DQB

Designated Quality Body
in England

Assessment for Variation of Degree Awarding Powers

TEC Partnership formally known as Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education

Review Report

April 2020

Contents

Summary of assessment team findings

Underpinning DAPs criteria	
Criterion A: Academic governance	Met
Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks	Met
Criterion B2: Academic standards	Met
Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience	Not Met
Criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff	Met
Criterion D: Environment for supporting students	Met
Criterion E: Evaluation of performance	Met
Overarching criterion	
The provider is a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems	Met

About this report

This is a report of an assessment of Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education conducted by QAA in April 2020 in accordance with the process outlined in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers, December 2019.*

Assessment for the variation and revocation 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 delivered by a provider in England that has an existing DAPs authorisation and where variation or revocation is to be considered.

The assessment was conducted in order to inform advice to OfS on whether the College's existing renewable powers be granted on an indefinite basis and whether the College's existing powers be extended from foundation degree level (up to and including Level 5) to bachelor's degree level (up to and including Level 6).

Provider information

Legal name	Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education
Trading name	TEC Partnership
UKPRN	10007938
Type of institution	Further Education College
Date founded	1944
Date of first HE provision	1993

Application route	Variation DAPs
Level of powers applied for (if applying for additional levels)	Taught degree (up to and including Level 6)
Locations of teaching	University Centre, Grimsby Scarborough TEC
Subjects applied for	All subjects
Current powers held	Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (renewable)
Date current powers granted	2013
Number of current programmes as from Provider Information Form, January 2020.	29 x bachelor's degrees 16 x foundation degrees 8 x Higher National programmes 2 x Certificate in Education 2 x Postgraduate Certificate in Education 2 x Professional Graduate Certificate in Education 14 x professional qualifications
Number of students as from Provider Information Form, January 2020	Full-time: 1,040, of whom 527 on bachelor's degrees, 432 on foundation degrees, 51 on Higher National programmes, 30 on certificates in education at various levels Part-time: 184, of whom 4 on bachelor's degrees, 4 on foundation degrees, 59 on Higher National programmes, 47 on the certificates of education and 70 studying for professional qualifications
Number of staff as at April 2020	335 academic staff, of whom 116 teach in higher education 46 managerial staff 802 support staff
Current awarding body arrangements	Level 6 provision is validated by the University of Hull

About Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education

Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education (the College) has offered higher education provision since 2002 from its campus in Grimsby and, since 2010 following a merger, also from its campus in Scarborough. It gained Foundation Degree Awarding Powers in 2013, and now offers foundation degree programmes in a range of vocational disciplines, including education and healthcare. The College additionally offers Level 6 provision leading to the award of bachelor's degrees from the University of Hull, and continues to offer Higher National provision leading to awards from Pearson and programmes of study leading to qualifications from professional bodies. At present, the College is preparing for a further merger with East Riding College, planned to take place in August 2020.

The College aspires to attain the power to award bachelor's degrees from 2020. If successful, it intends, over a period of three years, to validate Level 6 programmes which will be direct replacements of the current programmes which lead to awards of the University of Hull, thereby removing its dependence on the University's awarding powers.

How the assessment was conducted

The QAA assessment team completed an assessment of the College according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers, December 2019.*

The team appointed to conduct the assessment was as follows.

Name: Janet Faulkner
Institution: Leeds City College
Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor

Name: Ivan Garcia
Institution: Salford University
Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor

Name: Penny Renwick
Institution: formerly Manchester Metropolitan University
Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor

Name: Harry Williams
Institution: University of Keele
Role in assessment team: Student assessor

The QAA Officer for the assessment was Stephen Ryrie.

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 subject expertise. Collectively, the team had experience of the management and delivery of 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 those that apply in England as set out paragraphs 215-216 and in Annex C in OfS's regulatory framework. To support the clarity of communication between providers and QAA, the DAPs criteria and evidence requirements from OfS's 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.

In the course of the assessment, the team read 204 documents presented in support of the application. An initial set of 33 documents was provided as supporting evidence with the College's submission document. Following a desk-based assessment of this initial evidence against the DAPs criteria, a request for additional evidence was made. This request covered areas from all five DAPs criteria which had been identified as requiring follow-up investigation. An additional 171 documents were provided in response. Key themes pursued in the course of the assessment included the roles, responsibilities and relationships between different bodies involved in academic governance; the means by which the College ensures oversight of the quality of teaching and learning; the College's approach to

monitoring student progression and completion, the College's approach to programme design, approval, monitoring and review, including the use of external involvement; the approach to scholarship, staff development and support provided for teaching, learning and assessment; the extent of staff engagement with external bodies; and student engagement.

The team held meetings using videoconferencing technology with staff and students of the College during the week of 20 April. In the course of these meetings it met senior staff, academic staff (including staff with key programme management responsibilities), professional support staff, the Chair of the College's governing body and a senior member of staff from the University of Hull. The team also met a sample of students of the College which was representative because it included students from all levels of study, students from both of the College's campuses and students who were elected student representative as well as those who were not student representatives.

Details of the evidence the team considered are provided in the 'Explanation of findings' sections of this report below. The team made the following requests for samples of documentation:

- a representative sample of two programme handbooks
- a representative sample of validation and approved course documentation used by the College in the approval of new programmes
- a representative sample of annual monitoring reports consisting of the two most recent reports for six programmes
- a representative sample of assessment briefs across the foundation degree provision
- a representative sample of external examiner's reports for 2018-19 and responses to these reports
- a representative sample of CVs for academic staff with and without programme management responsibilities.
- a random sample of seven quality improvement plans (one at faculty level, two at curriculum level and four at programme level) relating to the College's use of the annual monitoring process.

Further information of the samples and the basis on which they were chosen and considered are described within the discussion of each criterion in 'How any samples of evidence were constructed'.

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.

