arrangements (if applicable)	N/a

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: Developing Legal Professionals for pre-qualification trainee solicitors or paralegals; Legal Services Professionals for newly qualified solicitors with up to five years post-qualification experience (PQE); and Leadership and Management Professionals 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 (DLP), is planned to provide a master's qualification but modules in the course are 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 eventually become the sole route for solicitors to qualify to practice in England and Wales. The College's expectation is that most students will be studying part-time as they must complete at least two years' full-time (or equivalent) qualifying work experience to be able to qualify as a solicitor.

At the time of the New DAPs test visit, DLP was the only course in active development for which draft course documentation was available for the team to scrutinise. This also included some documentation from pilot units for two modules proposed for the programme that have been trialled with volunteer students so that the College can test some aspects of its provision. While these volunteers are not formally registered as students, the College has sought feedback from them and invited the participation of one of these volunteers to provide student representation on the Programme Committee prior to the enrolment of its first cohort in August 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 is wholly owned by the College of Law (CoL), a not-for-profit provider of higher education in Australia. The College is making use of CoL's existing online delivery systems and adapting them for the UK context leading up to August 2021 when delivery of the first module of DLP will commence. The College successfully underwent a Quality Standards Review in November 2020 and were registered by the OfS in March 2021.

The College is incorporated in the UK. Its governing board, the Board of Directors (the 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, which is responsible for day-to-day operations of the College, and

the Programme Committee. The Programme Committee is the College's senior academic authority to which is delegated the authority to ensure the maintenance of academic standards, a role to advise the Senior Executive and the Board on all academic matters and to maintain oversight of all aspects of the College's operations.

At the time of the New DAPS test, the College was an 'in-prospect' provider, approximately two months away in its preparations from enrolling its first cohort of students. As the first module that is planned for delivery in August 2021 is also designed to support students to prepare for the new Solicitors Qualification Exam, the College's intention is to commence this before completing its full internal programme approval for DLP which is due to take place in the first quarter of its probationary period for degree-awarding powers.

How the assessment was conducted

The QAA team completed an assessment of the College of Legal Practice according to the process set out in [*Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019.*](#)

The team appointed to conduct the assessment was as follows:

Name: Dr Margaret Carran
Institution: City, University of London
Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor and subject assessor (Law)

Name: Mrs Clair Blanchard
Institution: University of Wales Trinity St David
Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor

Name: Dr Andrew Redford
Institution: Independent
Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor

The QAA Officer was Damon Lane.

The size and composition of this 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 as well as involvement in the Quality Standards Review undertaken by the College in November 2020. 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 assessment to identify and resolve any possible conflicts of interest.

The team conducted the assessment by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers. The criteria used in relation to this assessment are these that apply in England as set out paragraphs 215-216 and in Annex C in the OfS regulatory framework. To support the clarity of communication between providers and QAA, the DAPs criteria from the OfS regulatory framework have been given unique identifiers and are reproduced in Annex 4 of *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019.*

During the course of the assessment, the team scrutinised 229 documents in support of the application. An initial set of 165 documents was tendered as supporting evidence for the self-assessment by the College. After an initial assessment, the College was asked to make some amendments to the organisation of its New DAPs Plan before the team carried out a desk-based analysis of the initial evidence provided against the New DAPs criteria. A request for additional information was made and clarification was sought on areas related to governance, admissions, scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff as well as student support. The provider submitted an additional 11 documents in response. Upon consideration of this additional information the team then made a further request. In response to this, the provider submitted a further 46 documents that it thought to be useful in support of its application, some of which included minutes of more recent committee proceedings. During the course of the visit, upon request by the team, the provider submitted a further document for consideration by the team as well as providing it with a student login to access the College's learning platform.

The visit was undertaken during May 2021 and, in line with guidance from government regulations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the team and staff at the College were working from home. For this reason, the visit was conducted online. The visit took place over two days during which the team met with senior, academic, and professional support staff as well as a volunteer Student Representative and external members of the College's Programme Committee. The team was also provided with a demonstration of the College's learning platform.

The assessment team did not construct samples of evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

Further details of the evidence the assessment team considered are provided in the 'Explanation of findings' below.

Explanation of findings

Criterion A: Academic governance

Criterion A1 - Academic governance

- 1 This criterion states that:
- A1.1: *An organisation granted degree awarding powers has effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.*
- A1.2: *Academic governance, including all aspects of the control and oversight of its higher education provision, is conducted in partnership with its students.*
- A1.3: *Where an organisation granted degree awarding powers works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, it ensures that its governance and management of such opportunities is robust and effective and that decisions to work with other organisations are the result of a strategic approach rather than opportunism.*

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

2 The QAA assessment team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the College's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes of the New DAPs test outlined in paragraphs 232 of the regulatory framework, namely, to assess the College's understanding of this criterion and to test the credibility of the College's New DAPs Plan in relation to this criterion.

- 3 Specifically, the assessment team considered or assessed:
- a whether the College's higher education mission and strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, will be published, understood, and applied consistently and that its academic policies will support its higher education mission aims and objectives. To do this, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [000], CoLP Brand [001]. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], and external representatives of the Programme Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units [M4].
- b whether there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in the organisation in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision; whether the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is clearly articulated and is likely to be applied. To explore this, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [000], Role of Senior Executive [006], CoLP Organisational Chart [015], Academic Governance and Quality Assurance Framework [017], Programme Committee Terms of Reference [018], Curriculum Development and Delivery Group Terms of Reference [019] Nominations and Governance Committee Terms of Reference [021] Audit Risk and Compliance Committee Terms of Reference [022], CoLP Governance Structure [033], Terms of Reference for Assessment Panels [020], Articles of Association [221] and the Corporate Governance Code [153]. The team also met

with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], and external representatives of the Programme Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units [M4].

- c whether there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership. To explore this, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [000], Short CVs of Board members and Staff CVs [016], Role of the Senior Executive [006], Assessment Officer role draft [041], Head of Curriculum JD [050], Programme Leader JD [051], Module Leader JD [052], Supervisor role JD [053], CVs of Programme Committee and Curriculum Development and Delivery Group (CDDG) Members [055], CEO Job Description [105], Recruitment and Selection Policy [111], Nominations and Governance Committee Terms of Reference [021], Nominations Committee papers [032], and Job Description - Registrar [143]. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], and external representatives of the Programme Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units [M4].
- d how the College will develop, implement and communicate its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff and students and external stakeholders by considering the New DAPs Plan [000], Student Staff Liaison Committee standard agenda, [153] Corporate Governance Code, [076] Student Staff Liaison Committee terms of reference, [025] Approval Panel submission document template and [088] Student Partnership Framework. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], and external representatives of the Programme Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units [M4].
- e whether the College will successfully manage the responsibilities that would be vested in it were it to be granted degree awarding powers. To explore this, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [000], CVs of staff [016] and [042], Approved Policies and Procedures by the Programme Committee. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], and external representatives of the Programme Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units [M4].
- f whether students, individually and collectively, will be engaged in the governance and management of the organisation and its higher education provision, with students supported to be able to engage effectively. To do this, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [000], Student Partnership Framework [088], Student Staff Liaison Committee standard agenda [104], Corporate Governance Code [153], Student Rep Induction Outline [225], Student Staff Liaison Committee terms of reference [076] and Annual Programme Evaluation Report [077]. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], and external representatives of the Programme Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units [M4].
- g whether, where the organisation works with, or proposes to work with, other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, the arrangements will be based on a strategic approach, informed by the effective assessment of risk, including the carrying out of due diligence. To do this, the assessment team considered the New DAPs Plan [000] and met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

4 The assessment team did not construct samples of evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

What the evidence shows

5 The College's plans [New DAPs Plan 000] in relation to this criterion is, having already approved and published a higher education mission and associated policies on its website, to establish the operation of effective academic governance and management structures to support its evolving programmes and to do so in partnership with its students. The College's Board, the College's ultimate decision-making body, is already in operation and has responsibilities that include the setting and subsequent oversight of strategic aims, the delegation of responsibility for management to the CEO and Senior Executive, and the delegation of oversight of all academic matters to the Programme Committee which is also operational.

6 To ensure that governance remains consistent and current, regular meetings of the Board, Programme Committee and other governance committees are currently scheduled to the end of this calendar year and the College is confident that it will be able to demonstrate that there are clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities by the end of Y1 Q4.

7 The New DAPs Plan [001] details the recruitment of a Registrar and new Head of Curriculum before the assessment visit as part of plans to develop the depth of the Senior Executive with additions to the leadership of the academic team planned for the first year of the proposed probation as the College recruits students. The College intends to demonstrate that it can manage successfully the responsibilities that would be vested in it were it to be granted degree awarding powers by the end of Y2 Q3, primarily through the minutes, papers and reports of its academic governance structures and once the College has completed an academic cycle for its first programme and successfully graduated a student cohort from enrolment to completion of the proposed award.

8 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

9 The mission and vision of the College is clearly defined in the papers of the Board from August 2019 [002a section 2.3, para 1.2]. This is to 'deliver innovative, practice focused legal education and training to enhance the careers of practicing professionals across England & Wales,' and 'to be the leading College of practice focused legal education and training in England & Wales.' These papers also detail the approach of the College to the above vision which is overseen by the Board and monitored at its quarterly meetings (002f, 002i). It was clear to the team those future meetings should continue the provision of this evidence.

10 The College's strategy is supported by a four-year business plan through to the end of June 2024 [035]. An annual business planning conference in Q4 [036] informs the development of the strategy, business plan and the consequent budgetary discussions. The team could see that there is oversight of the College's budgeting by the parent company, the College of Law in Australia (CoL), as part of its own budgetary processes [037]. However, staff from the Senior Executive explained [M2] that funding for the four-year plan is held in the UK and that the College has been delegated full control over academic and business leadership decisions [M2]. The annual business planning conference will increasingly involve additional staff as they are recruited, including the new Head of Curriculum and Registrar who took up their roles in April 2021, and programme leaders. The Programme Committee

will be kept informed of developments from the planning conference through a report from the CEO [000, para 94, 166 in Y0 Q4 and Y1 Q4].

11 The Programme Committee has overseen the development and approval of a framework of policies, including, for example, the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations [005], Policy Approval and Communication Policy [045] and associated procedures [046]. The College provided the team with a summary of those that have been developed and approved to date [042]. The New DAPs Plan [000] confirms that the Programme Committee will continue to review and approve new policies. However, the team agreed that the necessary policy framework is in place for the College to commence delivery in Y1 Q1, and that these are coherent and support the aims and objectives of the College.

12 Policies are published under a 'Policies and Procedures' section on the College website. The team could see that there has been some considerable development in the communication of its policies and procedures through the website since the November 2020 Quality Standards Review. The team also noted that the College had updated the Selection and Admissions of Students Policy [087] and the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations in March 2021 [005] and agreed that the annual review of all policies [000] is appropriate for a provider in the early stages of its planned delivery.

13 Policies are incorporated into the Programme Handbook [063] and are introduced to staff during their induction together with the curriculum and 'Principles in teaching and learning' documents [029], ensuring the communication of these to staff. The Induction Outline for Staff [044] details the topics that are covered during staff inductions.

14 There is clear evidence of committees working effectively at the College (Board of Directors [002 a-i], Programme Committee [012 e-l, 062 a-h], Curriculum Delivery and Development Group (CDDG) [074 b-d, 157 a-d]) with established processes for minutes being recorded and agendas and papers for meetings being received appropriately. The College has a Programme Committee agenda template [056] which includes a programme and curriculum update from the CEO as a standing agenda item.

15 It was noted that the minutes for the Programme Committee [012e] when approving policies did not specify the policies received and approved. Minutes state for example, 'Several policy documents were presented by the CEO for comment and approval by the committee'. It was unclear to the team which policies these were. The team also noted that policy document templates only record the previous update and not a full history of its development over time. This approach does not therefore provide as clear a record of the function of the committee through its minutes and associated papers as it might.

16 There is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in the College in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision. This is demonstrated through evidence submitted, including the terms of reference for key committees such as the Programme Committee [018], Assessment panels [020] and the Senior Executive [233], clearly illustrating these different roles within the College's governance structure. The Board has five members (both executive and non-executive) with no plans to increase membership during the probationary period [000, para 92]. The Board has responsibility for the strategic direction of the organisation. It has delegated management of the College to the CEO and Senior Executive [153, Code of governance, para 3.1].

17 The Code of Governance [153] states that the College has drawn on the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) Code of Governance as well as the public interest governance principles of the OfS and some of the UK Corporate Governance Code (p3, pp 1.1). The Code of Governance lists the responsibilities and functions of the Board which are clear. Though this is not termed the 'statement of primary responsibilities' (as in the CUC UK Code

of Governance), the team agreed that it is in line with this approach. At the meeting with the Senior Executive [M2], the team received an assurance that a mapping exercise had taken place and a summary of this was provided [265]. The Code of Governance [153] clearly evidences the role of the Board and responsibilities of Directors. The Corporate Governance Code [153, p.9 pp.11] confirms that an evaluation of the Board will be convened after two years and then every four years thereafter; however, the team noted that the first Board evaluation is not included in the New DAPs Plan [000].

18 The Code of Governance [153] includes a section on the monitoring of performance which describes that key performance indicators (KPIs) will be used to enable the Board to maintain oversight of the quality of delivery. KPIs will be used to monitor financial considerations such as revenue and expenditure but also non-financial aspects of the provision, including staff and student satisfaction, the quality of teaching and the currency and accuracy of learning materials.

19 The Programme Committee is clearly articulated in its terms of reference as being the senior academic authority of the College with appropriate corresponding responsibilities [018]. Reporting to the Board, it is responsible for keeping under review the quality of provision and advising on a range of academic areas, including programme approval, teaching and learning, student outcomes, and research and scholarship. It has been meeting since April 2020 and is chaired by an external member. Its terms of reference include two independent members (of which one is a non-executive director of the Board), bringing an independent dimension to the leadership of the senior academic authority of the College.

20 The team noted that the Articles of Association [221] (para 4.6) state that the academic authority of the College is the 'Academic Committee'. However, all other documentation in the submitted evidence refers to this as the 'Programme Committee' and this was the term that was used in meetings with all staff and members of that committee. The team agreed that, although the Articles of Association is a high-level document that predates almost all the other documentation submitted as part of the College's evidence-base, there would be greater clarity for the College to be consistent in the naming of this key academic body. The team agreed that the function and responsibility of the Programme Committee as the College's senior academic authority is clearly articulated and should be consistently applied. It has established terms of reference [018] and is clearly stated in the Articles of Association that it (as the Academic Committee) is the academic authority of the College.

21 The work of the Audit Risk and Compliance Committee (ARCC) [022], which records a range of risks including those associated with evolving academic governance, and the Nominations and Governance Committee (NGC) [021] which deals with appointments to the Programme Committee and other board committees, are currently supported by two groups: the Launch Programme Steering Group and the CDDG. The New DAPs Plan [000] suggests the use of additional steering groups to the Programme Committee being created, though at present there are no terms of reference or membership stipulated for these. It is not clear in the documentation whether these groups would include student representation. This was discussed with staff from the Senior Executive [M6] who stated that they saw many benefits to student involvement on such bodies, dependent on the role of any such steering group and the appropriateness of student membership to it. They noted that student views are already sought as an important part of the programme approval procedure, which is a key role of the CDDG.

22 The team also discussed with representatives from the Senior Executive [M6] whether its meetings might also include periodic attendance by a student representative in time. They stated that they would anticipate in the future engaging with a lead student

representative during some of their meetings in addition to their other planned methods of engagement with the student body.

23 The Programme Committee, which has been meeting since April 2020, has the ultimate responsibility to ensure that academic standards are maintained, that programmes are coherent and properly structured, and that the programmes are supported by experienced members of academic and non-academic staff. The membership of the Programme Committee is determined by the NGC. There is evidence of this functioning through the recruitment of two external members to the Programme Committee [Nominations & Governance Committee Minutes February 2021, 086a].

24 The team met with a selection of external members of the Programme Committee [M4] who demonstrated a clear understanding of their role and that of the Committee in the functioning of the College. The external members confirmed that they had received communications from the College regarding developments over time and that they had received an appropriate induction to their role. The team found in their discussions with external members that they had considerable sector and subject experience which will be likely to support the proper functioning of the committee and mission of the College as well as confirming the proper functioning of the appointments process. The team agreed that the committee arrangements are appropriate for a provider of the size of the College.

25 The Programme Committee devolves responsibility for assessment of students to Module Panels [020] and for progression matters to the Progression and Awards Panel whose terms of reference [020] are appropriate to undertake this role. They set out a clear process to perform this function and should ensure that panels pay due consideration to the comments of academic staff and external examiners. The Module and Progression and Awards Panels should report to the Programme Committee through an Annual Examinations Outcomes Report [169a], which the New DAPs Plan shows will be evidenced at Y2 Q2 [000]. The panels are separate from the Programme Committee which should facilitate better independence between these bodies. There is limited ex-officio membership within the committee structure that should facilitate better consistency of application of the relevant rules and processes because members will be able to refer to previous precedents when making decisions.

26 The College's organisational chart [015] helped the team to understand how academic leadership cascades down the College from the CEO, to whom the Head of Curriculum and Chief Operations Officer report, through to Programme leaders and Module Leaders. Professional support staff (for example, the Registrar and Student Support Manager) report to the Chief Operations Officer. During meetings with academic [M5] and professional support and operations staff [M3] the team was able to assure itself that there was a consistent and high-level understanding of this structure.

27 The team agreed that the CEO and other staff are appropriately qualified and experienced as demonstrated through the consideration of their CVs, [016] with senior staff having previously held senior positions in other providers of higher education from which they can draw their experience. The team also agreed that the current Senior Executive represented an appropriate depth and strength of leadership for the size of the College and its current stage of development with the recruitment of a Registrar and new Head of Curriculum having taken place in April 2021 in keeping with the College's stated plan [000]. The consistent and appropriate application of the academic governance structure is evidenced through the minutes of the governance committees scrutinised by the team, including the Board [156 g-i], Nominations and Governance Committee [086a], Audit Risk and Compliance Committee [158a, 159a] and the Programme Committee [012 e-i] supported by the CDDG [074 b-d, 157 a-d].

28 During its scrutiny of the submitted evidence, the team noted that an external member of the Programme Committee was also named as a module convenor in the Assessment Schedule Template [058]. The team queried this with staff, as such a role in the academic team would preclude external membership on a committee and the 'module convenor' position was not detailed as part of the staffing structure in the College's evidence. This apparent conflict also raised questions regarding the time the College would expect to pass before a former member of staff might be able to take the role of an external committee member at the College. The College confirmed in a clarification statement [264] that the template was submitted as an example of the document that is planned and that it would expect a period of three to five years to pass before a former member of staff could take up a position as an external member of a committee, but that this would have to be confirmed by the Programme Committee. The College also confirmed that the form had been closely modelled on a similar format in use at another provider. The data in the template (including the name of the committee member) had been duplicated as they too had worked at this institution. The team was satisfied at this explanation and that this was an oversight.