2   The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers (December 2019).*

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

3   The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the *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 described in Annex 4 and 5 of this Guidance as follows:

a   To assess whether the College has effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities and with appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership, the team considered the UCG 2020 Strategy [022], the College's higher education policies as embedded in its 18 Codes of Practice [035 – 052]; the Strategy Consultation [201], the TEC Approach to Strategy document [139], the Draft Approach to Strategic Measures of Success [071] and the Approach to Extending Powers to Level 6 and Merger [172]. The team also reviewed minutes and/or extracts of Executive Management Team [053], Senior Management Team (SMT) [123], Scarborough SMT [159], Corporation minutes [187,188], and key higher education committees [004, 054, 009, 055, 107, 114] as well as other governance documentation, such as the former [008] and current [003] deliberative committee structure; Governance Structures [010]; Timeline for Governance Changes [030] and an explanation of the senior academic authority [195]. The Quality and Standards Handbook [https://grimsby.ac.uk/quality-and-standards-handbook-home/ accessed 17/4/20], the HE Standards Staffing Structure [005]; Academic Regulations changes document [011], Proposed Bachelor's Degree Regulations [015], the Community and Practice Register [175], programme handbooks for two foundation degrees [081, 093], and an example of co-creation of policies between students and staff [191] were also reviewed in relation to this, alongside written [RR1] and verbal statements from senior staff [M1, M5], students [M2], academic staff [M3], and professional support staff [M4].

b   To test whether academic governance is conducted in partnership with the College's students, the team considered the following: the Deliberative Committee Structure [003], minutes of higher education committees [054, 055, 107, 114], the Code of Practice for Management of Placement Learning [050], the Draft Approach to Strategic Measures of Success [071], the Code of Practice on Continuous Improvement and Student Engagement in Quality [036], minutes of higher education Student Senate meetings with members of the Senior Management Team [171, 149], the Quality Enhancement Report [132], evidence of student involvement in validations and modifications [182], Student Senate Minutes [058, 152], UCG2020 [022], the Student Submission [136], Student Senate Training [200] and the Induction Booklet for New Governors [204]. The team also met students [M2], senior staff [M5] and professional support staff [M4].

c   To test whether the governance and management of learning opportunities delivered in collaboration with other organisations is robust and effective, the team considered the Code of Practice for Management of Placement Learning [050] and the College's Quality Enhancement Report [132].

d   To test whether the College will manage successfully the responsibilities that would be vested in it were it to be granted powers to make awards at Level 6, the team considered an Examining Board Case Study [012], the Central Record of Validated Programmes [017], the awards records [018], the Bachelor's Degree Academic Regulations [015], the Approach to Extending Powers to Level 6 and Merger document [172] and the revised staffing structure [154]. The team also met staff [M1, M3, M4, M5].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

4   The assessment team considered samples of evidence as follows.

5   The team considered a representative sample of two programme handbooks, specifically those for FdSc Football Coaching and Youth Development and for FdA Counselling Studies, for the purpose specified in paragraph 3a. This sample is representative because it is drawn from the College's foundation degree provision and comprises the handbook for the largest such programme by student number, namely the FdA Counselling Studies (74 students) and the handbook for one of the smallest such programmes by student number, namely the FdSc Football Coaching and Youth Development (12 students).

What the evidence shows

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

7   The College's governing body is its Corporation, responsible for the development, monitoring and implementation of the College's strategic plan [003, 010]. Its composition includes an elected member of staff of the College and two students, each of whom may be drawn from either the College's further education or its higher education provision. Governance of the College's higher education provision is delegated to the HE Oversight Committee which advises the Corporation on matters relating to the strategic direction of that provision. The composition of the Oversight Committee includes a higher education student as well as senior representation from each of the College's campuses, at Grimsby and Scarborough [010]. The College's plans for extended powers to award bachelor's degrees and for its proposed merger with East Riding College [172] show that the HE Oversight Committee is intended to safeguard its Level 6 awarding powers by continuing to have an independent academic chair, currently a Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hull, and

that the HE Oversight Committee's composition will be extended to include a senior member of staff from East Riding College.

8   The College's current higher education strategy, UGC2020 [022], affirms that its purpose is to 'outline the strategic aims and critical success factors that are required to achieve these aims to the year 2020'. The strategy contains a set of 13 objectives for higher education provision and outlines strategies to achieve them. The College held a staff consultation day [201] in 2016 on the development of the strategy, and staff whom the team met stated that they were heavily involved in the development of strategies for the College [M3]. The College's plans for the use of extended powers [172] show that it intends, over a period of three years, to validate Level 6 programmes which will be direct replacements of the programmes that currently lead to awards of the University of Hull. The plans do not, however, indicate any strategic direction for the College's higher education provision beyond that point, and do not link to or make reference to the objectives embedded in the College's current higher education strategy [022], suggesting that the College has not yet considered the likely strategic direction for its higher education provision beyond this three-year time period.

9   The Corporation's methodology for higher education strategic planning [071] requires it annually to review sector developments and to identify the direction of travel for the following year based on measurable targets under four strategic pillars: these form a key agenda item at each meeting of the Corporation and the measures are RAG rated with an action plan for those rated as red. The methodology [071] supports the strategic plan [022] by identifying a clear and coherent measure of progress against each of four priority areas, specifically 'Learner Success', 'Culture', 'Financial Security' and 'Brand, Reputation and Innovation'.

10   The higher education strategy is currently undergoing revision with a draft being presented to the HE Oversight Committee in February 2020 [004]. In order to ensure staff understanding, the College has stated that it intends to consult with staff on the development of this strategy during the summer of 2020 [139]. Minutes of the HE Oversight Committee for 15 October 2019 [004] indicate that this strategy had been presented to the other committees within the deliberative structure, but minutes of the Executive Management Team [053], the Senior Management Team [123], the Scarborough TEC Senior Management Team [159] and the higher education Strategic Enhancement Group [054] committees did not bear this out, and hence the team was unable to see the extent of consultation through the committee structure to date.

11   Each campus has its own Principal and higher education is managed operationally at campus level with support from the College's HE Quality Office. At the time of obtaining FDAP, higher education provision was managed separately from the College's further education provision. In 2015, the College transferred responsibility for managing higher education into departments responsible for both further and higher education in order to 'retain subject area specialist expertise' [001].

12   Since the application for FDAP there have been substantial changes to the governance structure, as illustrated in the Timeline for Governance Changes [030]. These include the introduction of local boards at each campus (Grimsby and Scarborough) which determine and monitor the strategic measures for the provision at that campus with the addition of two mandatory committees, for Audit and for Remuneration [001]. The rationale for this was to increase accountability at each site and to improve reporting to governors. The latest of these changes was the establishment of the HE Advisory Board in December 2018 in response to recommendations by OfS during the registration process. The HE Advisory Board was renamed the HE Oversight Committee in July 2019. The HE Oversight Committee approved further changes to the deliberative committee structure on 4 February

2020 [004], specifically establishing new terms of reference and introducing new business cycles, with the intention to 'drive forward the organisational vision to be an outstanding provider of choice and to implement the College's strategic plan' [001]. The changes included the renaming of two committees, with the Progression and Standards Committee (PSC) becoming the Academic Authority and Standards Senior Committee (AASSC) and the HE Strategic Enhancement Group (HESEG) becoming the HE Quality Assurance Committee (HEQAC). In addition, the College has a HE Coordinators Enhancement Committee.

13   The team reviewed the terms of reference for each of the committees within the governance structure [010] and concluded that the new terms of reference are suitable for the governance of its higher education provision in that they provide for the monitoring and review of all aspects of higher education and conditions of registration. The deliberative committee structure [003], together with the further clarification provided by the College [195], shows that the responsibility for management of higher education provision is delegated by the HE Oversight Committee to the Executive Management Team (EMT), which approves all policies and regulations relating to higher education and signs off the approval of new programmes. EMT specifically delegates to AASSC the responsibility for ensuring the maintenance of standards: AASSC manages quality assurance processes to ensure that policies set by EMT are followed. EMT also delegates responsibility for programme approval with HEQAC having authority for Stage 1 approval of new programmes and AASSC for approval at Stages 2 and 3. This is in alignment with the Academic Regulations [011, 015] and the Code of Practice for Validation and Amendments [038]. The HE Coordinators Enhancement Committee terms of reference [008] confirm that it is responsible for embedding and creating enhancements to provision and that it reports to other committees responsible for higher education provision by making recommendations for changes to policy or codes of practice. The team considered that the College has clear arrangements for academic governance, with appropriate lines of accountability for these responsibilities.

14   The terms of reference for AASSC [003] states that 'it has the responsibility for the regulations and quality assurance framework for all HE...', whereas the HEQAC terms of reference state that it has 'responsibility for driving performance in HE' thereby giving the two committees distinct and clear areas of authority. The team considers the allocation of responsibilities and terms of reference to be suitable for the governance of higher education as they adequately monitor and review both standards and quality of experience and the implementation of awarding powers. These committees and terms of reference were only established in February 2020 so there is limited evidence of the application of these powers and responsibilities. However, minutes from the first meeting of AASSC [055] in February demonstrate the terms of reference and the business cycle being applied appropriately, for instance in the presentation of reports on appeals, external examiner approvals, course closures and the approval of minor amendments. The presentation of these reports can also be evidenced in minutes for the predecessor of this committee, the Progression and Standards Committee (PSC) [055]. AASSC is responsible for recommending approval of new programmes following the completion of a validation process, in alignment with the relevant code of practice on Validation and Amendment of Programmes [038]: minutes of AASSC and its predecessor committee [009, 055] show these bodies exercising their responsibilities for academic governance regarding confirmation of student outcomes and oversight of validation processes. Evidence from the HE Oversight Committee [004] and the predecessor committees PSC [055] and HESEG [054] demonstrate business cycles and terms of reference being followed and implemented. Under the former committee structure, the terms of reference of HESEG [008] include responsibility for monitoring higher education provision, and its minutes of December 2019 [150] show evidence of it exercising oversight of the College's annual monitoring of programmes. Under the current structure, HESEG has been replaced by HEQAC whose terms of reference [003] include responsibility for

monitoring of higher education provision. The assessment team formed the view that there are clear oversight arrangements.

15   The College plans for how academic governance will be carried out following the planned merger with East Riding College are clearly outlined in its approach to extending powers to Level 6 [172], and details of the plans were verified by senior staff met by the team [M1]. These plans include ensuring that the Codes of Practice are embedded into the practice of the new partner; the inclusion of the new partner in the deliberative committee structure on entry to the group; increasing the capacity of AASSC to oversee the higher education provision within the group by increasing the number of meetings from three to six per year; planned modifications to Codes of Practice and the extension of the HE Quality Office role across all campuses. The Executive Director of Quality Improvement and Learner Success and the Academic Registrar will have responsibilities across all sites. These constitute robust plans for the inclusion of the present East Riding College within the governance structure. The team concludes that there is clarity of function and responsibility of the deliberative structure and that there are robust plans to ensure academic governance of the new partners.

16   The staffing structure document provided to the team demonstrates a clear management and reporting structure across the group [005]. The College is led by the Chief Executive Officer supported by the EMT, which consists of the Principals of Grimsby and Scarborough campuses and other cross-campus managers such as the Group Finance and Marketing Directors. The Scarborough and Grimsby campuses each has its own Senior Management Team as well as curriculum faculties led by Associate Principals. All the management team have responsibility for both further and higher education, including the Vice Principal for Curriculum and Higher Education who is a member of the Senior Management Team for the Grimsby campus. The College's CEO was Vice-Chair of the Mixed Economy Group during 2018-20; the Academic Registrar attends Association of Colleges HE Policy Group and has contributed to a reading group for the QAA Quality Code Advice and Guidance Documents [001]. The team formed the view that there is a clear management structure and that senior staff of the College are well informed about current issues and developments relating to the higher education sector.