29 The role of Registrar has been recruited by the College since the Quality Standards Review. This is the senior officer responsible for student administration, support and the management of assessment frameworks and is a member of the Senior Executive. A role of Assessments Officer is also included in the New DAPs Plan, to be recruited in Y2 Q1, which, as student numbers expand, will permit assessment matters initially handled by programme leaders to transfer to this role [000]. The New DAPs Plan indicates that the appointment of additional academic and professional staff is intended to continue during the probationary period as the College grows.

30 There is clear evidence that the College should utilise staff, students, and external stakeholders in the development of its policies. This is evidenced through membership of the Programme Committee [018] and its minutes [012e, g, h, i], agendas and papers [062a, e, f, h]. The College was able to assign one volunteer student representative to the Programme Committee in 2020 and another for 2021. As the College has yet to register students to its programmes these have been recruited from other institutions and the piloted units [055 CVs of Programme Committee and CDDG Members] to aid the College in gaining a student perspective. External stakeholders are currently represented through external members on the Board and Programme Committee. The terms of reference for the Staff Student Liaison Committee [076] states that employers are to be represented on this committee which will start to meet in Y1 Q1.

31 The Student Partnership Framework Policy [088] states that each programme will be represented by two student representatives. The policy envisages that when more than two students volunteer a vote will be held. The same policy also describes the role of a Student Staff Liaison Committee with terms of reference [076] and a standard agenda template [104] which will meet at least three times per year [076]. The New DAPs Plan [000] indicates that student feedback, including module evaluations, are scheduled for each quarter of the probation period commencing in Y1 Q2.

32 The Student Partnership Framework Policy [088, section 6] states that the Annual Programme Evaluation Report [077] will also include a commentary from the student representative demonstrating engagement in the process beyond simple attendance as part of the committee structure. A student representative is also included on the approval panel [025]. The team agreed that the above provided evidence of the College's understanding of the need for engagement with students in the governance and management of the organisation and its provision.

33 The College has produced an outline document for the induction of student representatives [225]. Staff explained their plans for these inductions [M1]. The team met

with a volunteer student representative who has been involved in the pilot units. They explained that they had not received a formal induction, but that College staff had met with them to fully explain the purpose and function of their role and this was articulated to the team.

34 In meetings with staff from the Senior Executive it was confirmed that, to date, the College has not engaged with employers as external stakeholders in any formal process, such as an 'employers forum' or other equivalent group [M2]. The team was informed that there has been some informal engagement as part of the College's project to pilot its courses. This included a briefing and provision of written information on the pilot. At present, staff from the Senior Executive consider that the experience of external members of both the Board and Programme Committee and its engagement with legal professionals as part of its course design process, the College is able to incorporate external views sufficiently. Given the considerable experience of some of the Programme Committee external members the team agreed that this is a reasonable expectation.

35 Representatives from the Senior Executive confirmed to the assessment team that the College does not have any plans for entering into a partnership with an organisation that will contribute to meeting learning outcomes or awards during the probationary period, although it has entered into an agreement with one law firm for the College to provide modules of training [M2, 000, p.31]. The New DAPs Plan does acknowledge the option of developing partnerships in the future. A partnership policy and appropriate process documentation is therefore planned to be developed [000 pg. 31] during Y1 Q2, in advance of any such arrangements being pursued. The team agreed that the development of such a policy was evidence of a strategic approach to this aspect of the provision but one that would not exceed the restriction on the validation or subcontracting of provision to other providers during the probationary period referred to in paragraph 238b of the OfS Regulatory Framework.

36 The team agreed that the College's governance structures, lines of accountability, roles and plans for policies are sufficient to have confidence at present that degree awarding powers would be managed successfully. This is because there is clear documentation outlining roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines. There are also sufficiently experienced personnel to successfully manage the responsibility of Degree Awarding Powers.

Conclusions

37 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Colleges on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*.

38 The team concludes that the College has effective academic governance, frameworks and policies with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic provision. There are detailed and credible plans for academic governance in which the Programme Committee, its senior academic authority, is clearly independent from the Board.

39 The team has confidence that there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership to support the College's development, with the senior team possessing considerable management and subject-based experience both in industry and academia, and similarly at board level.

40 The team has confidence that the academic governance of the College's higher education provision should be conducted in partnership with students because the importance placed on effective student contributions to academic governance is evidenced in the Student Partnership Framework and terms of reference of committees. The plans to work in partnership with students are well articulated and credible; governance committee

membership includes students sitting as partners with external academic members of the leadership team, and teaching and support staff.

41 The team concludes that the College has developed robust and effective frameworks for academic governance that are fit for purpose and are fully understood by staff. These are comprehensive, including clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities, arrangements for oversight and academic decision-making conducted in partnership with its students. Overall, the College's plans for meeting this criterion by the end of the probation period are coherent and realistic.

42 The team concludes, therefore, that the College understands this criterion and that its New DAPs Plan is credible and should enable the College to demonstrate that it has fully met the criterion by the end of the probation period.

Criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1 - Regulatory frameworks

43 This criterion states that:

B1.1: An organisation granted degree awarding powers has in place transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications.

B1.2: A degree awarding organisation maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

44 The QAA assessment team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the College's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes of the New DAPs test outlined in paragraphs 232 of the regulatory framework, namely, to assess the College's understanding of this criterion and to test the credibility of the College's New DAPs Plan in relation to this criterion.

45 Specifically, the assessment team considered or assessed:

- a whether the College's academic framework and regulations governing its higher education provisions are appropriate to its current status and will be implemented fully and consistently. The team considered the College's New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment [000], Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations [005], Selection and Admission of Students' Policy [087], Student Complaints Policy and Procedures [093], Flow Diagram for students – Student Complaints [110], Student Disciplinary Process [112], Flow Diagram Student Disciplinary Process (non-academic matters) [113], Flow Diagram Student Disciplinary Process (academic matters) [114], Academic Appeals Policy and Procedures [121], Equality and Inclusion for Students Policy [129], Approach to Reasonable Adjustment [130], Admissions Criteria for DLP Programme [234], Admission Guidance for DLP [235], Student Complaints Policy and Procedures for website [236], Refund and Compensation Policy [139], Draft Alumni Engagement Policy [152], Programme Handbook Content Guide [063], Sample of Admissions communication to Students [211]. The team also met with the representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], Operations and Support staff [M3], external representatives of the Programme Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units [M4], and representatives from Teaching and Learning staff [M5].
- b whether the College, in readiness of receiving degree awarding powers, has created one or more academic frameworks and regulations that will be appropriate for the granting of its own higher education qualification. In addition to the evidence considered in paragraph a, the team also reviewed the College's Board papers [002a – 002i], Programme Committee Terms of Reference [018], Programme Committee minutes [012e – 012i], Academic Governance and Quality Assurance Framework [017], Terms of Reference for Assessment Panels [020], Programme

Development and Approval Process [023], Programme Committee Policy Approval [042], Policy Approval and Communication Policy [045], Policy Approval and Communication Process [046], Staff Development Framework [048], Programme Committee Meeting Proforma Agenda [056], Academic management meeting schedule [057], Programme Committee Meeting Papers [062a – 062h], Student Charter and Code of Conduct [118], Student Protection Plan [138], IT Support Framework for Students [150], and the Overview of Monitoring policy and processes [243]. The team also met with the representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], Operations and Support staff [M3], external representatives of the Programme Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units [M4], and representatives from Teaching and Learning staff [M5].

- c how the College intends to maintain definite and up-to-date records of its programmes and qualifications and how the College will ensure that these records will be used as the basis of delivery and assessment and that the students and alumni will be provided with records of study. The team reviewed the College's New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment [000], Programme Handbook content guide [063], Programme Outline (Attachment A) for LLM in Legal Practice, Module Specifications (Attachment Bs) for LLM in Legal Practice modules [066], Draft Quality System Group Terms of Reference [078], Draft Transcripts and Certificate Templates [193]. The team also met College staff for a demonstration of the learning platform [M1] and Operations and Support staff [M3].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

46 The assessment team did not construct samples of evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

What the evidence shows

47 The College's plans in relation to this criterion are as follows.

48 The College's New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment stipulates that the College, as a new entrant to the market, initially plans to offer three postgraduate courses. These courses will be aimed at students who are either already in legal employment or who wish to enter the legal profession. Initially, the College intends to offer an LLM in Legal Practice (Developing Legal Professionals), an MSc in Legal Practice (Legal Services Professionals) and an MBA in Legal Practice (Leadership and Management Professionals) [000]. As the College has yet to recruit students, all academic frameworks and regulations that govern academic credit and qualifications have been designed and developed in anticipation of receiving degree-awarding powers.

49 Definitive and up-to-date records of each qualification to be awarded and each programme being offered by the College will be maintained on the College's database, supervised by the Registrar and managed by the Student Services team. This will include programme specifications and any revisions that are made by the College over time and are intended to form the basis for the delivery and assessment of the programmes offered to students.

50 The New DAPs Plan details that assessments and completion information from the learning portal are designed to be automatically captured within the student record on the database [000 pp 163]. A template for final transcripts is planned to be designed by Y1 Q1. The automation in the system should allow students and alumni easy access to these.

Students and alumni will be able to access their grades and learning records directly through the College's Career Portal which will be set up by Y1 Q3 [000 pp.165].

51 The College's New DAPs Plan specifies that all elements of criteria B1 will be met by Y2 Q2. The College's overall academic framework is composed of several policies and regulations that have been approved by the Programme Committee [000, 042]. These are to be implemented from Y1 Q1 with the exception of the Selection and Admission of Students Policy [087] that is already being applied and implemented. The College's policies are subject to review and communication under the Policy Approval and Communication policy [045] and the Policy Approval and Communication procedure [046]. Annual Policy Reviews are scheduled for Y1 Q1, Y2 Q1, Y3 Q1.

52 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

53 In anticipation of receiving degree awarding powers, the College has developed a comprehensive and appropriate academic framework and quality assurance framework. These frameworks consist of policies and regulations and are clearly written, transparent and include provisions relating to the functioning of a provider within the higher education sector. The policies include admissions [087, 234, 235], assessment [005], progression [005], awards [005], academic and non-academic appeals [121], complaints [093, 236], a refunds and compensation policy [139], an approach to reasonable adjustments [130] and a disciplinary policy [112]. These policies have been reviewed by the team and were found to be coherent, clearly written and appropriate to regulate the College's activities consistently, fairly, and equitably.

54 The College's Academic Governance and Quality Assurance framework [017] details the College's committee structure to ensure appropriate governance and supervision of the regulatory and academic framework. The Board is the highest committee of the College, but it is the Programme Committee that has devolved responsibility for all matters concerning the academic framework, including policy making on eligibility, enrolment, progress, assessment and completion, of awards as well as for staff recruitment [017]. The Programme Committee then delegates the powers to monitor assessments, approve grades and grant awards to students to the Progression and Awards Panel. The responsibility to ensure consistency of marking and relevant standards will be overseen by the Module Assessment Panels [017]. Programme leaders are responsible for ensuring that operational and academic matters of the courses operate effectively, and module leaders must ensure the delivery of individual modules [017].

55 The College's Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations document [005] is clear, coherent and addresses all regulatory elements relating to assessments that the team agreed should be expected of such regulations. Students are admitted onto Level 7 postgraduate study only with a previous undergraduate degree or equivalent professional experience. The College's choice of modules, being set primarily at 20 credits (with the exception of the Solicitors Legal Knowledge (SLK) and Solicitors Legal Skills (SLS) modules that are to be delivered as 30 credits) is typical to the sector and adheres to the FHEQ. Students are required to achieve all credits for the desired qualifications – 60 credits for a certificate, 120 credits for postgraduate diploma and 180 credits for postgraduate master's degree [009]. A near complete draft of programme and module documentation was available [065, 066]. The maximum time limit of four years to complete the course is reasonable for an online distance learning degree allowing students the flexibility to manage their study load as they progress through the course. Relevant elements from the programme and module specifications will be incorporated within the Course Guide, an example of which was provided for the team that was presented to volunteer students at their induction for a pilot that was used to test some aspects of the College's provision in the autumn of 2020 [060].

56 The Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations [005] are complemented by various templates that should support ensuring that assessments, marking standards, progression decision and awards are effective and reliable [095, 096, 097, 098, 099].

57 The College's proposed processes for assessment are comprehensive and have been approved by the Programme Committee [062f]. These are discussed more fully under Criterion B3. However, the team agreed that the College's regulations [005] will provide an effective framework to award academic credit and qualifications based on student achievement that is consistent with the levels of the FHEQ and the Statement of Solicitor's Competence of the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA). This is because the process stipulates that all assessments must be scrutinised internally and externally before they are released to students and all submissions must be marked with reference to the generic Grading Criteria [090] and module-specific criteria. Assessments must be moderated and approved by external examiners who also are required to be present during the Module Assessment Panels and Assessment and Awards Panels [005]. The team agreed that the roles and responsibilities for the operation of these panels are allocated clearly to different individuals and this increases the volume and quality of internal checks and balances that should ensure the effectiveness of the approach.

58 The Selection and Admission of Students Policy [087] outlines principles that will be adopted by the College when admitting students. The policy outlines the College's commitment to the minimisation of barriers to entry and to the use of reliable selection methods that are consistent, transparent, and fair [087]. It also stipulates how the College will review applications from those who are disabled or may have disabilities, who may come with non-standard qualifications, are under 18 years of age, are international applicants, who may have criminal convictions, who may wish to apply for a credit transfer, or who may wish to apply for a deferred entry [087]. The policy itself does not include entry criteria. These are listed in the draft programme specifications [065, 066] and in the Admission Criteria for the DLP Programme [234]. The criteria are accompanied by the Admission Guidance for DLP [235]. This is a student-facing document that includes explanations of the routes to qualification as a solicitor in England and Wales and includes frequently asked questions with responses. The templates for admissions communications to students [211] demonstrate that the College is already implementing its admissions policy in communicating with prospective students.

59 The College's Students Complaints Policy and Procedure [093] and Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure [121] set out the approach and detail for both informal and formal processes that are clear and appropriate. These are discussed more fully under Criterion B3. The Student Contract [073] outlines the College's and students' contractual obligations and the Student Charter and Code of Conduct [118] outlines the College's expectations of students' behaviour and conduct.

60 All policies are subject to the Policy Approval and Communication Policy [045] and Procedures [046]. These stipulate that each policy of the College must have an owner and that the owner must ensure that the principles articulated in the Policy Approval and Communication Procedures [046] have been adhered to. It also specifies that proposals will only become a policy after receiving formal approval from the Board or a committee appointed by the Board [045] and that all policies must be reviewed, as a minimum, annually. The above process aims to ensure that all relevant members of staff know and understand the correct processes that must be adhered to when seeking approval for a new or revised policy and that all policies are properly communicated to all relevant stakeholders [046]. Policy reviews have already been scheduled and timetabled for the next three years [000].

61 The College's proposed academic framework is considered by the team to be credible and appropriate because it was evident from the minutes of the Programme Committee that it has been developed and approved following rigorous discussion and scrutiny both prior to and at the Programme Committee level [12a-12i]. It has also been developed with reference to national expectations and this development was underpinned by a reliance on nationally recognised external reference points, including the FHEQ, the *Master's Degree Characteristics Statement (2020)*, Statement of Solicitors Competence [027] and the SRA's Threshold Standard [027]. Representatives from Operations and Support [M3] and from teaching and learning staff [M5] clearly and correctly articulated to the assessment team the principles from the policies that were relevant to their roles. This clearly demonstrates that the members of staff are not only aware of the policies but that they also understand them. They are therefore likely to be implemented and applied consistently once they become fully operational.

62 Due to a lack of any formal programme validation event before Y1 Q1, programme and module specifications provided in evidence were in draft form [065, 066]. The draft Programme Specification includes details of the course description, entry criteria, course structure and content, details of academic credit and principles of course completion, and details of learning resources [065]. The draft module specifications provide indicative content for individual modules, as well as learning outcomes, explanation of how these learning outcomes link with Solicitor's Competency and with the thresholds of the FHEQ and provide details of assessments. These draft specifications are to be used as the basis for module design and delivery. They also will underpin the Design Guide that is given to subject matter experts responsible for module design and development [067].

63 Once approved, the Registrar confirmed that the programme and module specifications will be stored in the College's database and will be used as the definitive record of each qualification [M3]. Any updates and changes will be monitored by the Registrar who will also be responsible for ensuring version control and accuracy. However, as most of the processes within the database are automated staff believe that the scope for any errors in the records of such information will be limited.

64 According to the New DAPs Quarterly Plan [011], the College's first three planned programmes will go through the approval process in Y1 Q1, Y1 Q3 and Y2 Q1 and should ensure that the specific modules and programmes are formally approved before they are offered to fee-paying students. The provided timescale was agreed by the team to be pressured, particularly if the approval process was to identify any significant issues. However, the team agreed it is feasible and achievable considering the experience of the staff involved and the agile nature of the College's structure at this point in its development.

65 The College's New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment stipulates that the College will maintain the records for all students from enrolment through to graduation on their customer relationship management system (CRM) [000, p.36]. The College informed the team that the system is to be tested and made operational in May 2021, shortly after the New DAPs test visit [M3]. The system will include all student records, including applications details, enrolments, grades, and awards [000]. The accuracy of the database will be overseen by the Registrar with the assistance from programme leaders and the Assessment Officer. Most of the processes in this system will be automated [M3]. The College's draft transcripts and certificate templates [193] demonstrate the format that the College wishes to use to provide students with their records of study and final awards. They include all details that would normally be found on these documents and, as such, demonstrate that the College's approach to provide students with a record of their studies will be appropriate.

Conclusions

66 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Colleges on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*.

67 The team concluded that the College has developed an academic framework, regulations, and associated policies to govern how it will award academic credit and qualifications which are fit for purpose and understood by relevant members of internal staff and external contributors. The policies and regulations are comprehensive, have been approved by the Programme Committee and collectively govern all aspects of the provision. The policies and regulations have been developed with reference to relevant external reference points, including the FHEQ and the Solicitors Competency Framework.

68 The College has a clear and credible plan to create and maintain a definitive and up-to-date record of each qualification to be awarded and each programme to be offered. These records will be used as the basis for the delivery and assessment of each programme and students will be provided with their records of study using the proposed certificate and transcripts templates. The current drafts of programme specification and module specifications are intended to undergo a formal validation event prior to the commencement of delivery in August 2021. Relevant elements from the programme and module specifications will be made available to students.

69 In anticipation of receiving degree awarding powers, the College has made significant progress since the Quality and Standards Review in November 2020 in devising appropriate policies and regulations and in starting to implement some of these. The governance structure provides clear oversight of the policies. The requirement for policies to be reviewed annually and the provision of an achievable timescale for development means that all the elements of criteria B1 have been understood by the College's team and their plan for compliance is credible.