17   Academic leadership is evidenced at all levels throughout the management structure from the Corporation through the committee and management arrangements. This is illustrated through the approach to strategic planning [071] whereby the Corporation approves the strategic plan for higher education, which is then operationalised by the Senior Management Team and implemented across all campuses and at every level [M1]. The implementation of the strategic plan is monitored and RAG-rated at every HE Oversight Committee meeting [071]. Senior staff, academic staff and professional support staff [M1, M3, M4, M5] expressed clear understanding about their role in the management of academic standards and quality.

18   Evidence from minutes of AASSC [055], of the HE Oversight Committee [004] and of EMT [053, 123, 159] shows that the Vice-Principal for Curriculum and Higher Education and the HE Group Academic Registrar lead the development of higher education and drive the modifications to processes in that the holders of these roles are the authors of the majority of the higher education papers presented to these committees. The Academic Registrar, as head of the HE Quality Office, is responsible for the assurance of standards through the implementation of the higher education quality processes [001], and the College has recently strengthened oversight of quality assurance for higher education provision by an appointment to a newly created post of HE Quality Manager. Professional support staff expressed a clear understanding of the responsibilities of this role in overseeing the work of Quality Managers in each faculty, including in respect of staff training, assurance of assessment processes, and managing the external examining process [M4]. The team

concludes that there are appropriate lines of responsibility and accountability in respect of academic leadership from the Corporation through the management and committee structure to faculty staff.

19   The College's Codes of Practice [035-052] set out policies and procedures which are comprehensive in their coverage of the management of higher education provision and are published for both staff and students on the College website: these include policies relating to, for instance, the validation and amendment of programmes [038]; admissions [040]; the retention and engagement of students [041, 036] and assessment [042]. Student handbooks [081, 093] contain links to relevant policies and procedures. Students met by the team [M2] stated that they understood key policies relating to their studies such as those relating to academic misconduct, appeals and complaints; academic staff also demonstrated awareness of where to locate policies relevant to their work [M3]. Codes of Practice are communicated by being published on the HE Quality and Standards Home page on the website [https://grimsby.ac.uk/quality-and-standards-handbook-home/ accessed 20 April 2020] and both students [M2] and academic staff [M3] were clear as to where they could be found.

20   The Codes of Practice, including its academic regulations [011], also include policies relating to continuous improvement and student engagement [036], teaching research and scholarship [037], and validation and amendment of programmes [038]. These policies support the goals identified in the aspirations and enhancement measures in the 'Strategic Measures of Success' [071], for instance in respect of students being active partners at all levels of the College and in respect of teaching staff being actively engaged in meaningful and useful research, and/or scholarly activity. The current foundation degree regulations [052] and the proposed Bachelor's Degree Academic Regulations [015] each state that in exercising its powers and responsibilities the College will ensure governance over the quality of teaching and scholarship, although as discussed further in Criterion B3, the regulations provide no further information about how this will be ensured.

21   While all policies and Codes of Practice are approved by EMT, there is no static process for where a policy begins its journey. The College has stated [RR1] that 'a judgement is taken by the Academic Registrar as to where the policy/change begins its process'. The development of some codes of practice [RR1] has been considered by the HEQAC or by AASSC, but others begin development at HE Coordinators Enhancement Committee as shown in its minutes [114]. Others arise from Community and Practice meetings which offer an hour-long opportunity once a week for academic staff to be consulted on best practices, discuss changes to processes, and to share scholarly activity and good practice on teaching and learning. Academic staff met by the team stated that they were included in the development of strategies and policies [M3] and confirmed the Community and Practice sessions and HE Coordinators Enhancement Committee meetings as key forums for this activity. The team saw evidence of consultation in the development of policies and procedures. This included consultation with staff who sit on College committees, as shown in the minutes of HESEG [054] where the codes of practice on Admissions Appeals and Accreditation of Prior Learning Transfers [040], Fitness to Practice [046] and Fitness to Study [045] were presented. There was also consultation with the wider body of staff and students outside the formal committee structure. The Community and Practice Register [175] indicated consultation sessions with staff on the introduction of trimester delivery, although the College could only provide evidence of consultation on one policy [191], in relation to the Code of Practice on Retention and Engagement of Students [041] in December 2017. There is evidence of staff consultation in the development of the proposed Bachelor's Degree Regulations through a Community and Practice session [175] attended by 20 staff. There is also evidence of dissemination of new or revised codes of practice in the minutes of HE Coordinators Enhancement Committee meetings [114], including the codes of practice for Admissions Appeals and Accreditation of Prior Learning Transfers [040]

and for Mitigating Circumstances and Short Extensions [043] as well as a new process for suspension of studies.

22   In readiness for the extension of degree awarding powers, the College has developed a draft version of regulations to govern the award of bachelor's degrees [015] which include regulations for the award and classification of qualifications at Level 6. The draft regulations have been the subject of consultation with students and with staff and remain subject to ratification by EMT following external review [001]. The regulations are appropriate for this level of awarding powers because they set out the requirements for the assurance of academic standards and quality, including those relating to programme approval and review, admissions, progression and assessment of students, examining boards and external examiners, and affirm that these regulations sit within the context of the College's Codes of Practice. The suitability of these regulations for the granting of qualifications at Level 6 is further discussed in Criterion B1.

23   The College has a plan for the extension of its awarding powers [172] which lays out the approach to managing standards and quality and has a schedule for the validation of Level 6 provision which is realistic in relation to the timing and number of validations. The plan is credible in that it reviews the existing structures and their capacity to manage the new powers and makes adjustments where necessary, an example being the increase in the number of AASSC meetings to prepare for an increased workload for both new powers and the addition of new partners [172]. Details of higher education staffing resource demonstrate that the higher education quality infrastructure has recently been strengthened by the introduction of a HE Quality Manager to take account of the growth of provision [154]. The team noted that, as expressed by professional support staff [M4], the introduction of this post is intended to enable the HE Academic Registrar to take on a more strategic role across the College to ensure that the College's degree awarding powers are implemented securely across its campuses, including at East Riding College which will follow the College's existing policies and regulations in respect of the assurance of standards [M4].

24   The College has six years' experience of the sole governance of, and 18 years of the production and data for, and management of, award boards at Level 5 [012] and through its relationship with the University of Hull has experience of participating in awards boards for Level 6 provision. Award and module board minutes [012, 018] reviewed by the team are comprehensive and demonstrate consistent application of the academic regulations. The draft academic regulations for bachelor's degrees [015] provide appropriate regulations to extend these existing award board processes for the award of credit and qualifications at Level 6.

25   The College has substantial experience of foundation degree approval under its own FDAP which includes the approval of 22 foundation degrees [017]. The College has also been involved in the design and validation of Level 6 top-up awards in BA Business Management and BA Game Design [070] and full degree programmes with its validating partner, the University of Hull. These demonstrate the ability of the College to develop and deliver programmes with the appropriate academic standards required for bachelor's degrees (see paragraph 65 for further information).

26   The Code of Practice on Continuous Improvement and Student Engagement in Quality [036] states that 'all students will have the opportunity to make their views known to the [College], through representation on appropriate committees and other appropriate mechanisms (both formal and informal)'. It sets out expectations for the membership of the Student Senate and other deliberative committees (the Corporation, AASSC and the HE Oversight Committee) as well as panels responsible for quality assurance functions (Annual Monitoring Review panels and panels responsible for considering self-evaluation and enhancement documents). The Student Senate comprises HE Vice Presidents, one for each

academic level and faculty, who are elected by students. The HE Student Senate President is then elected by members of the Senate [003]. Minutes of HE Student Senate meetings with members of the Senior Management Team [171] show that there are opportunities for students to share their views and that comments are considered and, on the whole, acted upon. Minutes from 2019-20 [058, 152] also show that the College consulted the Student Senate on the development of proposed bachelor's degree regulations, although only three students attended this meeting. In addition to the Student Senate, there are also group representatives who are elected by students on each course and whose role is to 'represent the collective voice of students to [College] staff and tutors' [036]. Senior managers hold meetings four times per year with such representatives and records of these meetings demonstrate [171, 149] consultation regarding changes to the academic regulations and Covid-19 strategies. However, students whom the team met [M2] expressed a low level of awareness of opportunities for expressing their voice through formal channels. The Student Submission [136] describes the College's arrangements for student engagement but offers no evaluation of the effectiveness of these arrangements in engaging students in the governance and management of higher education provision. The team found that while there was evidence of codes of practice being presented through the deliberative committee structure, there was limited evidence of consultation with the wider body of students regarding policies and procedures.

27   The training available to student members of the Corporation consists of the 'Induction booklet for new governors' [204] which, although not intended specifically for student members, is detailed and clear in describing the responsibilities of the Corporation and the role of its members. Additionally, the team heard from senior staff that student members of the Corporation are offered a briefing before each meeting [M5]. For Student Senate members there is a training document [200] which aims to give Vice-Presidents an understanding of their role within the HE Student Senate. Professional support staff affirmed that the HE Quality Manager supports Student Senate representatives at committee meetings by guiding them on the conduct of the meeting and resolving any queries regarding terminology and process [M4]. The team saw no evidence of training for other student representatives, although professional support staff affirmed that they work with student representatives to ensure that they can access papers and contribute to meetings. Although the code of practice on Continuous Improvement and Student Engagement in Quality [036] expresses a requirement that training for elected student representatives should take place annually, student group representatives expressed no awareness of training for their role, but one Student Senate member said that they had a one-one meeting with a representative from the University of Hull regarding the role [M2].

28   Over the past two years the level of attendance by student representatives at HEQAC and its predecessor, HESEG, has been less than 50% [054], and 20% at AASSC [055]. Representation at the HE Coordinators meetings [114] was approximately 75%. Senior staff confirmed [M5] that they wished to increase levels of attendance, citing the use of videoconferencing technology as a potential approach to doing so. The team formed the view that, while there are mechanisms for student engagement in the governance and management of the College, there is only limited evidence of such engagement taking place in the committee structure due to the low levels of attendance of students on committees and limited evidence regarding consultation with students in the development of codes of practice. The College provides other opportunities for engagement, including involvement in programme design, and students whom the team met drew attention [M2] to their participation in module approval meetings. As discussed in Criterion B2, feedback from students is also formally considered as part of the College's programme validation process and the team saw records of the contribution of current students to the approval process in the documentation for a major programme amendment [182]. The College also uses Module Evaluation Questionnaires to survey students on the quality of modules, including commenting upon staff pedagogy and professionalism [054, 071] although the HEQAC

minutes of March 2020 [107] report only a 30% completion rate against the College target of 80% [071]. Actions arising from this meeting required the Assistant Principals to focus on areas where there is non-compliance with completion rather than adopting a blanket approach across all curriculum areas.

29   The College works with other organisation to deliver higher education through the provision of work placements. These are managed in accordance with the Code of Practice for Management of Placement Learning in Higher Education [050] which, as discussed in Criterion B3, sets out the responsibilities within the College for securing, approving and allocating placements and for ensuring that all documentation is checked for suitability and for placement providers' commitments to their responsibilities under health and safety legislation in the workplace. The College's Quality Enhancement Report [132] demonstrates oversight of the work of the College's Placements Team through annual monitoring and reporting, but does not show evidence of plans to monitor the handling of issues arising, such as the apparent lack of sufficient placements in counselling.