70 The team, therefore, concludes that the College understands this criterion and that the New DAPs Plan is credible and should enable the College to demonstrate that it will fully meet the criterion by the end of the probation period.

Criterion B2 - Academic standards

71 This criterion states that:

B2.1: An organisation granted degree awarding powers has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications.

B2.2: Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that they are able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that the standards that they set and maintain above the threshold are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to these set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

72 The QAA assessment team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the College's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes of the New DAPs test outlined in paragraphs 232 of the regulatory framework, namely, to assess the College's understanding of this criterion, to test the credibility of the College's New DAPs Plan in relation to this criterion and to test the academic standards of the proposed programmes.

73 Specifically, the assessment team considered or assessed:

- a whether the College's higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies (FHEQ). To do this, the team explored the New DAPs Plan [000], FHEQ [004], *Master's Degree Characteristics Statement* [026], Statement of Solicitor Competence [027], The SRA Threshold Standard [028], HEA Professional Standard Framework [196], Mapping of PLOs against Module Outcomes [100], Course Guide for Pilot Units [060], Grading Criteria [090], Indicative Assessment and Template for Banking and Finance [102], Banking and Finance Annotated Student Submission [117], Competency Framework Form DLP Exemplar [120]. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], Operations and Support staff [M3], external representatives of the Programme Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units [M4], and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].
- b whether the setting and maintaining of academic standards is likely to take appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and external and independent points of expertise, including students. In order to explore this, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [000], Programme Development and Approval Process [023], Induction and Training for External Examiners [092], Guide to Good Practice of External Examiners [093], Student Feedback Questionnaire Module [108], Student Feedback Questionnaire Programme [109], Practitioner Comments Banking and Finance Review [079], Practitioner Comments Dispute Resolution Review [080], Practitioner Opinion on B and F materials [101]. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], operations and support staff [M3], external representatives of the Programme

Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units [M4], and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].

- c whether the College's programme approval arrangements are robust, are likely to be applied consistently, and ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations. To do this, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [000], Programme Development and Approval Process [023], Approval Event Report Template [024], Approval Panel Submission Document template [025]. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], operations and support staff [M3], external representatives of the Programme Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units [M4], and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].
- d whether credit and qualifications are awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment, and both the UK threshold standards and the academic standards of the relevant degree-awarding body have been satisfied. In order to explore this, the assessment team considered the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulation [005] and the Terms of References for Assessment Panels [020]. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], operations and support staff [M3], external representatives of the Programme Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units [M4], and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].
- e whether the College's programme approval, monitoring and review arrangements are robust, applied consistently and explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained. To do this, the assessment team considered the College's New DAPs Plan [000], Pilot Evaluation Report [061], Programme Development and Approval Process [023], Module Review Form [043], and Programme Evaluation Report [077]. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], operations and support staff [M3], external representatives of the Programme Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units [M4], and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].
- f whether in establishing, and then maintaining, threshold academic standards and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications, the College makes use of appropriate external and independent expertise. To undertake this, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [000], Guide to Good Practice of External Examiners [093], and Induction and Training for External Examiners [092]. The team also met with the representatives from Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], operations and support staff [M3], external representatives of the Programme Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units [M4], and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

The assessment team did not construct samples of evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

What the evidence shows

74 The College's plans in relation to this criterion are as follows.

75 The College has established the Programme Committee which reports to the Board and is identified as the senior academic body in its terms of reference [018], with oversight for the setting and maintenance of sector-recognised standards. The Programme Committee and the Curriculum Development and Delivery Group (CDDG), which has specific responsibility for curriculum, are already operational [000].

76 The College plans to commence appointing external examiners and inducting them from the summer of 2021. External examiners are scheduled to submit reports in the second and third year of probation [000]. Programme team meetings are scheduled to also take place periodically, which can respond to external examiners' reports [039].

77 The Programme Approval and Review Policy [043] states that review processes are intended to operate at two levels: Annual Programme Monitoring, and Periodic Review on a five-yearly basis. Annual Programme Monitoring is intended as an opportunity for the programme team to reflect upon their programme's performance over the previous year, provide an overview of successes, and to confirm any actions to enhance the programme. The annual review of programmes is scheduled in the first quarter of each year of the probationary period [000].

78 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

79 The Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations [005] set out the proposed standards for courses. All programmes are to be delivered at the relevant level of the FHEQ (Level 7). The regulations also outline that credits and qualifications will only be awarded once learning outcomes are properly achieved as confirmed through internal and external marking processes and assessment panels.

80 The College's first programme, Developing Legal Professionals, is due to be approved in Y1 Q1 with two others following in Y1 Q3 and Y2 Q1 [000]. At the time of the New DAPs test visit, a near-complete draft of the first programme, DLP, and module documentation was available [065, 066]. The College stipulates in its New DAPs Plan [000] that in addition to the FHEQ, courses will be further underpinned by reference to other external points of reference, including the *Master's Degree Characteristics Statement*, the Statement of Solicitor's Competency [027] and the SRA's Threshold Standards [028]. These standards are to be ensured by setting learning outcomes at the appropriate levels and by adopting standard grading criteria that will apply to all modules which is evidenced in a mapping document [Mapping of PLOs against Module Outcomes and External Framework [100] and Grading Criteria [090]. Compliance with those frameworks is to be assured through the programme approval process and reliance on external examiners.

81 During the development of its first programme, the team could see evidence of the College taking appropriate account of relevant external points of reference through seeking feedback on the module design from current legal practitioners [079 Practitioner comments Banking and Finance review, 080 Practitioner comments Dispute Resolution review]. The College also intends to obtain students' feedback by including in the Programme Committee's membership representation from students and practitioners [000 p.40].

82 During the probationary period, the College plans to appoint three external examiners for each of its programmes, beginning in advance of the delivery of each programme [000]. These plans have been confirmed by the Programme Committee [012k, l, m, n, p]. Academic staff [M5] confirmed information provided in the New DAPs Plan [000 pp.167] that they seek external points of engagement through participation in industry

conferences and through drawing on their own academic and professional legal experience [M5].

83 The College evidenced how it intends to approach assessment setting, the provision of information and feedback for students and marking criteria through a number of documents. The Course Guide for Pilot Units [060] provides information to students about what they will study, including information about the FHEQ Level, notional learning hours, credits, and the learning outcomes for the unit. The Indicative Assessment and Template for Banking and Finance [102] contains information on the final summative assessment for the module as well as the relevant learning outcomes, key criteria and competencies that will be assessed. The Banking and Finance Annotated Student Submission [117] is an example of the feedback that a student could expect to receive from a supervisor about their submission, and the Exemplar assessment with student and supervisor feedback [120] is an exemplar for an assessment and the feedback provided for a student submission. The Competency Framework Form DLP Exemplar Document [119] is an example of the competency frameworks that are used in modules to support supervisors in discussion with students to help develop their skills. The New DAPs Plan highlights these documents to illustrate how its postgraduate training model will work to support students in their studies [000 pp.418-423].

84 The team noted that, although the assessment regulations [005] make the College's adherence to the FHEQ clear, the above documents [060, 102, 117, 119, 120] that are to be used by the College appear to focus on the Solicitors Regulation Authority competencies and do not have any direct references to the FHEQ or master's descriptors. As such, they demonstrate that standards are likely to comply with SRA competencies thresholds, but they do not explicitly demonstrate that they will also comply with FHEQ thresholds. The Course Guide for Pilot Units [060], for example, contains learning outcomes which are not expressly, or through the choice of words, directly linked to Level 7 FHEQ descriptors. The team discussed whether this might result in an over-reliance on the professional, rather than sector-recognised, standards and agreed that the documents used do indicate the appropriate Level 7 requirements. However, this could be made clearer by using wording and terminology more consistent with Level 7 of the FHEQ.

85 In meetings with staff, the team discussed the College's approach to standards [M2, M5]. Academic staff demonstrated a clear understanding and appreciation of the FHEQ [M5]. They articulated their approach for benchmarking their course design against Level 7 when working with practitioners and ensuring that the scenarios and other content that is being designed for students to work with will require students to make judgements that would be appropriate for master's level.

86 In adhering to SRA's commitments to make entry to the legal profession more accessible, the College's entry criteria for its DLP programme does not stipulate that a candidate must have a prior undergraduate law degree or relevant conversion course such as a Graduate Diploma in Law, or similar [234]. The assessment team was therefore interested in questioning College academic staff regarding the programme only apportioning 30 credits to study the functioning legal knowledge that is to be assessed by the first part of the SQE. The concern arose not from the admission criteria but from the challenge for students who enrol on the programme without prior legal qualifications finding the pace and volume of the module too demanding and whether this might increase the likelihood of them having to withdraw from the programme. The assessment team raised with the College team the possibility of offering these students additional support or offering them an alternative pathway of study. The College's Senior Executive agreed with the team that the 30-credit Solicitors Legal Knowledge (SLK) module may, but does not have to, prove too challenging to students [M2, M6]. The Senior Executive described how their approach will be to provide information and advice about this and to very strongly encourage prospective students to

first enrol on the proposed Graduate Foundation in Law (GFL) programme before embarking on the DLP; their expectation being that most would heed this. When questioned further about applicants who choose to ignore this advice, staff explained that students will be permitted to commence the course with their supervisors being tasked to ensure that these students are closely monitored and supported through the module. The College will be able to offer the option to students to withdraw if it transpires that they do find the module too challenging. As the requirement of having a prior law degree has been removed by the Solicitors Regulatory Authority, staff from the Senior Executive explained that they felt that it would be inappropriate for the College to set up its own course requirements in opposition to this approach to widening access to the profession. The team agreed that the College's approach was appropriate in the context of the position taken by the SRA and its own responsibilities to its students.

87 The College provided a scoping document that outlines the proposal for the College's GFL course in its final upload of additional information the week prior to the visit [249]. This provides an overview of the proposed course that describes it as a '20-week full-time (40-week part-time) online programme for graduates from disciplines other than law who intend to progress to take the SQE examinations and follow a career path in professional legal services' [249]. The team noted that the College's website [265], while clearly stating that it was subject to validation, suggested that this course might contribute to a Graduate Diploma in Law. The team therefore sought clarification from the College after the review visit. The College clarified that its GFL is intended as 'a preparatory course to support students without any previous legal training'. As such, the team agreed that it would therefore not exceed the restriction on the entitlement to make awards to students only in the areas included in the College's New DAPs plan during the probationary period, referred to in paragraph 238a of the OfS Regulatory Framework.

88 The College's proposed programme approval arrangements are detailed in the Programme Development and Approval Process [023]. Proposals are scrutinised by the CDDG and are intended to undergo formal validation events as detailed above [023 – Programme Development and Approval Process, 024 – Approval Event Report Template; 025 – Approval Panel Submission document template]. The Approval Panel is specifically tasked with ensuring 'the appropriateness of learning and teaching strategies, learning outcomes and the level of awards' [025, paragraph 4.2]. While this does not explicitly address the FHEQ, it implicitly requires such consideration because any approval must then be submitted to the Programme Committee who are tasked with ensuring that any new proposal complies with the FHEQ and the College's own academic framework and regulations. This role is made clear in the terms of reference for the Programme Committee and the reference to the FHEQ is a guiding principle stated within the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations [005].

89 The College's proposed process for ensuring that credit and qualifications will only be awarded where the achievement of learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment includes policies and procedures relating to selecting and setting assessments, their internal and external scrutiny, and internal and external moderation of marking standards of submitted works [005]. This will be underpinned by processes relating to assessment panels, progression and awards. Under the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations, [005] module leaders will be expected to prepare the assessments drawing from the given choices provided in the Summary of Assessment Tasks and Methods [195]. Their assessment will then be scrutinised internally and externally. At both stages the scrutinisers will be expected to confirm that assessments have been set at the correct level and to meet the stated learning outcomes [095 Assessment Scrutiny Form]. Once the assessments are submitted by students, these will be marked by the module leaders and moderated internally prior to moderation by an external examiner [005]. The Moderation Form [096] specifically expects the moderators to ensure that marking has been carried out

consistently and is in line with the appropriate levels. The pass mark is set at 50% for all modules. All marks are subject to final formal confirmation of the Module and Assessment Boards [024 – Terms of References for Assessment Panels] which is responsible for confirming marks, progression decisions and awards. The Student Disciplinary Policy Process [112, 114] should ensure that students will not be able to achieve awards through academic misconduct. Equally, the College's Approach to Reasonable Adjustments [130] should ensure that students will not be prevented from achieving their awards due to having additional needs.

90 The College also intends to monitor standards through module and annual programme review. It intends to review modules after each delivery has been completed [000, 043 – Module Review Form] and programmes are to be reviewed annually [077 – Programme Evaluation Report]. The Programme Evaluation report is to be discussed with students at the Staff Student Liaison Committee which will meet at least three times per year (normally once per term) according to its terms of reference [076]. Subsequent action tracking will be monitored by the Programme Committee [000].

91 The College sets out external examiner appointment requirements, roles and responsibilities, and expectations in the Guide to Good Practice of External Examiners [093] who will be asked to assess the alignment of standards with the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. The External Examiner Nomination Form [094] also establishes the qualifications and experience required to be appointed to the role, including being qualified to at least master's level and to have experience of assessment design and current or recent active involvement in scholarly activity. The team agreed that these would be sufficient to command the respect of their peers and to perform the role adequately.

92 The College has a structure for the induction and training of external examiners immediately prior to their taking up their appointment [092 – Induction and Training for External Examiners] and annually in Q4 of each year [000 pp225]. This specifically includes references to the role of external examiners and external frameworks adopted by the College. External examiners will contribute to the College assuring itself that there is external scrutiny and input into maintaining standards and comparability of standards with other institutions. External examiners' appointments are intended to start in the autumn of 2021 [000]. Nominations of external examiners are to be made using the External Examiner Nomination Form [096] and appointments are subject to approval by the Programme Committee [000 p.51]. External examiners are expected to write a report on an annual basis to which they can expect to receive a reply from programme leaders within four weeks [005].

93 The team scrutinised the Pilot Evaluation Report [061]. The College piloted some units from proposed modules to test aspects of its provision but also to inform its approach to course and assessment design. Overall, the feedback was very positive, but it also highlighted areas that the College might wish to give consideration. Examples of feedback include a need to ensure that content can be delivered and learned within the indicated learning hours that correspond to the set credits. In this case staff reported that some adjustments were made to the time allowed for students to complete units as feedback had suggested those in employment found they needed more than originally provided [M2]. College staff confirmed that it is continuing to test modules with further pilots commencing after the test visit [M2].

Conclusions

94 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*.

95 The College's plans for meeting the DAPs criterion in full by the end of the probation period are clear and the stated approach is credible and realistic. The team concludes that the College has developed clear and consistent policies and processes for setting the academic standards of its higher education qualifications.

96 Although the programme and modules have yet to be formally approved by the College, the proposed timeline of when this should occur makes it feasible and achievable during the probationary period and, as such, provides a clear and credible timescale of development and that these should be at Level 7 of the FHEQ.

97 The College plans to operate credit-based awards, adopting standard credit ratings in line with the FHEQ. All learning outcomes are to be assessed before credit will be awarded for modules. The College's plans for maintaining academic standards are clear and credible with an appropriate range of underpinning policies. They describe both an approval process, an annual monitoring process and a five-year periodic review.

98 The College's New DAPs Plan provides for engagement of external experts in all procedures relating to the establishment and maintenance of academic standards. The team considers that it has developed credible procedures to identify and engage qualified and experienced external experts to contribute to establishing and maintaining academic standards. External examiners are to be appointed before the first cohort of students commence the initial programme, but the detailed policy and procedures already developed indicate an approach that the team is confident will provide evidence to inform reflection on the standards achieved by students if implemented as intended.

99 The team concludes, therefore, that the academic standards of the proposed programme should be appropriate, that the College understands this criterion and that its New DAPs Plan is credible and should enable the DAPs criterion to be met by the end of the probation period

Criterion B3 - Quality of the academic experience

This criterion states that:

B3.1: Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that they are able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students from all backgrounds, irrespective of their location, mode of study, academic subject, protected characteristics, previous educational background or nationality. Learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

100 The QAA assessment team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the College of Legal Practice submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes of the New DAPs test outlined in paragraphs 232 of the regulatory framework, namely, to assess the College's understanding of this criterion and to test the credibility of College's New DAPs Plan in relation to this criterion.

101 Specifically, the assessment team considered or assessed:

Design and approval of programmes

a whether the College of Legal Practice has robust and credible plans for effective processes for the design, development, and approval of programmes. To evaluate this aspect, the team considered the College's New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment [000], Board Papers [002d – 002i], FHEQ [004], The UK Quality Code for Higher Education [005], QAA Quality and Standard Review Draft Report [009], New DAPs Quarterly Plan [011], Programme Committee Terms of Reference [018], Programme Committee Minutes [012e, 012f, 012i], Curriculum Development and Delivery Group Terms of Reference [019], Programme Development and Approval Process [023], Approval Event Report template [024], Approval Panel Submission template [025], *Master's Degree Characteristics Statement (2020)* [026], Statement of Solicitor Competence [027], The SRA's Threshold Standard [028], Programme Committee Policy Approvals [042], Module Review form [043], Template for new programme or substantial change to an existing programme [047], Practitioner Engagement Email Banking and Finance [049], Commissioning information sent to each SME [054], DLP Pilot Evaluation Report [061], Programme Committee Meeting papers [062a – 062h], Design Guide and Induction for SMEs [067], UK Design Schedule for pilot units [068], CDDG Meeting Notes [074b – 074d], Programme Evaluation Report Template [077], Feedback Document Banking and Finance [079], Practitioner Feedback Email (Dispute Resolution) [080], Role and Responsibilities – Quality Assurance Officer [083], Mapping of PLOs against Module Outcomes and External Frameworks [100], Feedback Questionnaire for Pilot Units Autumn 2020 [107], Feedback Questionnaire for a Module [108], Feedback Questionnaire for a Programme of Study [109], SLK SME design updates, January 2021 [176], SLK SME design updates, February 2021 [177], Example of Commissioning Email [220], and Overview of Monitoring Policy and Processes [243]. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], representatives from Operations and Support [M3], and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].

- b whether relevant staff are informed of, and provided with guidance and support on, the procedures for the design, development and approval of programmes, and their roles and responsibilities in relation to them. The team considered the New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment [000], Launch Programme Project Implementation Document [013], Launch Programme kick-off meeting presentation [014], Induction Outline for Staff [044], Design Guide and Induction for SMEs [067], Induction and Training for External Examiners [092], COL Lecturer Training Module Proposal [155], SLK SME Design Updates, January 2021 [176], SLK SME Design Updates February 2021 [177]. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], representatives from Operations and Support [M3], and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].
- c how the College demonstrates that the responsibility for approving new programme proposals is clearly assigned, including the involvement of external expertise, where appropriate, and that subsequent action will be carefully monitored. The team considered the College's New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment [000], QAA Quality and Standards Review Draft Report [009], New DAPs Quarterly Plan [011], Programme Development and Approval Process [023], Programme Committee Terms of Reference [018], SME Briefing for SLK Module (part of LLM in Legal Practice) [218], Sign Off Notes for SLK Scoping [219], and An Example of Commissioning Email for SLK [2020]. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2] and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].
- d how the coherence of the programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained. In addition to the relevant evidence that the team considered and is listed in the previous paragraph, the team also met representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], representatives from Operations and Support [M3], and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].
- e whether close links are maintained between learning support services and programme planning and approval arrangements. The team reviewed the College's New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment [000] and met with representatives from Operations and Support [M3].

Learning and teaching

- f whether the College articulates and implements a strategic approach to learning and teaching which is consistent with its stated academic objectives. The team reviewed the College's Draft Teaching and Learning Strategy [283], CoLP Board Papers August 2019 [002a], Kolb and Shon pedagogy explained [194], Principles of Learning and Teaching [043], DLP BF Example Learning Content [252], DLP BS Example Learning Content [253], DLP DR Example Learning Content [254], DLP SLK Example Learning Concept [255], Programme Development and Approval Process [023], Role and Responsibilities – Quality Assurance Officer [083], Curriculum meeting review of Pilot Evaluation Report [084], DLP pilot evaluation report [061], Mapping of strategic objectives to policies [227]. The team also met with representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].
- g whether the College maintains physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use. The team reviewed the New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment [000], Refund and Compensation Policy [139], Student Induction to Learning Portal [106], Outline Approach to Reasonable Adjustment [130], The

Student Charter and Code of Conduct [118], Student Disciplinary Process [112], Flow Diagram Student Disciplinary Process [112], Student Partnership Framework Policy [088], Equal Opportunity and Dignity at Work Policy. The team also met with College staff for a demonstration of the learning platform [M1] and representatives from Operations and Support [M3].

- h whether there are robust arrangements that exist for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to students who are studying at a distance from the organisation are effective. The College of Legal Practice is established as a virtual institution that will not have a physical campus. As such, no separate evidence was necessary but has been included in the consideration of all other elements of the review.
- i whether every student will be enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development. The team considered Learning Analytics [116], Example of Supervisor written feedback and sample from DLP Written Communication Unit [120]. The team also met with College staff for a demonstration of the learning platform [M1] and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].

Assessment

- j whether the College operates valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit and qualification being sought. The team considered The Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulation [005], Terms of Reference for Assessment Panels [020], Assessment Scrutiny Form [095], Marking and Moderation Form [096], Grading Criteria [090], External Examiner Report Template and Guidance [097], Programme Committee Policy Approval [042], Summary of Assessment Tasks and Methods [095], Indicative Assessment and Template for BF [102], Banking and Finance Marking guidance [103], Statement of Solicitor Competence [027], SRA's Threshold Standards [028], Example of supervisor written feedback and sample answer from DLP Written Communication Unit [120], and the Programme Handbook Content Guide [063]. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2] and with representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].
- k whether the College engages staff and students in a dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made. The team reviewed the Programme Handbook Content Guide [063], Grading Criteria [090], Student Disciplinary Process [112], Flow Diagram Student Disciplinary Process Policy (academic matters) [114], QAA Quality and Standards Review draft form [009]. The team also met with representatives of supervisors and module leaders [M5].
- l whether the College provides students with the opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice. The team reviewed the Programme Handbook Content Guide [063], Grading Criteria [090], Student Disciplinary Process [112], Flow Diagram Student Disciplinary Process Policy (academic matters) [114], and QAA Quality and Standards Review draft form [009]. The team met with representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].
- m how the College will ensure that unacceptable academic practice is prevented, identified, investigated, and addressed. The team considered the College's New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment [000], Student Disciplinary Process Policy [112],

Flow Diagram Student Disciplinary Policy (Academic Matters) [114] and Programme Handbook Content Guide [063].

- n whether the College's processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and will be consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process. The team reviewed the College's New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment [000], the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations [005], Marking and Moderation Form [096], Assessment Scrutiny Form [095], Terms of Reference for Assessment Panels [020], Award Conferment Recommendation Form [098] and the External Examiner Report Template and Guidance [075].

External examining

- o whether the College will make scrupulous use of external examiners, including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work. The team reviewed the College's New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment [000], Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulation [005], Programme Committee Policy Approvals [042], Guide to Good Practice for External Examiners [091], Induction and Training for External Examiners [092], DAPs Quarterly Plans [011], Terms of Reference for Assessment Panels [020], External Examiner Report Template and Guidance [075], External Examiner Nomination Form [094]. The team also met with external representatives of the Programme Committee [M4].
- p how the College intends to give full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examiners' reports and how it will provide external examiners with a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations. The team reviewed the New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment [000], Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations [005], and External Examiner Report and Template [075].

Academic appeals and student complaints

- q whether the College has effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of the academic experience, and whether these procedures are fair, accessible and will enable timely outcomes, and enhancement. The team considered The Academic Appeals Policy and Procedures [121], Student Complaints Policy and Procedures [093], Flow Diagram – Student Complaints [107], Programme Handbook Content Guide [063], Refund and Compensation Policy [139], Student Complaints Policy and Procedures for website [236], Initial Scoping Document for Graduate Foundation in Law Programme [249]. The team also met with representatives from Operations and Support [M3].
- r whether the College will take appropriate action following an appeal or complaint. The team considered New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment [000], Refund and Compensation Policy [139], Student Complaints Policy and Procedures [093] and Flow Diagram – Student Complaints [107].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

102 The assessment team did not construct samples of evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

What the evidence shows

103 The College's plans in relation to this criterion are as follows.

104 The College has established processes for the design and approval of programmes. The process to design programmes for the College's provision has been tested through the running of pilot units from modules with volunteer students working with course materials and assessment. The New DAPs Plan details that the College intends to offer an LLM in Legal Practice (Developing Legal Professionals) from August 2021 followed by two further postgraduate courses: MSc in Legal Practice and MBA in Legal Practice. However, initially the College only intends to offer one formal module – Solicitors Legal Knowledge (SLK). This module is to be offered from August 2021 with the full programme due to be approved in Y1 Q1 and offered to registered students from January 2022 [011]. The College's New DAPs Plan states that all aspects of criteria B3a to B3c will be met by Y2 Q1 [000] with the programme approval process having been used three times [000 pp.243-249]. The programme approval panel will make a recommendation to the Programme Committee which has ultimate responsibility for the approval and review of all courses.

105 The College's Learning and Teaching Approach has been articulated in its New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment [000], the August 2019 Board Papers [002a], Principles in Teaching and Learning Policy [029] and the draft Learning and Teaching Strategy [238]. The College anticipates that the criterion in respect to learning and teaching will be met by Q2 Y3.

106 Assessment will be overseen by the Programme Committee following the processes detailed in the College's Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations [005]. The New DAPs Plan includes details of providing evidence of the proper functioning of these processes by Y3 Q2 [000 pp.288] through a range of reports that will be provided for the Programme Committee, including annual outcomes of examination reports and programme evaluations as well as the committee's minutes. Regular weekly meetings between students and supervisors, both individually and collectively, are scheduled as part of the design of modules, where specific marking schemes relevant to an assessment can be discussed, including the consideration of the College's standard Grading Criteria [090, 000 pp.276]. The effective operation of this approach will be assessed in Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings [000 pp.292].

107 The College's approach to the engagement of external examiners can be found in its Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations [005]. The College plans to give full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examiners' reports through their consideration at a range of committees of the College with this responsibility included in the terms of reference of the Programme Committee [018] and Staff Student Liaison Committee [076] as well as annual programme evaluations [077]. At the time of the New DAPs test visit, the College was yet to recruit its first external examiner. This is planned to take place between May 2021 and July 2021 for its first programme. Subsequent appointments of external examiners for the LLM in Legal Practice and MSc in Legal Practice are planned for the period between November 2021 and January 2022 and for the MBA in Legal Practice during the period between August 2022 and October 2022 [011]. Briefing and induction for external examiners will be undertaken on their appointment and the first annual briefing for all external examiners is also planned for the period between May 2022 and July 2022 [011]. The New DAPs Plan also commits the College to providing a timely response to comments made by external examiners [000 pp.296] and to be able to provide sufficient evidence of meeting this commitment by Y2 Q4.

108 The College has put in place procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints. The New DAPs Plan details that the Programme Committee approved a Student Complaints policy [093] and a Student Disciplinary Process Policy [112] during 2020 [000 pp 298]. Both policies contain review or appeals processes and there is accompanying information for students to ensure they are accessible. The policies include provision for appropriate and timely action to be taken following an appeal or complaint. The New DAPs

Plan details how these processes will be monitored by the Staff Student Liaison Committee and through the annual programme evaluation process with the Programme Committee having oversight [000 pp.300]. The plan envisages this aspect of the criterion being evidenced by Y3 Q1 [000 pp.303].

109 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

Design and approval of programmes

110 The College's planned processes for the design, development and approval of programmes are articulated in the Programme Development and Approval Process [023] and in associated supporting documents and templates. These include, but are not limited to, an Approval Event Report Template [024], an Approval Panel Submission Template [025], the CDDG Terms of Reference [019] and the Programme Committee Terms of Reference [019]. The monitoring of all aspects of the College's operations, including monitoring of the student experience, academic performance, assessments, and the academic team, has been summarised in the Overview of Monitoring Policy and Processes Document [243].

111 The Programme Committee Terms of Reference [018] clearly stipulates that ultimate responsibility for programme approval within the College is vested in the Programme Committee. The Committee has delegated authority on all academic matters from the College's Board. Individual modules are designed by subject matter experts who are commissioned to design and develop the content of the modules within their specific areas of expertise [054]. Content is developed with reference to the College's Teaching and Learning approach [002d], the Design Guide that is provided to all subject matter experts upon commission [067] and the schedule of events [068] to ensure they receive appropriate guidance.

112 Module and programme design are to be overseen by the Curriculum Development and Delivery Group (CDDG) whose terms of reference clearly show that it has been specifically set up for this purpose [019]. Proposals are submitted to the CDDG using a specifically designed template that should be used for proposing new programmes or for proposing any substantial changes to an existing programme [047]. The proposal needs to be signed off by the CDDG and approved by the Quality Assurance Officer [000, p.54] before it undergoes the formal approval process [024, 025]. The Quality Assurance Officer's task is to ensure that designed modules comply with the principles stated in the Design Guide and that they adhere to the UK-specific jurisdictional requirements [000]. External input is to be secured by the engagement of practitioners who will be asked to comment on and assess the currency, appropriateness, and relevance to the profession of the content of the devised modules. The Approval Panel that is established to review and consider formal proposals will be tasked with considering the coherence of the programmes with reference to content, curriculum design, assessment, structure, and appropriateness of the award [025]. The Approval Panel's remit also includes consideration of learning resources and support provisions [025].

113 Once modules and programmes are validated and offered formally to students, the College's monitoring and review process becomes operational [000, 243]. Modules are to be reviewed after each delivery using the Module Review Form [043]. This form includes consideration of student feedback as well as a review of students' performance and external examiners' comments [043]. Student feedback will be sought on each module using the Student Feedback questionnaire [108] and students will also be asked to comment on the overall quality and effectiveness of the programme as a whole [109]. Programmes are to be reviewed annually using the Programme Evaluation Report Template [077]. Parts of the Annual Programme Review are to be written by a student representative [M4] and will

include an evaluation of students' overall performance, the identification of good practice and areas for improvement and enhancement [077].

114 The College plans to inform and support staff regarding their role and responsibilities in the design and approval of programmes through the provision of written guidance, through induction and ongoing staff training and through informal support [000]. Upon commission, subject matter experts (SMEs) are provided with the Design Guide and Induction for SMEs [067]. This underpins the initial module content development and the development of learning content and assessments. Supervisors will receive a Practitioner Supervisor induction pack upon recruitment [069] and all staff are due to undertake induction and training. The list of activities to be included in such training have been articulated in the College's Lecturer Training Module Proposal [155]. This includes an induction into the College's policies and processes as well as an overview of the legal education continuum, national competency standards, course aims, modes of delivery, roles of staff mentors, teaching and learning materials, details of a skills week, student education and cultural diversity [155]. The initial induction and training activities are divided into compulsory and optional parts and all elements are to be formally assessed to confirm that the relevant staff undertook the prescribed training. This will be monitored using a staff training record template that is to be developed during the probationary period [000]. Staff should also receive a schedule of production of materials [000] and have ongoing formal and informal access to the Senior Executive of the College who should provide regular support and guidance [M2]. Academic staff confirmed that policies and regulations will also be available on the website [M5].

115 Coherence of the programmes will be evaluated through all stages of the review processes. The Terms of Reference for Approval Panel [025] specifically requires the panel to consider coherence. Discussions with the Senior Executive and the Teaching Team revealed that coherence should also be monitored by the CDDG and overseen by the Programme Committee [M2, M5]. Currently, the College does not intend to offer programmes with alternative pathways, or programmes with integral elements of work experience or other placements [000].

116 Learning support needs are identified during the design and development process through discussions between members of the CDDG and the Registrar and other support officers [M3]. Learning resources and other needs are also due to be considered during the validation events [000] and are included in the budget [M3]. The Budget Planning Timetable specifies that all budget holders, including these that deal with learning support, should be devising their budgets with the help of the finance team and will need to ensure that their respective needs are met [037].

Learning and teaching

117 The College's strategic approach to learning and teaching is articulated in its Draft Teaching and Learning Strategy [238] which sets out its aim to 'train current and future practitioners to serve clients in a business-focused manner' delivered in a digital environment. The strategy draws upon the College's Principles in Teaching and Learning Policy [029], the Principles of Engagement with the Profession and the Community Policy [030] which are high-level documents that articulate the College's approach to engaging with best legal, ethical and educational practice and to developing strong links between the legal profession and all the activities of the College. The New DAPs Plan also highlights the College's Curriculum Statement [002d] for setting the focus of the College's curriculum on providing engaging, flexible, adaptable and personal legal training [000 pp.250].

118 The College aims to design and deliver a curriculum that focuses on professional skills and is developed in a manner that should ensure currency and suitability for practice.

The College has adopted a transactional approach to education [000, 002a] and that, it states, is underpinned by Kolb and Schon's philosophy of teaching [194]. This combines experiential learning cycles with self-reflection and evaluation and aims to ensure that students focus on practical tasks and assessments that can be adapted from real life practice [194, M5]. All modules are to be developed by academics with input from practitioners [000, p.58] and students' progress is to be supervised by staff who are experts in their fields and can draw from their practical and academic experience.

119 Students will access learning content through the College's online learning platform that was demonstrated to the team [M1]. Modules are to be self-contained and students should be able to access all materials from the learning platform where they will also complete their interactive activities, submit formative and summative assessments, receive feedback from supervisors and access learning analytics [M1, M5]. Students should be guided through their studies by supervisors who will be expected to offer a stipulated number of hours of one-to-one supervision per module. Content of supervision is yet to be developed and the Supervisor Development Framework for Programmes is to be devised during the probationary period to be ready by Y1 Q1 [M5]. In addition to one-to-one tutoring, supervisors are expected to offer subject-specific surgeries where students will be able to raise and consider any issues related to the content that they study. These activities should be further supplemented by 'town hall' meetings which will be scheduled for all staff and students on a module to meet in sessions together. Students will also be able to create their own peer study groups [M2, M5]. Supervisors are to have quarterly catch-up meetings where any specific issues that may have arisen during supervision, as well as the consistency of approach, can be discussed and considered with colleagues [M5]. This process is to be facilitated and led by the programme leader who will also be tasked with ensuring that any action plans that may be created because of these meetings are properly articulated and implemented [M5]. The team was able to view how the College's software is used to facilitate all the above and was satisfied that the College will be able to successfully manage these sessions for staff and students [M1]. Feedback from volunteer students on the piloted units already run by the College provided further confirmation of this [061].

120 The College intends to remain a virtual provider with a virtual campus only [000]. It may offer some face-to-face introductory workshops but only if commissioned by specific firms. If this takes place, the College anticipates that the sessions would take place at the firms' premises and the firms would be responsible for ensuring compliance with the relevant health and safety regulations and standards and would need to ensure that the premises are suitable and accessible to all [M2].

121 The College's focus is to ensure that students have safe and secure access to their online environment. This is achieved by ensuring that all data transfers will be encrypted, and students will only be able to access their learning platform through a single sign-in facility with two-factor authentication [000]. Students should be introduced to IT provisions as outlined in the Student Introduction to the learning platform document [106] and will have 24/7 access to IT support in cases of technical difficulties [M3]. IT support provisions are underpinned by the IT Support Framework for students [150], Service User Agreements [M6, 064] and students should benefit from having access to IT support teams based in the UK and Australia to secure the 24-hour access promised [M3].

122 The College's policies regarding students' behaviour are intended to ensure that online interactions are carried out safely and in a manner that promotes dignity, courtesy and respect in their use. These include the Student Charter and Code of Conduct [118] that sets out the basic standards of acceptable behaviour and sets out responsibility for students to promote a safe environment in all of their online interactions, and Student Partnership Framework Policy [088] that sets out how the College intends to interact with students. The College's Student Contract [073] sets out the main contractual arrangements between the

College and the Students regarding accepting responsibility for appropriate use of information technology.

123 If students' behaviour falls short of the stated expectations, the College has devised several policies that aim to regulate and address such concerns. Students can bring complaints to the College not only with respect to actions taken by College staff but also by other students [093]. The College's Student Disciplinary Policy [112] outlines the process of dealing with instances of inappropriate behaviour. To aid transparency and students' understanding, the policies are supported by a Flow Diagram for Student Disciplinary Process Policy (non-academic matters) [113] and Flow Diagram for Students-Students Complaints [110]. Policies will also be available on the College's website [236] and in the Student Handbook [063]. Internally, staff will be expected to comply with the Equal Opportunity and Dignity at Work Policy [115] that also outlines the expectations that the College has for its staff, regardless of whether they work full-time, part-time or on an ad hoc basis [115].

124 All learning resources are to be available on the learning platform or through online legal databases [M5]. This should ensure that all students have access to the same materials and the same provisions of learning regardless of their location during their course of studies. Students will be expected to have their own IT equipment but issues regarding digital poverty and how students can be supported are being considered by the College's executive team with a view to mitigate any access issues [M2, M6].

125 Students will have access to learning analytics, examples of which were provided by the College, [116] and staff explained how these could be used by students to monitor their progress and further their academic development. Staff were also able to articulate to the team how supervisors will also be expected to monitor students' ongoing performance and to discuss milestones and progress during their regular weekly supervision meetings [M1].