Conclusions

30   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*, in particular Annex 4.

31   The College has effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. There is a clear approach to strategic planning which enables the College to review sector developments and to identify the direction of travel for the following year based on measurable targets under four strategic pillars. There is a comprehensive suite of codes of practice which apply to all aspects of higher education provision and which include clear policies in relation to admissions, assessment, academic integrity, progression and awards, and quality assurance. These procedures and regulations apply equally to all levels of higher education and include the College's draft bachelor's degree regulations, and hence provide a robust framework for the implementation of bachelor's degree awarding powers. The College's experience of exercising its own foundation degree awarding powers and enacting its devolved authority under its current and previous validating relationships is a positive indicator of the institutional ability to manage its current powers and the Level 6 powers it seeks. The deliberative committee structure is able to ensure effective academic governance and to oversee the standards and quality across its higher education provision. Staff are consulted through the deliberative committee structure and there is evidence of consultation outside of the formal meetings. Arrangements for the governance and management of learning conducted in partnership with others are documented and subject to oversight through the committee structure to ensure the quality of the learning experience.

32   The team found only limited evidence in relation to student engagement in academic governance. The code of practice for Quality Improvement and Student Engagement provides for student engagement in academic governance through representation on committees but actual engagement is hampered by low levels of student attendance at committee meetings and plans to address this weakness have not been implemented by the College. This weakness entails a risk that strategic and operational planning of higher education provision will be diminished by the absence of student input to internal deliberation. However, this risk is mitigated by evidence of student involvement in, and contributions to, other areas of provision closer to the student experience such as the approval process for new programmes and modules. In this context, the team concluded that this weakness does not present a significant risk overall to the academic governance of quality or standards.

33   On the basis of all the evidence available to the team, it concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

Criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1 - Regulatory frameworks

34   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.

35   The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers* (December 2019).

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

36   The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the *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 described in Annex 4 and 5 of this Guidance as follows.

a   To assess the extent to which the academic standards of the College's higher education qualifications are secured by the College's academic regulations, policies and procedures, the team considered the Academic Regulations [011], the proposed Bachelor Degree Academic Regulations [015], an Exam Board Case Study [012] and the codes of practice on Continuous Improvement and Student Engagement in Quality [036], Board of Examiners and External Examiners [039], Admissions, Admissions Appeals and Accreditation of Prior Learning Transfer [040], Teaching Research and Scholarship [037], Assessment of Students [042], Mitigating Circumstances and Short Extensions [043], Academic Misconduct [044] and Academic Appeals [049]. The team also reviewed AASSC Minutes [055] and the Quality and Standards Handbook [https://grimsby.ac.uk/quality-and-standards-handbook-home/#1562312947637-86c33bf7-6dc2 accessed 24 April 2020].

b   To test the readiness of the College to award qualifications up to Level 6 of The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ), the team considered the proposed Bachelor's Degree Academic Regulations [015], an extract from SMT minutes [123] and the Approach to Extending Powers to Level 6 and Merger document [172].

c   To test whether the College maintains definitive and up-to-date records of each qualification to be awarded, the team considered the Academic Regulations [011] and the codes of practice on Continuous Improvement and Student Engagement in Quality [036], Validation and Amendment of Programmes [038] and Board of Examiners and External Examiners [039]. In addition, validation documentation for three foundation degrees [025-027], programme handbooks for two foundation degrees [093, 094], the Validation Tracker [124], validation forms [014] the Validation Log [142], Code of Practice Log and website change log [177] and

approved course documentation for FDA Tourism Management [https://grimsby.ac.uk/assets/uploads/2017/10/FA-FdA-Tourism-Management-v2.4-PS.pdf] were reviewed and discussions held with academic staff [M3].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

37   The assessment team considered samples of evidence as follows.

38   The team considered a representative sample of three sets of validation and approved course documentation used by the College to approve new programmes, specifically those for the validations of FdA Tourism Management and FdA Events Management, of FdSc Mental Health Studies and of FdSc Professional Healthcare Studies. These documents were considered for the purpose specified in paragraph 36c. This sample is representative because it is drawn from the College's foundation degree provision and comprises a large programme (FdSc Professional Healthcare Studies, 40 students) and two smaller programmes (FdA Tourism Management, 20 students, and FdSc Mental Health Studies, five students). This represents a total of 15% of students on foundation degree programmes.

39   The team considered a representative sample of two programme handbooks, specifically those for FdSc Football Coaching and Youth Development and for FdA Counselling Studies. These documents were considered for the purpose specified in paragraph 36c. This sample is representative because it is drawn from the College's foundation degree provision and comprises the handbook for the largest such programme by student number, namely the FdA Counselling Studies (74 students) and the handbook for one of the smallest such programmes by student number, namely the FdSc Football Coaching and Youth Development (12 students).

What the evidence shows

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

41   The College has a set of academic regulations [011, 015, 052] which are appropriate to its current foundation degree awarding powers in that they provide for the award of credit and awards up to Level 5. These, together with related policies and codes of practice, provide a framework for the implementation of its current awarding powers, notably underpinned by the Codes of Practice for Continuous Improvement and Student Engagement [036], for Teaching, Research and Scholarship [037], Boards of Examiners and External Examiners [039], Admissions, Admissions Appeals and Accreditation of Prior Learning Transfers [040], Assessment of Students [042], Mitigating Circumstances and Extensions [043], Academic Misconduct [044] and Academic Appeals [049]. Collectively, this framework is appropriate for the level of awarding powers and coherent in that it covers the full lifecycle of both the student journey and the development, validation and review of foundation degrees. The academic regulations and associated policies are comprehensive because they define the approach to awarding credit and awards, and provide detailed regulations covering all aspects of assessment, including academic malpractice, mitigating circumstances, processes for handling appeals and complaints, and classification of awards.