Assessment

126 The Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations [005], Terms of Reference for Assessment Panels [020], Assessment Scrutiny form [095], Marking and Moderation form [096] and the Grading Template [090] were approved by the College in April 2020, followed by the Mitigating Circumstances Policy, Fitness to Study Policy and External Examiner Report Template and Guidance [097] that were approved in October 2020. The Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations were further updated in October 2020 and March 2021 [042].

127 Processes for the marking of assessments and for moderating marks are detailed in the College's Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations [005]. This document sets out formal requirements for the internal setting and moderation of assessments, marking and moderations processes and the need for all assessments and final grades to be approved by external examiners. It also includes the principles that will be adopted for the recognition of prior learning.

128 To ensure the reliable and valid operation of this process, assessments must first be drafted by the module leader and scrutinised internally and by an external examiner before being released to students. There are further directions to ensure the use of anonymous marking where possible, sampling for the internal moderation of grades and by the external examiner and the role of the Module Panel to ratify the overall outcome for each individual student [005]. Staff are expected to be familiar with these processes through the induction and ongoing staff training and development that is detailed in the Lecturer Training Modules proposal [155]. Regular staff training days are scheduled for Y1 Q1, Y1 Q3, Y2 Q1 and Y2 Q3 [000 pp.322].

129 Marking and moderation processes will be carried out internally in accordance with the generic grading criteria [090] and module-specific grading criteria and guidance [102, 103]. Training on external reference points such as the SRA's Statement of Solicitor Competence [155] and the standards required by the FHEQ is planned as part of ongoing staff development [155]. Template forms confirm that marking standards and student achievements are to be approved and confirmed by the external examiners [096, 097] whose role is, among others, to ensure that the College maintains standards that are comparable to the sector. An Award Conferment Recommendation Form [098] has been created to support the function of module and assessment panels, and students' performance and attainment will be monitored through the Annual Programme Review that will be completed annually using the Programme Evaluation Report Template [077]. In this way the College should be able to monitor the reliability of its assessment processes.

130 Learning outcomes are to be assessed by a range of written tasks and oral presentations, examples of which were provided to the team through the Summary of Assessments Tasks and Methods document [195]. All members of staff involved in the assessment are responsible for ensuring that the assessments correspond to learning outcomes, are appropriate to the level of study and give students the opportunity to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the learning criteria [000, 009, 095]. The Indicative Assessment and template for the Banking and Finance unit [102] that was piloted by the College and an exemplar assessment with student and supervisor feedback [120] showed how this part of the assessment process has been tested by the College. While volunteer students on the pilots did not undertake any summative assessments, they submitted formative ones and received feedback. The team agreed that the examples of assessments used in the pilot units were of appropriate standards that correspond to Level 7 of the FHEQ. The feedback sample demonstrated a high level of engagement as well as high-quality and extensive feedback that should be easy for students to follow in order to improve their submissions [120]. If fully replicated in formal modules, this should provide students with a solid grounding on which to improve their performance and to demonstrate the extent to which they achieved the intended learning outcomes.

131 The College has developed its Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Fitness to Study Policy that is included in the content guide for the Student Handbook [063] that is due to be finalised by Y1 Q1. This should ensure that students are not prevented from demonstrating learning outcomes due to circumstances beyond their control. Students should be made aware of the relevant policies and procedures through the Student Handbook [063] which is intended to be a definitive and complete guide to all regulations and policies that students should be aware of and is currently being developed for the first cohort [M5]. It will include grading criteria [090] as well as policies and regulations relating to academic appeals, good academic practice, and academic misconduct as well as disciplinary policies relating to academic and non-academic matters [063, 112, 114, 121]. Provision of all information in the Programme Handbook may render the document unwieldy but it has the benefit of ensuring that students can find all relevant information in one place and, as such, represents a credible approach to communication.

132 It is intended that staff and Students engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgments are made and of the principles of good academic practice through clear signposting of students to the policies, through ongoing discussions with their supervisors and through comments provided to them through feedback on their formative assessment, examples of which were made available for the team to scrutinise [120, 117]. The Grading Criteria [090] and Statement of Solicitor Competence [027] will be included in the Student Handbook [063] and module-specific guidance and criteria will be provided to students together with their module materials and summative assessment guidance [060, 089]. The Student Disciplinary Process Policy [112] and the Flow Diagram Student Disciplinary Process Policy (academic Matters) [114] are also

relevant to the students' understanding of good academic practice. The team agreed that these measures should provide students with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice.

133 The College does not intend to use any anti-plagiarism software [000, pp. 284]. In discussions with the team, staff explained how they intend to rely on their planned close supervision and the specific task-based nature of assessments to detect and investigate poor academic practice or academic misconduct [M2, M5].

External examining

134 At the time of the New DAPs test visit, no external examiners have been appointed. The College plans to appoint its first external examiner for the LLM in Legal Practice before the commencement of Y1 Q1 [011]. Subsequent external examiners are to be appointed through to Y2 Q1 of the College's New DAPs Plan as the College expands its offer. As the College only intends to offer one module from August 2021, this schedule was considered by the team to be appropriate because it should ensure that appointments are made before assessments are set for courses.

135 The College's self-evaluation of this aspect of its operations in the New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment is brief [000, pp.293-297] but its Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations [005] clearly articulate how external examiners are to be engaged during the operations of the programmes. External examiners are to be appointed by the Head of the CDDG and ratified by the Programme Committee [091] upon nominations using the External Examiner Nomination Form [094]. The nomination form requires the nominee to ensure that the proposed examiner has relevant professional and academic experience and has no conflict of interests [094]. The list of required skills and experience, as detailed in the nomination template [094], is extensive and should ensure that only suitably qualified candidates are appointed and ratified.

136 Once appointed, external examiners are expected to attend an induction with the College [092]. The College has already produced a Guide to Good Practice for External Examiners [091] to support their work which the team agreed provided a thorough explanation of the role and processes to be used. During the induction, the College will discuss with the external examiners their role, quality assurance processes and the nature and context of working with them [092].

137 The College's Assessment and Quality Assurance Regulations [005] stipulate that all assessments need to be scrutinised and approved by the external examiners before they are released to students and that the externals' role is to scrutinise a sample of marked assessment to confirm that standards are being maintained, student attainment is comparable to other similar providers and marking has been carried out appropriately with reference to learning outcomes and levels of qualifications [005]. The external examiners are ex-officio members of the Module Assessment panels as well as the Progression and Awards Panel [020]. This means that grades, awards and progression decisions can only be confirmed with the input of external examiners. The Assessment and Quality Regulations also specifies that external examiners are expected to provide a written annual report on how standards are assured and any areas for enhancement [005]. Such reports should be written within four weeks of completion of the relevant academic year and external examiners can expect a response from the programme leaders within a further four weeks.

138 The external examiner report template [075] indicates that external examiners will be asked to specify their level of confidence with regards to whether the College maintains the thresholds of its awards in accordance with the FHEQ framework and the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements; whether the assessment processes measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcome, and whether the academic

standards and the achievement of students are comparable with these in other UK institution. The external examiner is also expected to confirm that they have been provided with appropriate access to all relevant programme and module materials and assessment regulations, and that they were able to feed in their observation of the assessment process. They will also be asked to confirm whether they received a sufficient sample of assessments to moderate and whether the general standard of marking and feedback was appropriate and allowed them to determine the rationale for the final marks. There are sections in the template for them to identify areas of good practice and any innovation as well as any areas of concern and to confirm that they received an appropriate response to their previous comments [075].

139 The reports of external examiners are also to be scrutinised through the College's committee structure. The terms of reference of the Programme Committee states that it must make an annual report to the Board regarding quality and standards which must include a summary of comments made by any external examiners [018]. The Staff Student Liaison Committee's terms of reference [076] state that it should receive and consider external examiner reports as well as overseeing the action plans that result from programme evaluations. The team noted that the Programme Evaluation Template [077] includes sections for responses to, and resulting actions to be taken from, these reports. In so doing the College has a clear process for responding to and monitoring the way in which it reacts to the formal reports of external examiners.

140 The College's Assessment regulations were updated in March 2021 with the addition of a section regarding disagreements between internal markers and moderators and external examiners [005, 042]. The power is granted to the Programme Committee that may meet on an ad hoc basis to resolve any dispute between internal and external members of staff, should such need arise. The College also plans to have annual external examiners' briefings in Q4 of each year to update them on institutional developments and regulation changes but also to learn from them [091]. The team agreed that this should also provide a forum at which to discuss any systemic issues that might occur across programmes.

141 The above approach indicates that the College plans to make scrupulous and systematic use of external examiners and that their input should be valued, actively sought, and acted upon through the reporting process described above. The College's detailed policy and the extent to which it is planned to engage with external examiners indicates that the College has a good understanding of the role that they play within the UK higher education sector.

Academic appeals and student complaints

142 The College has put in place procedures for dealing with academic appeals and students' complaints and has developed separate policies that will govern these matters.

143 The Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure [121] outlines the process for an academic appeal and clearly articulates the grounds on which appeals can be made. These grounds include material irregularity or errors, extenuating circumstances and prejudice or bias. They exclude appeals against academic judgement. The process includes the provision of an informal initial stage to allow students to understand their grade. Should they be dissatisfied, the formal process involves a written submission followed by an investigation undertaken by the Chief Operations Director that will either reject the appeal or recommend to the relevant assessment panel that a new decision be substituted. Should a student still be dissatisfied they will be notified of their right to appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) [121]. The timescales included in the policy for the consideration of appeals are likely to ensure timely outcomes for students.

144 The policy states that the process will be overseen by the Registrar and that the Programme Committee will receive an annual report for monitoring purposes [121]. This report should represent a basis for consideration as to whether any changes are needed to the appeals procedure.

145 Students' complaints should be addressed in line with the College's Students' Complaints Policy and Procedure [093]. The aim of the policy is to resolve any complaints informally to foster a partnership with students. If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, students will have the right to follow the formal process. This process includes an initial formal stage, followed by a review stage and, ultimately, the right to refer the matter to the OIA [093]. To make it easier for students to understand the process, the policy is also accompanied by the Flow Diagram - Student Complaints [107]. As with appeals, the process is overseen by the Registrar and staff confirmed that an annual report of students' complaints should be presented to the Programme Committee [M3]. This can then be used as a basis for evaluation and any subsequent actions.

146 The College intends to inform students of these policies through the Student Handbook [M3]. They will also be available on the central space of the College's learning platform [M1] and a version of the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure for the website has also already been devised [236]. The College has also adopted a Refund and Compensation Policy [139] that may be relevant in cases of serious complaints.

147 As the College has yet to enrol students it was not possible for the assessment team to consider whether appropriate actions are taken following an appeal or complaint. However, the proposed policy, if implemented consistently, is likely to resolve issues appropriately and the timescales included in the policy for the consideration of complaints are likely to ensure timely outcomes for students.

148 Members of the Senior Executive confirmed that they will monitor the type and nature of complaints and will react accordingly [M2] and this is reflected in the New DAPs Plan [000 pp.303] that confirms that the Programme Committee will review this aspect of operations. The team agreed that the College's plan to evidence this by Y3 Q1 was realistic given that the College has yet to commence delivery of courses.

149 The College's approach to allocating complaints and non-academic appeals to the Registrar is appropriate to the status of the College. This is because the College is likely to be relatively small in its initial stage of operation and there is very limited risk of the Registrar becoming overburdened with complaints or appeals. As the College grows this may need to be reconsidered, particularly for complaints, but this does not undermine the existing assessment that the process that is to be used is credible. The team was also reassured from conversations with representatives of the Senior Executive of their understanding that this may need to be reassessed as the College grows [M2].

Conclusions

150 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Colleges on Assessment* by QAA, October 2019.

151 The team concludes that the College has in place robust academic frameworks, regulations, policies and procedures to govern how it will operate processes for the design, development, and approval of its programmes. It has a credible process that should ensure that staff are informed of and provided with the guidance and support of the procedures for, and their roles and responsibilities in relation to, programme approval and design. The College's procedures relating to its use of external expertise in developing its programmes are robust, with plans to ensure that subsequent actions will be carefully monitored by

programme leaders and the Programme Committee and that improvements and enhancements are considered on a regular basis. The College is developing its courses through the engagement of students, subject matter experts and practitioners and has already developed a wide range of high quality, interactive materials on its virtual platform. The programme design and approval incorporate internal and external expertise as well as students' participation and this is likely to ensure that the coherence of programmes will be monitored and challenged. Integral involvement of professional colleagues in the development and approval processes as well as specific budgetary allocation for learning resources is likely to assure the existence of clear links between learning support services and the College's programme planning and approval arrangements.

152 The team concludes that the College has a credible learning and teaching plan and that this plan clearly aligns with the College's strategic objective and their reasons for entry to the market. The College demonstrated that its approach to the virtual environment should ensure safety, accessibility and reliability and its policies are sufficiently robust to ensure that they are used in a manner that promotes integrity, dignity, courtesy and respect. As a virtual provider, all students will study at a distance from the organisation. Accordingly, the team considered that the relevant platform, learning and teaching pedagogy and approach to overall course design is appropriate to distance learning studies.

153 The team concludes that the College has credible policies, procedures, and regulations to operate a valid and reliable process of assessment. If applied by the College as described, these should enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit and qualification being sought. The range and format of assessments planned by the College is varied and diverse and is likely to enable all students to demonstrate their abilities accordingly.

154 The team concludes that the College has credible plans to make scrupulous use of external examiners, including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work and plans to give full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendation contained in external examiners' reports. The external examiner report template is comprehensive and clearly seeks out meaningful and constructive feedback that should ensure that the College will be able to maintain standards, assess students appropriately and recognise where enhancement or improvements may be made. The team considered that the College has demonstrated that it has planned for robust processes to ensure that external examiners' feedback is responded to appropriately.

155 The team concludes that the College has appropriate policies and regulations for the effective handling of academic appeals and students' complaints about the quality of their student experience or academic provisions. The procedures, as articulated, correspond to standard procedures within the UK higher education sector and, as such, are likely to be fair, accessible and timely. If implemented consistently, they should facilitate appropriate actions being taken and the oversight by the Programme Committee is likely to ensure its effectiveness.

156 Overall, the team concluded that the College's plans are clear, comprehensive in coverage, appropriate for their status and credible in terms of structure, processes and policies. The team concludes, therefore, that the College understands this criterion and that its New DAPs Plan is credible and should enable the DAP criterion to be met by the end of the probationary period.

Criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff

Criterion C1 - The role of academic and professional staff

157 This criterion states that:

C1.1: An organisation granted powers to award degrees assures itself that it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students. Everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, is appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the level(s) and subject(s) of the qualifications being awarded.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

158 The QAA assessment team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the College's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes of the New DAPs test outlined in paragraphs 232 of the regulatory framework, namely, to assess the College's understanding of this criterion and to test the credibility of the College's New DAPs Plan in relation to this criterion.

159 Specifically, the assessment team considered or assessed:

- a whether the College has clear expectations of its staff in terms of relevant learning, teaching and assessment practices that are appropriate to its intended provision, by considering the New DAPs Plan [000], Principles in Teaching and Learning [029], Principles of Engagement with the Legal Profession and the Community [030], Short CVs of Board members and Staff CVs [016], Academic Staff spreadsheet [031] Staff Development framework [048] Recruitment and Selection Policy [111] and the Teaching and Learning strategy [238]. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], representatives from Operations and Support [M3], and staff responsible for learning and teaching [M5].
- b whether the College has the level of academic and professional expertise of current academic and professional support staff by scrutinising the CVs of Board members and Staff CVs [016], Academic Staff spreadsheet [031], Assessment Officer Role Outline (draft) [041], Staff Development framework [048], the Job Descriptions of the current head of curriculum [050], Programme Leader [051], Module Leader [052], Supervisor [053], the CVs of Subject Matter Experts and Supervisors [070] Recruitment and Selection Policy [111], Programme Leader Job Application Pack [126]. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], representatives from Operations and Support [M3], and staff responsible for learning and teaching [M5].
- c whether the College has an effective process in place to recruit suitably qualified and experienced staff by considering the New DAPs Plan [000], Recruitment and Selection Policy [111]. The team also met staff from the Senior Executive who had recently been recruited, CVs of Subject Matter Experts and Supervisors [070]. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], representatives from Operations and Support [M3], and staff responsible for learning and teaching [M5].

- d whether the College has effective plans to support its staff in the enhancement of their practice, engagement with scholarship and research, and in reflecting on and evaluating their teaching and learning practices by considering the New DAPs Plan [000], HEA Professional Standards Framework [196], COL Lecturer Training Modules proposal [155], Principles of Engagement with the Legal Profession and the Community [030], Staff Development framework [048], COL Lecturer Training Modules proposal [155], Curriculum Development and Delivery Group ToR [019]. The team met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], representatives from Operations and Support [M3], and staff responsible for learning and teaching [M5].
- e whether the College has effective plans to monitor the performance of its staff and to facilitate their professional development within and beyond the institution, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [000], Induction Outline for staff [044], Staff Development framework [048], Peer Observation Scheme [123], E-learning for employees [125], Employment Contract Example [127], Principles in Teaching and Learning [029] and Principles of Engagement with the Legal Profession and the Community [030]. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], representatives from Operations and Support [M3], and staff responsible for learning and teaching [M5].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

160 The assessment team did not construct samples of evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

What the evidence shows

161 The College's New DAPs Plan states that the College aims to meet this criterion by Y2 Q3. Much of the evidence for the College's approach to the role of academic and professional staff was in place at the time of the test visit. Evidence includes an existing staff development framework [048] and staffing information spreadsheet [031] with CVs of existing staff [016, 070], a recruitment and selection policy [111], an example staffing contract [127], and plans for staff training [155]. Regular staff training is scheduled in the first and third quarters of each year [000 pp.322]. A supervisor development framework will be developed for each programme, the first of which is due for completion in Y1 Q1. Notes from the associated quarterly meetings of supervisors, staff induction, training and planning events, an annual quality and standards report, and the minutes of committee oversight are cited as evidence that will be provided during the proposed probation period [000].

162 The Annual Business Plan [071] details the additional staff that are to be recruited on a quarterly basis as the College expands its offer through to Y3 Q1. The New DAPs Plan also outlines plans to support staff engagement in reflection and evaluation of their teaching and assessment practices through their induction, and ongoing professional development that will be monitored through annual performance reviews [000 pp319].

163 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

164 The College's plans in relation to this criterion are to develop learning, teaching and assessment practices that are informed by reflection and evaluation of professional practice in law [000]. The New DAPs Plan details the development of a pedagogy of supervised transactional learning, which is designed to ensure that learning outcomes are set at FHEQ Level 7 and incorporate the master's degree characteristics as well as being consistent with the profession's expectations for solicitor training and qualification into the legal profession

[000 pp.308]. The College's stated aim is, therefore, to seek to recruit staff with significant academic and professional practice expertise [000 pp.332].