42   The Academic Regulations [011, 015] contain the framework for progression, the award of credit and the classification of awards. The team saw evidence of the implementation of the academic regulations in regard to progression and the award of credit and awards being applied accurately and consistently by the Progression and Award Boards [012] and then ratified by AASSC [055] in line with the academic regulations and code of practice [011, 052].

43   As described in paragraph 123, HEQAC has delegated authority for Stage 1 approval of new programmes and AASSC is responsible for approval at Stages 2 and 3. The team saw evidence of these powers being used consistently within the provisions of the academic regulations, in the form of Stage 1 applications for a number of programme approvals (FdSc Mental Health Nursing, BA Animal Management and FdA Professional Healthcare Studies) being considered by the predecessor of HEQAC, as shown in the minutes of HESEG [054], and in the form of full panel reports being presented to AASSC [055] and subsequent reporting to the Executive Management Team as shown in its minutes [053].

44   The College has developed a set of academic regulations for bachelor's degrees [015] in readiness for its own Level 6 provision. These regulations, in draft form, are currently progressing through the deliberative committee structure [123] and were presented to the Senior Management Team (SMT) meeting of February 2020 [123] which approved them subject to a minor clarification. The regulations are now subject to ratification by the EMT. The draft regulations are comprehensive and appropriate in that they provide detailed regulations for the classification and award of credit and awards up to Level 6. The College has already established regulations and procedures regarding the wider academic framework through its Codes of Practice, as discussed in criterion A1: the College's description of its approach to extending powers to Level 6 [172] affirms its plans for reviewing its codes of practice to ensure that they align with the increased powers, identifying the specific changes required in each code of practice arising from its extended powers and the process and timescale by which each will be achieved. The team found that these arrangements form an appropriate basis for preparing, and for the granting of, qualifications at Level 6.

45   The College has a dedicated higher education quality infrastructure to monitor and oversee the implementation of academic regulations, policies and procedures across the group structure. The HE Quality Office uses standardised programme approval documentation to manage the validation and modification process as set out in the Code of Practice on validation and amendment of programmes [038]. Standard templates [014] for definitive course documentation - in the form of programme and module specifications - require descriptions of learning outcomes, assessment and teaching and learning strategies of the programme. Samples of validation documentation for five foundation programmes reviewed by the team demonstrate that the College process of scrutinising documentation is thorough and comprehensive with constructive feedback given to programme teams through the different stages of the validation [025, 026, 027, 069]. Programme specifications are made available to students in their programme handbooks and module specifications in their module handbooks [093; 094].

46   The validation process is tracked by the HE Quality Office using a tracking document [124] which details outcomes of each stage. The team was provided with a sample of a more detailed log which the College intends to use in future [142]. The HE Quality Office maintains the definitive documentation of every programme and keeps a register of programmes which details dates of validation and revalidation. Modifications to programmes are noted on the register but it does not record when they took place. However, the register of programmes accurately reflected the validation documentation seen by the team [025-027].

47   Programme and module specifications form the basis for delivery and assessment and academic staff whom the team met affirmed [M3] this to be the case and stated that correct and up-to-date versions of programme and module specifications are accessible to all on the College's intranet. Definitive copies of codes of practice and validation documentation are also kept on the College's intranet [059] and are available on its website. An examination by the team of programme specifications on the website showed

consistency with the sample of documentation approved at validation events [https://grimsby.ac.uk/assets/uploads/2017/10/FA-FdA-Tourism-Management-v2.4-PS.pdf accessed 22 April 202020, and 025]. Staff also confirmed that the content of information about each programme in student handbooks is checked annually by the HE Quality Office [M3]. The HE Quality Office also arranges for the review and development of higher education policies, tracked using the Code of Practice Log [177].

48   The Code of Practice for the Board of Examiners [039] sets out the requirements for the preparation of data for the Board of Examiners. The HE Management Information System team prepares results grids using the definitive documentation, and results are entered on the system by module tutors. Meetings of the Board of Examiners are chaired by the Associate Principal for the faculty and have a member of the HE Quality Office to ensure consistent and accurate application of the academic regulations [012]. Examination Board records examined by the team [012] showed that the Board had correctly used its progression and award regulations to reach decisions relating to student progression and awards [011].

49   Students and alumni are provided with records of study as evidenced by the examples of academic records transcripts and diploma supplements provided to the team [018]. These contain a comprehensive record of modules titles, credits, level and marks awarded, together with the overall award. As specified in the code of practice for Board of Examiners and External Examiners [036], these are produced by the HE management information system and approved by the HE Quality Office prior to release.

Conclusions

50   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*, in particular Annex 4.

51   The College has transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications. The existing academic regulations for foundations degrees and the draft Bachelor's Degree Regulations, together with related policies and codes of practice, provide a suitable framework for the implementation of its awarding powers. The regulations and associated policies are comprehensive and clearly articulate how the College awards academic credit and qualifications. The College has made recent amendments to its codes of practice and Foundation Degree Regulations, demonstrating that it monitors and reviews its performance and makes modifications to ensure that its regulations and associated process are effective and consistently applied. It maintains definitive and up-to-date records of each validated programme which are used as the basis for the delivery and assessment of each programme. The central role of the HE Quality Office ensures that documentation is held securely and currency is maintained. Documentation is easily accessible, and monitoring and review processes ensure that it is consistently used as the reference point for all programmes. Records of study for students and alumni are securely held and the regulations governing their production ensure accuracy.