165 A Recruitment and Selection policy has been introduced [111] which the team agreed provides an appropriate framework for the recruitment and appointment of new staff as it establishes general principles for recruitment based on merit, as well as a detailed process for role description, job advertisement, and for the shortlisting and appointment of candidates. Representatives of the Senior Executive explained how prospective staff undertake a rigorous interview process, and that all will be required to undertake a probationary period at the commencement of their employment [M3, 044].

166 Job descriptions [050, 051, 052, 053, 105, 143, 144, 145] helped the team to fully understand the specific responsibilities of individual roles within the organisation from the CEO through to academic and professional support roles. Job descriptions provided evidence of a rigorous approach to the assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach the College's students. In so doing, the College has assigned some specific roles, when addressing its exclusively online academic provision, to differentiate between academic staff who design module content (subject matter experts) and the permanent staff who will be responsible for the running of modules (programme leaders [051] and module leaders [052]). Supervisors [053] will be academic staff with responsibility for providing tutorial support to students throughout their studies which the College identifies as key to ensuring expertise in providing feedback on assessment, which is constructive and developmental [000 pp.318].

167 The team also noted that the key academic roles of module leader [052] and supervisor [053] include, in the list of responsibilities, activities related to 'Intellectual & Professional Scholarship'. These describe appropriate scholarly activities for staff to ensure they maintain an active engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline and an understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline. They include such activities as attendance at conferences, research and publication or other research outputs, and to lead in research projects or other collaborative research initiatives.

168 Scholarly activity is less well defined in the job descriptions for programme leaders [051] and the Head of Curriculum [050] posts. These focus more on the key accountabilities of the positions. However, the team could see that the College maintains an Academic Staff Spreadsheet [031] that tracks the activities of its staff and this is used to ensure that they are involved in active engagement with research and advanced scholarship, including specific outcomes such as the production of published materials including journal articles or book chapters, conference presentations, and taking roles as external examiners, validation panel members, or external reviewers. Members of the Programme Committee and the Senior Executive explained how the College is actively encouraging attendance at conferences and industry events to maintain professional and academic expertise [M2]. The team agreed that the job descriptions seen offer an appropriate range of responsibilities and roles within the organisation to deliver its provision with duties to teach and support students clearly defined.

169 At the time of the New DAPs test visit, the College had eight permanent staff and a further 11 on other contracts with plans to recruit further academic and professional services staff. For example, plans indicate the College will recruit three programme leaders (May 2021, and then Y1 Q1, Y1 Q3), one assessment officer (Y2 Q1) and eight supervisors for the first cohort of students (Y0 Q4) [000]. Staff explained that as new programme leaders are recruited this will permit the Head of Curriculum role to focus on strategic issues, with day-to-day operations resting with the appointed programme leaders [M2]. The team agreed that within the existing staff CVs [016] there is the requisite academic and legal expertise as well as experience of curriculum development and assessment design among the recruited subject matter experts [070].

170 Senior members of the academic team with considerable experience of curriculum development and assessment design have been recruited by the College. All have previously held similar positions at other providers, as evidenced to the team in the CVs provided [016, 070], and in meetings with representatives from the Senior Executive [M2] and staff responsible for learning and teaching [M5].

171 Representatives from the Senior Executive explained how the College has been involved in the sharing of good practice within the wider group of institutions of the parent organisation to inform the development of the College's approach to the design of its courses [M5]. The College provided evidence of reflection and evaluation of professional practice and subject-specific and educational scholarship being employed to inform teaching and assessment practices in the design of courses. This included the design guide for SMEs [067] which encourages collaboration and reflection between current practitioners working as practice experts and feedback received from practitioners on proposed modules [079, 081, 101].

172 The academic team has drawn upon their expertise in designing the Solicitors Legal Knowledge (SLK) and Solicitors Legal Skills (SLS) modules, which address the Solicitors Qualification Examination (SQE) assessments. The draft module outlines for the Developing Legal Professionals (DLP) Programme [066] demonstrate how this knowledge and understanding has shaped the materials and the learning methodology used. In recruiting its Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to design its modules, the College has employed experienced designers with academic and professional practice experience [016]. Staff explained to the team how a similar profile is sought in relation to the supervisors the College will recruit for its initial programme [M2]. This process was underway at the time of the assessment visit. Overall, the College demonstrated the capability to recruit a good mix of staff with both academic and practitioner experience.

173 The College has begun preparations to train a wider staff base in providing feedback on assessments [M3]. Examples of feedback [117 Banking and Finance annotated student task] have been developed, as have competency frameworks [119 Competency Framework from DLP], to support staff to supervise students in meeting module outcomes [000 pp318].

174 The College has created a Staff Development Framework [048]. The stated objectives of the Staff Development Framework [048] are to promote the personal development of academic staff, develop staff confidence as supervisors and teachers, disseminate good practice, and improve the overall quality of teaching [048]. Every member of staff teaching on the College's programmes should participate in the scheme.

175 The Staff Development Framework clearly states that the College intends to encourage links to practice, wider legal education activities and research. The framework describes a 'performance lifecycle' that includes opportunities for staff to engage in reflection and to enhance their own practice as well as to identify and gain further training, and to participate in external engagement with the sector and the legal profession. Within the framework, provision is made for training, including an induction upon recruitment, peer observations [Peer Observation Scheme 123] for academic staff who work directly with students and an annual performance review at which staff should be able to reflect with their manager on their own development. It contains a schedule for the annual review that runs from July through to June each year, beginning with agreeing goals, a series of periodic check-ins with a line manager, and an end-of-year review and reflection exercise. More information about this process is provided for staff in the Performance Management Goals and Development Process Guidelines [212]. The Staff Development Framework clearly shows that the College's approach to supporting staff is the same regardless of their employment status. The process should support the scholarly activities of academic staff by

creating a process to identify a targeted number of goals to be achieved by the employee in their role with demonstrable outcomes to be agreed and an appraisal to support the above process. However, it would be equally applicable to professional staff and their developmental needs. Evidence of this process being used by the College will be provided in the form of samples of annual performance reviews available in Y1 Q4 [000 p78].

176 Staff explained that, as the framework is developed and implemented, information will be shared with all colleagues at the College's regular staff meetings [M3, M5]. There are plans for programme leaders to hold quarterly meetings with all supervisors on their programme and there will also be appointed staff training days with targeted staff development. These are detailed in the New DAPs Plan producing meeting notes throughout the probationary period [000 p.78].

177 The draft Teaching and Learning Strategy makes clear that the College expects its staff 'to take personal responsibility for keeping up to date with developments in their fields of expertise', but also to 'participate in institutional initiatives to consolidate individual development for teaching and learning' [238] and the team was interested in exploring in meetings how the College would balance and support the training and scholarly activity of supervisors, who the team understood were the most likely members of staff to be employed on flexible contracts.

178 The team found references to the framework in the draft Teaching and Learning Strategy [238], the Principles in Teaching and Learning document [029], the Principles of Engagement with the Profession and the Community document [030] in papers presented to the Curriculum Development and Delivery Group [157a] and Board meeting Papers [002a] indicating the integration of this approach to the College's pedagogy. An assessment of the framework should be possible based upon the College's proposed evidence base for the first two years of the probationary period.

179 The College's approach to supporting the scholarly activities of staff should form part of a Supervisor Development Framework, which is currently in development and is designed to support individual development plans for all academic staff [M2, M5]. This is to be produced in time for the beginning of the first year of the probationary period. Through their meetings with staff the team was able to understand how the framework should operate. Staff explained that, during induction, supervisors will receive training on how to navigate and use the online Learning Portal, including accessing and interpreting analytical data on student engagement and attainment, as well as working in tutorials and providing written and verbal developmental feedback to students [M1, M5]. Quarterly meetings, that are to be attended by the College's teaching staff to share information and reflect on teaching and learning with a view to improving their pedagogical effectiveness, are planned to be put in place [M2, M3, M5]. Peer observations and feedback sessions also form part of these plans and the Supervisor Development Framework is expected to build on the information provided in the Staff Development Framework about this.

180 To ensure that all staff, including those employed on a fractional and flexible basis, have access to the information they need to enhance their practice and scholarship, staff will be provided with an Employee Handbook [237] which the team could see provides direct links to further information on a wide range of topics, including College policies, an online training platform and information about standards and quality assurance at the College. The team also scrutinised the induction pack created for supervisors [69] which provides very similar information and that the team was informed will form part of the Supervisor Development Framework [M3]. The team was informed that all content would be made available on a private and secure collaboration webspace [M1].

181 Staff will be encouraged to engage with the sector, including through undertaking reviews and acting as external examiners at other institutions. Such activity was apparent in the existing staff CVs [016] and senior and academic staff confirmed the College's ongoing intention to support teaching staff in maintaining their academic currency [M2, M5]. They stated that this approach would also include support to attend regulatory briefings and conferences run by the Solicitors Regulation Authority and other sponsored professional practice and recruitment events run for legal practitioners and law schools [M3]. The College in its New DAPs Plan has stated that it will make use of full membership of Advance HE [000 pp.329] from April 2021 to further enhance its Staff Development Framework through making use of the support and guidance available.

182 In discussions with operational staff, the team established that there are also opportunities for staff development outside of the College as staff expect to be able to join industry bodies such as the Association of University Administrators, the Committee of Heads of Law Schools or the Association of Law Teachers and train in particular areas for team development [M3]. The Student Services staff, for example, are intending to take up an opportunity to gain expertise in UK ENIC standards [M3]. All these developments are intended to foster the building of a cohesive academic community and build the commitment of a more experienced and informed staff to the assurance of standards [M3].

183 Representatives from the Senior Executive confirmed that there will be a staff development budget available for those who wish to attend conferences to enhance their practice [M2, M5]. All staff will be actively encouraged to attend conferences and undertake roles as external examiners in other institutions [M2]. Senior Executive articulated how effective staff development and training is a priority across the College [M2]. Staff who had been recruited since the introduction of the Recruitment and Selection policy [111] confirmed that they had been recruited in line with the policy and inducted in line with Induction Outline for staff [044].

184 The team was interested in understanding how the College approaches its calculations of the number of supervisors required to effectively support student cohorts. Staff at the College acknowledge that close supervision is a key element of the approach taken [M2]. They also explained that they are confident that they can establish a group of supervisors, [REDACTED] to create a flexible resource the College can call on [M6]. However, the team was concerned that as flexibly employed staff, such calculations might be complex, especially with [REDACTED] and for an online provider, there being capacity for large numbers to be accommodated by the online platform and other resources offered by the College [REDACTED] [008]. This raised the concern as to how the College would manage its resources and ensure the quality of the provision for students and that supervisors would not be overburdened.

185 The team established in meetings with staff from the Senior Executive that different modules had different levels of supervisor support built into them. For example, the College will undertake to provide a minimum of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] module, but a minimum of [REDACTED] [REDACTED].

186 The team asked the College to clarify its approach to staff/student ratios, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. The College confirmed that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED].

These differing levels of support are defined within the learning design and module

specifications. The College explained that supervisors will be contracted to work with the College for an agreed and specified range of hours throughout the duration of a module. The team understands that this is so the College can call on supervisors who have up-to-date experience in the legal profession as they are current practitioners. But contracting for specific modules should also enable supervisors and the College to ensure that maximum student numbers can be set and adhered to. Members of the Senior Executive also explained that the College had strategically considered student numbers and their assessment of the introduction of the Solicitors Qualification Exam. At the time of the meeting they also had experience of their early engagement with the market and their assessment was that uptake for the course is going to take time, allowing for the College to learn more about the operation of supervisor resources and student numbers. The team was persuaded by the evidence presented and the articulation of the College's approach to student recruitment that its management of supervisors for the course was realistic. However, this will be monitored during the probationary period.

Conclusions

187 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*.

188 The team concludes that the College has comprehensive and credible plans in place to assure itself that it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students. These are based on student number projections over a three-year period and a projection for how the College expects its staff-to-student ratio to be managed during that period. Staff recruited thus far are appropriately qualified and skilled to teach and assess students at master's level and have the required academic and professional expertise.

189 The College has established recruitment processes that are fit for purpose and allow it to appoint suitably qualified and experienced staff who are all able to demonstrate the competency required to deliver, teach and assess this type of provision. The New DAPs Plan and Staff Recruitment Plans provide a timeline for the recruitment of staff that is aligned with the needs of the College and its students during the probationary period. The College has so far successfully implemented its plan for the recruitment of senior staff and has clear and achievable plans for staff recruitment going forwards.

190 Teaching and assessment practices at the College are to be informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship and there will be appropriate expertise in providing feedback on assessment, which is constructive and developmental.

191 The Staff Development Framework aims to provide a framework that builds commitment and engagement which leads to improved organisational performance.

192 The team concludes that the plans that the College has to support and develop its staff to teach and support learning at the level of the qualifications proposed is realistic and credible. The New DAPs Plan articulates plans for ongoing and sustainable staff development which should be routinely monitored to ensure staff are able to fully meet the needs of the students, while maintaining their own professional and academic currency in their respective fields of study.

193 The team concludes, therefore, that the College understands this criterion and that its New DAPs Plan is credible and should enable the DAPs criterion to be met by the end of the probation period.

Criterion D: Environment for supporting students

Criterion D1 - Enabling student development and achievement

194 This criterion states that:

D1.1: Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

195 The QAA assessment team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the College's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes of the New DAPs test outlined in paragraphs 232 of the regulatory framework, namely, to assess the College's understanding of this criterion and to test the credibility of the College's New DAPs Plan in relation to this criterion.

196 Specifically, the assessment team considered or assessed:

- a whether the College's strategy and operational plans to enable all students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential are comprehensive and credible, the team scrutinised the New DAPs Plan [000], Curriculum Development and Delivery Group Terms of Reference [019], Roles and Responsibilities of Registrar and Student Services Team [032] Student Partnership Framework Policy [088]. The team also met with representatives from Operations and Support [M3] and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].
- b whether the plans for providing students with advice on, and inducting them into, their programmes are effective, the team assessed the New DAPs Plan [000] Induction plan and Status for Student Services Manager [124], Induction Outline for staff [044], Programme Handbook content guide [063], Student Contract [073], Selection and Admission of Students Policy [087] Student Partnership Framework Policy [088], Student Terms and Conditions [185], Refund and Compensation Policy [139] Student Protection Plan [138] Student Charter and Code of Conduct [118] Student Introduction to Learning Portal (Canvas) [106]. The team also met with representatives from Operations and Support [M3] and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].
- c whether the College's plans to monitor the effectiveness of the support services and support provided to students are likely to be effective, the team evaluated the New DAPs Plan [000], Student Partnership Framework Policy [088] IT Support Framework for CoLP students [150] Examples of analytics in Learning Portal for students and supervisors [116]. The team also met with representatives from Operations and Support [M3] and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].
- d whether the College's plans for its administrative systems enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately and to satisfy academic and non-academic management needs are clear and credible, the Principles of Teaching and learning [029] Student Partnership Framework Policy [088], IT Support Framework for CoLP students [150], Examples of analytics in Learning Portal for

students and supervisors [116]. The team also met with representatives from Operations and Support [M3] and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].

- e to determine whether the College has clear and credible plans to provide all students with opportunities to develop the skills to make effective use of the resources provided, the team reviewed the New DAPs Plan [000], reviewed examples of analytics in Learning Portal for students and supervisors [116], Equality and inclusion student plan [129], Outline and approach to reasonable adjustments [130], Web content accessibility guidelines [132], Navigating the portal for students [148], Overview of learning portal [149], and the Student Partnership Framework Policy [088]. The team also met with representatives from Operations and Support [M3] and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].
- f whether the College's approach to providing student support and access resources is guided by a commitment to equity, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [000], Equality and Inclusion Policy for Students [129], the draft Alumni engagement policy [152], Navigating the portal for students [148], Overview of learning portal [149], and the Student Partnership Framework Policy [088]. The team also met with representatives from Operations and Support [M3] and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

197 The assessment team did not construct samples of evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

What the evidence shows

198 The College's approach to enabling student development and achievement is to put in place strategic policies that outline its commitment to enable students to develop their academic, personal, and professional potential, and operationally to focus on developing the infrastructure that will support students to be able to make effective use of the range of resources planned.

199 The College has planned for its online learning platform to provide access to a range of services integrated into the platform itself. As such, many of these services are already integrated, ready to be used by the first cohort of students in Y1 Q1. These include administrative support systems to enable the College to monitor student progression and inductions and other tutorials for all students to develop skills to make effective use of the learning resources available. Services for enquiries from prospective students were also in place at the time of the New DAPs test.

200 The New DAPs Plan [000 pp.418] points to support for students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal, and professional progression being designed into its courses. The College plans to monitor the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services, that it plans to introduce from Y0 Q1 onwards, through student and staff feedback and other forms of evaluation from Y1 Q1 through to Y3 Q1 when the New DAPs Plan states that this criterion will be met [000 pp.404]. Any resource needs arising from this process will be built into the annual business plan that will be produced in the first quarter of each year of the probationary period.

201 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

202 The New DAPs Plan outlines how the College's strategic approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement for its students is set out in a number of policies [000]. The draft Teaching and Learning Strategy [238] sets out the objective of the College to create a digital learning environment with personalised academic advice and support to assist its distance learning students to study successfully with effective data systems to support student progression and achievement. The entire student experience will be delivered online and so all academic and professional support services will be accessed through the College's learning platform.

203 The Equality and Inclusion for Students Policy [129] establishes the College's commitments to these values as well as its intention to monitor its performance through the annual Programme Evaluation Report process. The Selection and Admissions of Students Policy [087] sets out a merit-based system for the admission of prospective students taking into account considerations such as the additional needs of disabled applicants as well as those without formal qualifications, those with criminal records and students looking to transfer credit or seeking a deferred entry. The College also establishes an approach to monitoring its performance through the use of anonymised and aggregated applicant data.

204 The College has produced an Approach to Reasonable Adjustments [130] that describes its Individual Study Adjustment (ISA) process as well as a template form for students to request reasonable adjustments. The range of typical measures suggested in this document are appropriate to an online provider. For example, the College undertakes to provide materials at least 48 hours in advance of a taught session but will also undertake to provide extra time in timed assessments should this be appropriate.

205 The College has also developed a Student Partnership Framework Policy [088]. It is within this policy that the College sets out the principles to support students to develop as independent learners and effective legal professionals as well as describing how it will evaluate how it enables student development and achievement. It seeks to do this through collective and individual student engagement to identify services that support students in reaching their academic potential. The team noted that consideration of programme evaluations and student feedback is in the terms of reference for the Staff Student Liaison Committee [076] (SSLC) and agreed that this should enable discussions to take place about all aspects of the student experience and feed into the College's committee structure.

206 The New DAPs Plan recognises that the student body will diversify as the College introduces its first three programmes and that student support services will necessarily change to reflect this. To facilitate this the College will engage with minutes of SSLC meetings which are planned to take place three times each year and through module and programme questionnaires as a way to shape the change to its support services as well as to introduce any additional services and support it considers are needed [000 pp.363].

207 Operationally, the College has prioritised the establishment of a Student Services team to support the implementation of its student support policies. These roles include the Registrar, a Student Services Manager and the two Student Services Officers, recruited in March and April 2021. The Student Services team will be tasked with fulfilling much of the College's Student Services Offer [134] which is a student-facing document designed to summarise the College's commitment to supporting students as well as providing information about how to access or make enquiries about the specific services offered. The assessment team inspected the CVs of the four staff who have been recruited to fill the roles and agreed that they had sufficient experience of similar professional and student-facing roles [016]. The Student Services Manager and a Student Services Officer are listed as members of the SSLC.

208 The New DAPs Plan details how prospective students are advised about their programmes and, once accepted, how they will be inducted. Prospective students can view the details of the first programme to be offered on the College's website [265]. The website is kept up to date by the Student Services team [000] which the team agreed is accessible for anyone considering online distance learning. To assist prospective students in their enquiries, the College has set out the criteria for acceptance onto programmes on the website [234 Admissions Criteria for DLP Programme]. Admissions guidance and FAQs for students have also been finalised [235 Admissions Guidance and FAQs for DLP].

209 The College makes use of an online enquiry form on its website and a dedicated email address to invite prospective student enquiries. These are managed by Student Services staff using dedicated customer relationship management (CRM) software for marketing, sales, and customer service. A telephone number is also available [265]. Dedicated software allows for multiple communications with the same enquirer to be linked and managed effectively. Operations staff in their meeting with the team also explained how phone calls and other notes can also be logged so the Student Services team can easily assist prospective students with their questions and the application process. There is also the option of a centralised applications portal for those courses preparing students for the SQE that operates in a similar way to UCAS [000 pp. 373-375].

210 All applications are considered against the same selection criteria and the Selection and Admissions of Students Policy [087] describes the process that is to be used, including the application, the admissions decision and the verification of an applicant's qualifications. This policy establishes other principles to minimise barriers for applicants, including the provision of accurate information and how the College should take account of different student choices and needs, including those with disabilities or a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia. Appeals against admissions decisions and complaints are addressed in the same policy. The team agreed that all of these provisions are appropriate and, if followed, should be effective and take account of different student's needs.

211 Once a student accepts a place at the College, a welcome email, and various links to information, such as the Programme Handbook [063] will be sent to them. The New DAPs Plan details how, closer to their start date, students will receive log-in details for the learning platform and guidance on what software and other requirements they may need for their learning, such as software to facilitate online meetings.

212 The College provides inductions to the programme as well as for each module [000 pp.393-394]. Staff explained that these would have an introductory section that covers learning outcomes, what is expected of the student, contact details for a supervisor and an introduction to the learning platform, including a video presentation about how to navigate the platform, and how to access the help facility that provides more information about the platform. This was demonstrated to the team in their meeting with staff [M1]. The team viewed the introductions to the piloted units as well as to the use of the learning platform [106] and agreed that these were an effective way to introduce students to the programme but also the mode of study with extra information being available through the help function.

213 The College's approach to providing pastoral and advisory support and counselling services is to make use of personal tutors from among the academic staff. On enrolment, each student is to be allocated a personal tutor [000 pp.396]. The role of the tutor is to discuss academic progress and any issues which might be impacting on the overall performance of the student. Personal tutors will be recruited from the supervisors at the College, but a personal tutor's role is to act as a contact for any queries that a supervisor on

a particular module cannot answer [134] and staff from the Senior Executive confirmed that the two roles would be separate [M2]. The College has created draft guidance for personal tutors to assist them in this role [241] and has plans for training to take place during the probation period (Y1 Q1, Y1 Q3, Y2 Q1, Y2 Q3) [000 pp.405].

214 In addition, the College will also arrange for external support [REDACTED] that provides information and support to anyone in the legal community experiencing mental health or wellbeing problems [000 pp.397]. Students and staff at the College who are in need of mental wellbeing or counselling support will be able to access external support [REDACTED]. Calls to this service are answered by trained volunteers who have also worked in the legal profession and can also signpost students or staff to other help.

215 The New DAPs Plan details the monitoring of these services through annual programme evaluations and annual quality and standards reports as well as the minutes of SSLCs, with oversight being maintained by the Board [000 p.95]. Any resource needs arising from this consideration will feed into the College's annual business plan in the first quarter of each year of the probationary period.

216 The College's organisation of its administrative support systems has been modelled on established systems operated by its parent provider in Australia. The College's online systems make use of its learning platform and other commercial database packages to create an integrated system that can record student progression and performance information. This was demonstrated to the team during its meeting with College staff [M1]. Staff articulated how the systems would be used to track students' engagement with learning materials, assessment, progression, and performance. Much of the system is automated to provide data for students' and supervisors' weekly meetings through to the reports required for external examiners and assessment panels. The team was able to see, for example, how teaching staff would be able to draw on analytics to check that students were working through units and modules so that they would be able to intercede should they have any concerns about an individual or group of students' progress.

217 College teaching and learning staff related how these analytics had already been used during the pilots to make decisions to change the time allowed for students to complete units because of analytics leading to discussions about how volunteer students were able to balance their studies with their commitments to their jobs [M5].

218 Operations and support staff expressed confidence in the way these systems will work together based on the established experience of the parent organisation making use of the same solutions [M3]. The team was satisfied that the systems in place will be able to provide timely, secure, and accurate information for the College's academic and non-academic needs. The New DAPs Plan expresses the confidence of the College that it will be able to demonstrate this element of the criterion being met by Y2 Q2 through the feedback of students and staff and cycles of Progression and Awards panels demonstrating the full functioning of the system that will by that time have produced completed transcripts for its first cohorts of students.

219 In providing opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal, and professional progression, the New DAPs Plan for the College points to its strategy of providing postgraduate training for professional legal practice [000 pp. 418-423]]. The College maintains that the skills students will learn through the module tasks and activities that are being designed for its courses will replicate those that they

would carry out in legal practice and therefore provide the development of employment and future career management skills demanded by this element of the criterion. Representatives from the College Senior Executive supported this view by using examples of the piloted units that provide real world scenarios in its assessment tasks. They maintained that in working through these the College was supporting students so that they would be able to provide a service to clients from the first day of work after their qualification as solicitors [M2]. This approach is encapsulated in the documents submitted by the College, including exercises and materials from the Banking and Finance unit [102, 117]. In this example, students are required to [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. The Practitioner Opinion on the Banking and Finance material [101] provides a legal professional's viewpoint to the College's course design, giving feedback on technical legal practice and the legal knowledge and skills that are involved, and confirming that students will develop banking and finance competencies that are needed in the workplace.

220 The College maintains that this approach will be replicated throughout the course design of its three planned programmes to embed 'employer-ready skills' and that this process will be supported by its approach to providing one-to-one supervision from practicing legal professionals on its courses [000 pp.422]. Students are to be taught through activities and materials designed by practitioners and incorporating up-to-date law and practice. In terms of personal skills and career progression, students are to learn through the module tasks and activities that replicate those that they would carry out in legal practice.

221 The team agreed that the College's approach to course design should facilitate the development of relevant skills for students, based on the piloted units seen [060, 065, 066, 263] and the assessment design used to support students in developing appropriate skills. The team could see that the course elements are targeted at providing realistic and current resources for students to develop their skills. The personal and professional development of the students is addressed by the use of competency frameworks [119] that focus on key areas of development in five key areas of competence (technical legal knowledge, commercial awareness, client care and communication, legal skills and transactional documents). The New DAPs Plan shows that the College intends to make use of individual and collective student feedback as well as programme evaluations through to Y3 Q2 to allow its Programme Committee to monitor performance of the degree to which it enables the personal and professional development of students and, therefore, to provide evidence of meeting this element of the criterion.

222 In its exclusively online delivery, the College's students will be required to be technically literate to be able to access and make effective use of the learning resources provided. The New DAPs Plan asserts that the College will provide opportunities for all students to access learning resources through the provision of well-designed and accessible services with support available by phone, email and through the College's academic staff [000 pp.430].

223 The Student Introduction to the Learning Portal [106] provides the introductory information students need to access the College's online learning platform, including information about the hardware they will need, how to log in to the platform and how to access the other software that they will need to be able to take part in online meetings and tutorials. The Navigating the Learning Portal guidance for students [148] provides excerpts of the online guidance available to students once they have accessed the learning platform and the team was able to inspect this in the demonstration of the learning platform during the

assessment visit [M1]. The team agreed that this level of support would be sufficient for students to be able to easily gain access to the resources offered to College students.

224 The College also provides support to students to develop a greater level of familiarity with the learning platform and these are available once students are registered and logged in. The Overview of Learning Portal and Digital Systems [149] provides more detail about how students can interact with College staff, make use of peer-to-peer learning and collaboration tools, and integrated learning resources, including text, multimedia interactive text and video.

225 The College piloted some units of its first programme in the autumn of 2020 partly to test the ease of use and support for its digital and virtual learning environment. The evaluation report [061] from this exercise reported a satisfaction level of 92% for the overall learning experience. The College also identified some improvements to act on, such as making it easier for students to access specialist library materials from the platform, rather than with a separate login, and some details regarding how email and other notifications to students are provided. The team could see, however, that the overall feedback from the volunteer students to the College's model of delivery was very positive and that the support provided to help them access the learning platform was very well received.

226 The College is also developing resources to support its staff use of the learning platform to ensure they too can maximise their use of this. The Senior Executive [M2] confirmed that these resources would form part of the Supervisor Development Framework which is planned to be completed in Y1 Q1 so that staff tasked with supporting students through their studies will have the required level of familiarity with the platform. The team noted that there was some information in the Design Guide and Induction for SMEs [067] but staff who provided the demonstration of the learning platform [M1] were able to articulate that the expertise in the use of the learning platform at the course design stage was provided by the Content Design and Development department of the College's parent in Australia. This shared service is accessed by the College's staff to ensure that the facilities provided within the learning platform can be maximised. The team agreed that this approach and the positive feedback of volunteer students on the piloted units suggest that when the College commences its delivery, students should be able to expect a positive experience when adjusting to the online nature of the College's study environment.

227 The College's approach to its commitment to equity is guided by its Student Partnership Framework [088]. This document states the College's intention to ensure a transparent and fair admissions process and, once students are enrolled, measures being in place to ensure that all students can benefit from a supportive, inclusive, tolerant learning environment. The New DAPs Plan acknowledges the role that the College can play in promoting greater diversity in recruitment into law [000 pp.440]. It highlights measures in the College's Teaching and Learning strategy [238] that aim to support this. Measures include delivering learning content in a variety of forms to make them accessible, providing flexible learning for their students to access according to their own learning style, and providing easy access to a supervisor who can support students. The tools in place to allow the College to monitor its students' progress and the combination of synchronous and asynchronous interactions with the course are also highlighted as being of assistance to a diverse cohort of students [000]. The team agreed that the College's overall approach was appropriate for its planned provision.

228 In meetings with the assessment team, members of the College's Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2] affirmed the College's commitment to equity and

suggested that as a new provider it had the opportunity and unique provision to support the widening of access to the legal profession through its offer. They also suggested that its exclusively online presence could support it in its approach as its learning platform's technology provides integrated support to some students with learning support needs automatically without them even needing to request adjustments to be made for them.

229 The College has detailed in its New DAPs Plan that all staff will complete diversity and inclusion training and that a training partner has already been arranged for this provision. The details of this are to be found in the E-Learning available for all employees document [125]. Supervisors and personal tutors are to be trained to support learners and to signpost them to the Student Support team for services and evidence of these plans can be found in the Practitioner Supervisor Induction Pack [069].

230 The New DAPs Plan acknowledges that evidence of effective training taking place is key to meeting this element of the criterion and the College plans to work with [REDACTED], to provide advice to inform the College's approach to this in Y1 Q2. The College has also undertaken to review its student-facing policies to promote equity during the first year of the probationary period in response to student feedback and data collected about areas of the provision, such as Admissions, the Student Charter and the Partnership framework [000 pp.47]. Policy reviews will be overseen by the Programme Committee with minutes from SSLCs each year through to Y3 Q1 providing evidence that meaningful discussions take place between the College and its students. The team agreed that this was a valid approach for a new provider yet to recruit students to its courses.

Conclusions

231 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*.

232 The College has clearly articulated, in its New DAPs Plan and in meetings with the assessment team, its strategic and operational approach to enabling student development and achievement. The College's plans are well considered and demonstrate an understanding of this criterion. The Student Partnership Framework is appropriate for the nature of the College and its planned student cohort and is underpinned by clear policies which should enable the College to facilitate academic, personal and professional support. The plans include appropriate provision for the support of students with disabilities and additional learning needs and aim to ensure equality of opportunity and equity of access to support and resources. The College's plans to focus the development of skills to enable students to develop academically, personally and professionally through its curriculum are credible because they are entirely consistent with, and integral to, the College's approach to teaching and learning.

233 The College has administrative support systems built into its learning platform and associated databases that should provide timely, secure and accurate information for academic and non-academic staff and enable it to monitor student progression and performance effectively.

234 There are plans in place for the effective induction of students to their course and the College's online learning environment has resources built into the platform to support students to develop the skills to make effective use of them. Information about courses and the management of enquiries should ensure equity for prospective students.

235 Plans are in place for a personal tutor system and access to counselling services which will be monitored so that resource needs that arise can be considered.

236 The team agreed that the College's approach to enabling student development and achievement is guided by a commitment to equity and to assessing its approach as a new provider still to recruit its first students.

237 The team concludes, therefore, that the College understands this criterion and that its New DAPs Plan is credible and should enable the DAPs criterion to be met by the end of the probation period.

Criterion E: Evaluation of performance

Criterion E1 - Evaluation of performance

238 This criterion states that:

E1.1: An organisation granted degree awarding powers takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

239 The QAA assessment team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the College's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes of the New DAPs test outlined in paragraphs 232 of the regulatory framework, namely to assess the College's understanding of this criterion and to test the credibility of the College's New DAPs Plan in relation to this criterion.

240 Specifically, the assessment team considered or assessed:

- a whether the College has illustrated that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of its own higher education provision and that action assigned and discharged in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [000], [018] Programme Committee terms of reference, [084] review of Pilot Evaluation Report, 061 DLP evaluation report, 023 Programme Development and Approval Process, 024 Approval Event Report template, 025 Approval Event submission template, [043] Module Review Form, [077] Programme Evaluation Report Template, [007] Board monitoring, [088] Student Partnership Framework, [091] Guide to Good Practice for External Examiners, [092] Induction and Training for External Examiners, [243] Overview of Monitoring Policy and Processes. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], representatives from Operations and Support [M3], external representatives of the Programme Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units [M4] and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].
- b if the ideas and expertise from within and outside the College are drawn into its arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review, the team reviewed the New DAPs Plan [000], [088] Student Partnership Framework, Programme Evaluation Form, [076] Staff Student Liaison Committee terms of reference. The team also met with representatives from the Programme Committee and Senior Executive [M2], representatives from Operations and Support [M3], external representatives of the Programme Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units [M4] and representatives from teaching and learning staff [M5].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

241 The assessment team did not construct samples of evidence as the College has yet to commence delivery and exhaustive consideration could be given to the evidence provided.

What the evidence shows

242 The New DAPs Plan makes clear that the College's Programme Committee has been developed as the senior academic board with a key role to oversee and critically assess the operation of the College's provision, [000 pp.451] although it acknowledges that it is for the Board ultimately to consider and take appropriate financial or strategic decisions upon receiving an annual report on quality and standards from the Programme Committee in the third quarter of each year.

243 The College has plans to draw in ideas and expertise from outside the organisation into arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review, utilising separate external panellists as part of its programme approval process and external examiners once programmes are approved and being delivered. Its first three planned programmes will go through the approval process in Y1 Q1, Y1 Q3 and Y2 Q1, permitting scrutiny of the approach to this aspect of the provision [000 pp.452]. The College plans to appoint external examiners through the Programme Committee from Y1 Q2 [000]. They are scheduled to submit reports in Y2 Q2, and Y3 Q2 and 3 of the probationary period. External examiners' reports, together with the programme leader's responses to the reports will be scrutinised at the Programme Committee.

244 The New DAPs plan also includes the College's plans for internal self-assessment. Annual programme evaluation reports will commence from Y2 Q3 and Annual Quality and Standards Reports from Y1 Q3. These will be considered by the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) and the Programme Committee and the minutes from these are cited by the New DAPs Plan as locations for open discussion and resolutions of issues. The New DAPs Plan states that this criterion will be met by Y3 Q2.

245 The New DAPs plan states that the College is confident of demonstrating that it meets this criterion by the end of Y3 Q2 through the gathering of feedback throughout the College and providing evidence of the open discussion and evaluation of this leading to the discharging of actions in response to matters that arise [000 pp.456]. This shall ultimately be demonstrated through the minutes of the Programme Committee and Board papers.

246 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

247 The New DAPs plan acknowledges that embedding a culture of critical self-assessment is a challenge for a new provider [000 pp.457]. To achieve this the College has created a system with three stages. The first involves the effective gathering of feedback from students, staff, external experts and from the Board. The second involves open discussion and evaluation of feedback between students and staff in team and committee meetings. The third stage involves the clear communication of decisions and their rationale to resolve issues. The New DAPs Plan describes a number of routes through which this will happen, including to students through the SSLC and information on the learning platform, to staff through team meetings as well as from the Board and the Senior Executive.

248 To gather feedback, the College plans to utilise student feedback mechanisms and has developed appropriate programme and module questionnaires. These will be received and scrutinised by the Programme Committee. The first questionnaires should operate from the first year onwards with module questionnaires being available in Y1 Q2 and programme questionnaires from Y2 Q1.

249 The College plans to undertake annual monitoring and review of programme delivery utilising its module monitoring and programme monitoring templates. Annual Programme and Module Monitoring will be available from Y1 Q2. The College plans to undertake annual monitoring and review of programme delivery using its module review form [043] and programme monitoring [077] template. The programme evaluation report template

[077] indicates that an appropriate range of evidence should be used by Programme leaders to compile the report, including external examiner comments, student feedback and management information data. The template for the Programme Evaluation Report [077] also includes a section (6) for the student representative to include their own evaluative comments which the team agreed would allow students the opportunity to take part more fully in the process. These reports are to be considered by the SSLC [076] and the Programme Committee [018] in Y2 Q3 and Y3 Q2 of the probationary period where any actions that emerge from this assessment process will be recorded and discussed.

250 The module review form template [043] provides for reflection on the operation of the module by the module leader, which informs the compilation of the Programme Evaluation report. However, the Module Review form does not currently include the use of management information data relating to the module (for example, pass rates, number of students on module, submission rate, lowest, highest and average mark). The team agreed that this would provide a more effective form of feedback were the form to include such an evidenced-based approach. The New DAPs Plan [000] states that the first completed module review form should be available at Y1 Q2 of the probationary period. In meeting with staff, the team was able to confirm that there was an understanding of the appropriate management information data that the College systems would be able to provide. Both operations and support staff [M3] and academic staff [M5] stated their intention to make use of this in their monitoring activities.

251 With a view to encouraging open discussion of feedback, the Curriculum Design and Delivery Group reporting to the Programme Committee has a clear remit for the monitoring and review of the provision, including, for example, student feedback [000]. There is evidence of the group operating since October 2020 and discussing the monitoring of the piloted units through the receipt of an evaluation report at its February 2021 meeting [157d]. Although the team did not see any evidence of action to be taken in response to this in the minutes, [074d] it was clear that the link from feedback to open discussion was in place through the College's Programme Committee which should allow for critical self-assessment in the operation of the provision.

252 The College also plans for programmes to be subject to a cyclical five-yearly periodic review process [023, pp.2.2]. The outcomes of these processes should be reported to and discussed at the Programme Committee. Although the first of these will not be undertaken during the probationary period, the team agreed that a five-yearly approach was appropriate.

253 The College also has mechanisms in place to allow for ideas and expertise from outside the organisation to be drawn in. External examiners' annual reports are to be considered by the Programme Committee and responses formulated by programme leaders who will develop an action plan and a rationale for any recommendations to act [092]. These should be available during the probationary period at Y2 Q2, Y2 Q4, Y3 Q2, Y3 Q2 [000] and their receipt and consideration should also be evidenced at multiple Programme Committee meetings during the probationary period.

254 The College's plans to utilise external panellists as part of its Programme Development and Approval Process [023] include terms of reference for the panel that are included in the Approval Panel Submission document template [025]. This document makes clear that consideration of external examiner reports from the last two years of the programme are to be considered when programmes go through periodic review using the same process.

255 Collectively, the combination of external membership of the Board, Programme Committee, external subject specialists on approval panels and the planned use of external

examiners provides credible use of externality in the monitoring of the College's delivery. The team also noted that the College has already commenced evaluative processes as it prepares to deliver its first programme. These include the DLP evaluation pilot report [061] and the review of the pilot evaluation report [084], where actions were assigned to enhance the provision. This demonstrates the College's overall approach to making critical self-assessment an integral part of its operations.

256 The College does not currently make use of external expertise from an employers' or industry external advisory group. In discussion with members of the Senior Executive [M2] confidence was expressed that the externality present in the Board and Programme Committee provides this external input. The team also noted that the College has, through its Principles of Engagement with the Legal Profession and the Community document [030], an approach to engagement with the legal profession and the community. Although this is a high-level document, it does indicate the intention to engage with representatives of the legal profession in developing the College's curricula in the future. The terms of reference for the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) [076] also include an employer representative in its membership.

257 In establishing mechanisms for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision, the assessment team noted that, as the ultimate body with the power to discharge actions in relation to the College's provision, the Board has a significant role to play. The Board is already operational, and the team was able to inspect minutes and papers from September 2020 and March 2021 [156 g-l, 002 a-i]. The Code of Governance [153] for the Board outlines a number of high-level academic and non-academic performance indicators which will form the basis of Board-level monitoring of the provision during the probationary period so that the College's performance and associated improvement opportunities can be identified, considered and addressed.

258 The Programme Committee is the senior academic authority [018 Programme Committee Terms of Reference] with the role of overseeing and critically assessing the operation of the College's higher education provision. Its membership is a diverse and experienced group, with senior academics and members of the Senior Executive, but also external and independent members [055 CVs for Programme Committee members]. The New DAPs Plan [000] states that the Board will receive an annual quality assurance report in Y1 Q2 and Y2 Q2 on the academic provision from the Programme Committee which is designed to highlight issues to consider and take appropriate financial or strategic decisions.

259 The effectiveness of the Board will be reviewed after the first two years and then every four years thereafter. The College has plans to conduct a review each year of its general policies and procedures as noted in its Policy Approval and Communication policy [045] and accompanying procedure [046]. The team agreed that the above is an appropriate approach for a new provider and suggested that critical self-assessment would include the College's highest body and the provider's policy framework.

Conclusions

260 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*.

261 The team concludes that the College's planned approach to take effective action to assess its performance and respond in relation to the review and monitoring of academic provision is transparent and credible. The New DAPs Plan indicates a clear and appropriate sequence of monitoring and reporting through its governance structures. The College has a clear commitment to the use of externality in its processes, incorporating external examiner

provision, external subject specialists as part of approval panels and externality within its governance structures.

262 The College has plans for student involvement across its activities. The Staff Student Liaison Committee should provide for credible mechanisms of student engagement in the evaluation of the College's performance. These mechanisms are realistic and demonstrate a clear understanding of the importance of gaining student feedback on their experience and engaging them in shaping and developing their programme and outcomes.

263 The team considers that the College has credible plans and clear mechanisms for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its performance and academic provision through its committee structure.

264 The New DAPs Plan articulates how the College plans to meet this criterion. It identifies when key pieces of evidence should be available, including external examiner reports, annual monitoring reports, student feedback of its programmes and when and how they should be considered by its academic governance structure. The team concluded that, overall, the College's plan for meeting this criterion in full by the end of the probation period is comprehensive, coherent and realistic.

265 The team concludes, therefore, that the College understands this criterion and that its New DAPs Plan is credible and should enable the DAP criterion to be met by the end of the probation period.

New Degree Awarding Powers overarching criterion

266 The New DAPs overarching criterion is that 'the provider is an emerging self-critical, cohesive academic community with a clear commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective (in prospect) quality systems'.

Conclusions

267 The team reviewed all relevant documentations and considers that the College has credible and robust plans to support an emerging self-critical, cohesive academic community which are evidenced throughout the assessment.

268 The College should be self-critical with effective quality systems because it has extensive cyclical plans in place for the review of its provision. These begin with module and programme design, development and evaluations that incorporate the views of staff, external examiners and the prospect of genuine engagement with students who are to be invited to contribute to these processes and not merely observe. The Programme Committee, as the ultimate academic authority for the College, is to monitor and address, as and when necessary and on an ongoing basis, all academic risks, compliance reports, external audit reports and operational group reports in addition to the annual evaluations of courses. The College intends to review all policies annually to ensure that they are working as originally envisaged and to identify areas where improvements may be required. The Board will monitor a range of strategic performance indicators and intends to benchmark these, where possible, to provide a way to compare the College's performance against other providers. Over the longer term, the College has made provision for periodic reviews of all programmes every five years and the Board also intends to consider an evaluation of its own performance after the first two years of operation and then every further four years. The team found evidence of feedback and reflection on piloted units, undertaken prior to enrolling students, already being used by the College to reflect upon, take action and enhance the provision and respond to feedback from volunteers who had trialled units from its first programme. This augurs well for its future commitment to these aspects of the overarching criterion.

269 The College has a clear commitment to the assurance of standards. Its Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations place the FHEQ at the heart of its considerations, but it also makes proper reference to the *Master's Degree Characteristics Statement*. The College also gives appropriate weight to the Statement of Solicitor Competence from the Solicitors Regulation Authority and its associated threshold standard, so that students can be assured that the qualifications that they achieve should be recognised by their chosen profession. In the design of its courses, the College prioritises the design of assessments that should enable its students to develop skills that allow them to work effectively as soon as they qualify as solicitors. The College's detailed plans to engage with external examiners and reviewers support its intention to assure itself that its standards are being maintained, as do other templates that will be used by academic staff in the design and review of courses.

270 The assessment team agreed the College's main challenge could be the development of a cohesive academic community. The College will have no physical campus and all resources and interactions between staff and students will take place online with a significant number of teaching staff (supervisors) who will be contracted to work on an hourly basis and a large proportion of students expected to be balancing their studies with their work in the legal profession. Gaining the necessary traction to develop this aspect of the College's provision may well take time. However, this is an aspect of College operations that is being addressed by staff; supervisions and other interactions with students are to be timetabled with multiple opportunities for staff and students to interact every week. Training events for staff are detailed in the New DAPs Plan and other development is to be designed in partnership with the staff concerned. Building opportunities for development for all staff

connected with the College through the Supervisor Development Framework should contribute towards building commitment and engagement. Staff who met the team reported that informal conversations and other interactions are already developing between staff from the scheduled 'Town Hall' group meetings with volunteer students on the piloted units. Once these connections gain traction, the development of a cohesive academic community should be assured.

271 The team therefore concludes that the College has an emerging self-critical, cohesive academic community with a clear commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective (in prospect) quality systems.

Proposed changes to the New DAPs Plan

- To include the scheduling of the Board evaluation referred to on page 9 of the Corporate Governance Code.

Annex

Evidence

- 000 - New DAPs Plan and Self-Assessment
- 001 - The CoLP Brand
- 002a - COLP Board Papers August 2019
- 002d - Board Meeting Papers May 2020 Curriculum Statement
- 002h - Board Papers December 2020
- 002i - Board Papers March 2021
- 003 - SRA SQE Briefing July 2020
- 004 - FHEQ qualifications frameworks Quality Code Part A
- 005 - Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations
- 006 - Role of the Senior Executive
- 007 - Board monitoring
- 008 - Three-year dashboard
- 009 - QAA Quality and Standards Review draft report
- 010 - Academic calendar
- 011 - New DAPs Quarterly Plan
- 012e - Programme Committee Meeting Minutes August 2020
- 012g - Programme Committee Minutes October 2020
- 012h - Programme Committee minutes February 2021
- 012i - Programme Committee Minutes April 2021
- 013 - CoLP Launch PID
- 014 - Launch Programme Kick-off Presentation
- 015 - CoLP Organisation Chart
- 016 - Short CVs of Board members and Staff CVs
- 017 - Academic Governance and Quality Assurance framework
- 018 - Programme Committee Terms of Reference
- 019 - Curriculum Development and Delivery Group ToR
- 020 - Terms of Reference for Assessment Panels
- 021 - Nominations and Governance Committee ToR
- 022 - Audit Risk and Compliance Committee ToR
- 023 - Programme Development and Approval Process
- 024 - Approval Event Report template
- 025 - Approval Panel Submission document template
- 026 - Masters Qualification Characteristics Statement
- 027 - Statement of Solicitor Competence
- 028 - The SRA Threshold Standard
- 029 - Principles in Teaching and Learning
- 030 - Principles of Engagement with the Legal Profession and the Community
- 031 - Academic Staff spreadsheet
- 032 - Roles and Responsibilities of Registrar and Student Services Team
- 033 - CoLP Governance Structure
- 034 - Bridge Group proposal for COLP
- 035 - CoLP four-year business plan
- 036 - Board planning conference slides
- 037 - Budget Process Timetable
- 038 - Programme Charter and Plan
- 039 - CoLP Meeting Dates
- 040 - Launch Programme Steering Group papers March 2021
- 041 - Assessment Officer Role Outline (draft)
- 042 - Approved Policies and Procedures by Programme Committee
- 042 - Programme Committee Policy Approvals

043 - Module Review form
044 - Induction Outline for staff
045 - Policy Approval and Communication Policy
046 - Policy Approval and Communication Procedure
047 - Proposal form to CDDG for programme change
048 - Staff Development framework
049 - Practitioner engagement email Banking and Finance pilot 28th April 2020
050 - Head of Curriculum Job Description
051 - Programme Leader Job Description
052 - Module Leader Role Description
053 - Supervisor Role Description
054 - DLP pilot SME commissioning email Dispute Resolution 210720
055 - CVs of Programme Committee and CDDG Members
056 - Programme Committee Meeting proforma agenda
058 - Assessment Schedule Template
059 - Information for pilot organisations
060 - Course guide for pilot unit
061 - DLP pilot evaluation report
062a - Programme Committee Agenda and Papers January 2020
062e - Programme Committee Agenda and Papers August 2020
062f - Programme Committee Meeting Papers - October 2020
062h - Programme Committee Meeting papers Feb 2021
063 - Programme Handbook content guide
064 - Services Provider Agreement
065 - Attachment A for LLM in Legal Practice
066 - Attachment Bs for DLP Programme
067 - Design Guide and Induction for SMEs
068 - UK Design Schedule agreed for Pilot Units
069 - Practitioner Supervisor Induction Pack
070 - CVs of Subject Matter Experts and Supervisors
071 - Annual Business Plan 2020-2021 Sept 2020
072 - OfS Financial Tables Submission Jan 21
073 - Student Contract
074b - CDDG notes October 2020
074c - CDDG notes December 2020
074d - CDDG notes Feb 2021
075 - External Examiner Report Template and Guidance
076 - Staff Student Liaison Committee Terms of Reference
077 - Programme Evaluation Report Template
078 - Draft Quality Systems Group Terms of Reference
079 - Practitioner comments Banking and Finance review
080 - Practitioner comments Dispute Resolution review
081 - CDD Organisation Chart
083 - Role and Responsibilities Quality Assurance Officer
084 - Review of evaluation report March 2021
085a - Nominations and Governance Committee Papers February 2021
086a - Nominations and Governance Committee Minutes February 2021
087 - Selection and Admission of Students Policy
088 - Student Partnership Framework Policy
089 - Assessment exemplar Dispute Resolution pilot unit
090 - Grading Criteria
091 - Guide to Good Practice for External Examiners
092 - Induction and Training for External Examiners
093 - Students Complaints Policy and Procedure
094 - External Examiner Nomination Form

095 - Assessment Scrutiny Form
096 - Marking and Moderation Form
097 - External Examiner Module Panel Approval
098 - Award Conferment Recommendation Form
099 - Module Assessment Panel Agenda
100 - Mapping of PLOs against Module Outcomes and External Frameworks
101 - Practitioner Opinion on B and F material
102 - Indicative Assessment and template for BF
103 - Banking and Finance marking guidance
104 - Staff Student Liaison Committee Meeting Agenda
105 - CEO Job Description
106 - Student Introduction to Learning Portal (Canvas)
107 - Student Feedback Questionnaire Pilot 2020
108 - Student Feedback Questionnaire Module
109 - Student Feedback Questionnaire Programme
110 - Flow diagram for Students - Student Complaints
111 - Recruitment and Selection Policy
112 - Student Disciplinary Process Policy
113 - Flow diagram Student Disciplinary Process Policy - non-academic matters
114 - Flow diagram Student Disciplinary Process Policy - academic matters
115 - Equal Opportunity and Dignity at Work Policy
116 - Examples of analytics in Learning Portal for students and supervisors
117 - Banking and Finance annotated-student submission task1.1
118 - Student Charter and Code of Conduct
119 - Competency Framework from DLP Exemplar
120 - Exemplar assessment with student and supervisor feedback
121 - Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure
123 - Peer Observation Scheme
124 - Induction plan and Status for Student Services Manager
125 - E-learning for employees
126 - Programme Leader Job Application Pack
127 - Employment Contract Example
128 - Excerpts from COLP website
129 - Equality and Inclusion Policy for Students
130 - Outline of Approach to Reasonable Adjustments
131 - Application Form for DLP Programme Modules
132 - Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0
133 - Content outline for prospectus
134 - Student Services Offer
136 - Website enquiry form
137 - CAB Briefing Paper and impact assessment
138 - Student Protection Plan
139 - Refund and Compensation Policy
140 - Law Care Services
141 - Flexible Working Policy
142 - HR Grievance Policy
143 - Job Description - Registrar
144 - Job Description - Student Services Manager
145 - Job Description - Student Services Officer
147 - O Shaped Lawyer Competencies December 2020
148 - Navigating the Learning Portal guidance for students
149 - Overview of Learning Portal and Digital Systems
150 - IT Support Framework for CoLP students
151 - Bridge Group SQE monitoring and maximising diversity report July 2020
152 - Draft Alumni Engagement policy

153 - Corporate Governance Code
154 - Project 1 report
155 - COL Lecturer Training Modules proposal as at 12 Jan 2021
156g - Board Minutes September 2020
156i - Board minutes March 2021
157a - CDDG papers March 2020
157d - CDDG meeting papers Feb 2021
158a - ARCC papers November 2020
159a - ARCC Minutes February 2021
160 - Job Description for Student Services Officer Marketing Executive
176 - SLK SME design update 1 January 2021
177 - SLK SME design update 2 February 2021
178a - Board planning conference notes May 2021
185 - Student Terms and Conditions
187a - Programme Handbook for DLP
193 - Draft Transcripts and Certificate Templates
194 - Kolb and Schon summarised
195 - Summary of Assessment Tasks and Methods
196 - HEA Professional Standards Framework
197 - Launch Plan Trackers Compendium as at 3 March 21
211 - Samples of admissions communications with students
212 - Performance Management Goals and Development Process Guidelines
213 - Abbreviations Index for 120321
213 - Abbreviations Index for 120321
218 - SME Briefing for SLK Module - LLM in Legal Practice
219 - Sign Off notes for SLK Scoping
220 - Example of commissioning email for SLK
221 - Articles of Association
222 - Risk Register April 2021
223 - Risk Management Framework
224 - Nominations process and checklist for Governance Appts
225 - Student Rep Induction Outline
227 - Mapping of objectives to policies
228 - Brand Book
229 - Strategic plan
230 - Policy Register
231 - Draft Annual Policy Review Framework
232 - Governance and Key Groups Structure
233 - Senior Executive Terms of Reference
234 - Admissions Criteria for DLP Programme
235 - Admissions Guidance and FAQs for DLP
236 - Students Complaints Policy and Procedure for the website
237 - Employee Handbook
238 - Draft Teaching and Learning Strategy
239 - Summary of Assessment Tasks and Methods
241 - Draft guidance for personal tutors
243 - Overview of monitoring policy and processes
244 - CAB portal and internal admissions guidance
245 - Online Application and Enrolment Forms
247 - DLP Prospectus
248 - DLP Course calendar 2021-22
249 - Initial scoping for Graduate Foundation in Law
250 - Attachment B DLP O-shaped Lawyer module
251 - Competencies for O-Shaped Module
252 - DLP BF Example Learning Content

253 - DLP BS Example Learning Content
254 - DLP DR Example Learning Content
255 - SLK Example Learning Content
256 - SLS Design Concept
257 - SLS Scoping
258 - Supervisor recruitment and role
259 - Student Rep Report PC Feb 2021
260 - Student Rep Report PC April 2021
261 - COLP Team meeting agenda
262 - SLK Student Timetable
263 - Attachment B SLS Pilot module
264 - Clarification Statement for Review team 190521
265 – The College of Legal Practice website (<https://www.collegalpractice.com/>) Accessed 18-20 May 2021.
M1 - Meeting with College staff for a demonstration of the learning platform
M2 - Meeting with Representatives from Programme Committee and Senior Executive
M3 - Meeting with Representatives from Operations and Support
M4 - Meeting with External Representatives of the Programme Committee and a volunteer Student Representative from piloted course units
M5 - Meeting with Representatives from Teaching and Learning staff
M6 – Clarification Meeting with Representatives from the Senior Executive

QAA2694 - R13148 - Aug 22

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2021
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

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