52   The assessment team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

Criterion B2 - Academic standards

53   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 those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

54   The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers* (December 2019).

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

55   The QAA assessment team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the *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 described in Annex 4 and 5 of this Guidance as follows.

a   To establish how the College sets and maintains the academic standards of its higher education qualifications and assures itself that there is consistency of approach across the College, the team considered the College's records of all of its validated programmes [017, 034, 140], the Academic Regulations for Foundation Degrees [011, 052], the proposed Academic Regulations for Bachelor's Degrees [015], the Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes Code of Practice [038], documentation relating to the validations of three foundation degrees [025-027], the Quality Enhancement Report 2019-20 [132, 146], the College's validation forms [014], the College's Full Approval Report pro forma [032], examples and minutes of Stage 1 validations which were not approved [061], annual monitoring reports for three bachelor's programmes and three foundation degrees [062-067], evidence of the involvement of external stakeholders in the College's validation process [069], examples of modifications to programmes [151] and evidence considered in support of the validation process [153]. The team also reviewed evidence of student involvement in programme validations and modifications [182], the Student Submission [136], the minutes of the Student Senate meeting [191] and met students [M2] and academic staff [M3] to gain their views of the approach.

b   To determine whether the College's arrangements for programme approval, monitoring and review enable it to ensure that academic standards are being maintained, the team considered the College's Academic Regulations for Foundation Degrees [011, 052], the proposed Academic Regulations for Bachelor's Degrees [015], the codes of practice on Continuous Improvement and Student Engagement in Quality [036] and on Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes [038], the College's validation forms [014], documentation relating to the validations of three foundation degrees [025-027], the College's Full

Approval Report pro forma [032], examples of Stage 1 validations which were not approved and minutes of the meetings [061], the annual monitoring reports for three bachelor's degrees and two foundation degrees [062-067], examples of modifications to programmes [151] and the Approach to Extending Powers to Level 6 and Merger document [172].

c   To verify that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment, the team considered the College's Academic Regulations for Foundation Degrees [011, 052], the proposed Academic Regulations for Bachelor's Degrees [015], the Assessment of Students Code of Practice [042], examples of exam board documentation [012], examples of transcripts of academic records [018], and examples of Module Assessment Task pro formas [170].

d   To identify the College's use of appropriate external and independent expertise in establishing and maintaining academic standards, the team reviewed the College's Academic Regulations for Foundation Degrees [011, 052], the proposed Academic Regulations for Bachelor's Degrees [015], the Board of Examiners and External Examiners Code of Practice [039], minutes of HESEG [054], examples of external examiner reports and responses by the College [031], the Quality Enhancement Report 2019-20 [146], and examples of recent annual monitoring reports [062-067].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

56   The assessment team considered samples of evidence as follows.

57   The team considered a representative sample of three sets of validation documentation used by the College to approve new programmes, specifically those for the validations of FdA Tourism Management and FdA Events Management, of FdSc Mental Health Studies and of FdSc Professional Healthcare Studies. These documents were considered for the purposes specified in paragraph 55a. This sample is representative because it is drawn from the College's foundation degree provision and comprises a large programme (FdSc Professional Healthcare Studies, 40 students) and two smaller programmes (FdA Tourism Management, 20 students, and FdSc Mental Health Studies, five students). This represents a total of 15% of students on foundation degree programmes. In addition, the team considered the approved course documentation for FdA Tourism Management, selected because that programme is representative of the three programmes whose validation documentation was considered.

58   The team considered a representative sample of annual monitoring reports consisting of the two most recent reports for each of BA Independent Games Design, BA Fine Art, BA Counselling, FdA Tourism and Events, FdSc Mental Health Studies, and FdSc Professional Healthcare Studies. These documents were considered for the purposes specified in paragraphs 55a, 55b and 55d. This sample is representative because it is drawn from the College's foundation degree and bachelor's degree provision and includes programmes with a total of 129 students, representing 13% of students on such programmes.

What the evidence shows

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

60   Since the award of FDAP in August 2013, the College has validated 23 foundation degree programmes [001]; it currently offers 18 different foundation degree programmes and over 25 programmes leading to externally validated qualifications at Level 6 [017, 034, 140]. The College's Academic Regulations for Foundation and Bachelor's Degrees specify the

requirements for programme development and approval leading to higher education qualifications and ensure that programmes are set at the standard appropriate to the level of the award, as described in *The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies* (FHEQ) [011, 015, 052]. The College's process for the approval of new programmes consists of three formal stages: Strategic Planning Approval, Programme Proposal Approval, and Full Programme Approval [038]. Any programmes put forward for validation must demonstrate compliance with the College's Academic Regulations as part of Programme Proposal Approval and Full Programme Approval; alignment of the proposed programme to the FHEQ must be evidenced at each stage of the validation process [038]. The documentation examined by the team relating to examples of programme validations and amendments [014, 025-027, 032, 061, 069, 151, 153, 182] showed that the foundation degree programmes in the sample were consistent with the descriptor for higher education qualifications at level 5 on the FHEQ. The team was able to confirm that the College offers programmes at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ.

61   The Academic Regulations for Foundation and Bachelor's Degrees [011, 015, 052] specify the three-stage process by which the College approves and awards its degrees. These regulations refer explicitly to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and other relevant external points of reference in the setting and maintaining of academic standards. The College's Academic Regulations are operationalised in its HE Codes of Practice. As specified in the Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes Code of Practice, the College's programme approval process also takes appropriate account of the UK Quality Code [038] and other external points of reference, such as Degree Characteristics and Subject Benchmark Statements [038] published by QAA. As part of the Full Programme Approval stage, confirmation is sought that module and programme learning outcomes are aligned with the FHEQ and, where relevant, that any programmes put forward for validation meet the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) [038]. This is evidenced, for example, in the validation documents for the FdSc Mental Health Nursing Studies programme [026], and the FdSc in Health Studies [027]. Feedback from suitably qualified and experienced external academic consultants, external stakeholders, and students is formally considered as part of the College's programme validation process [011, 015, 069]. This is shown, for instance, in the validation documents for three foundation degree programmes [025-027] and the Full Approval Report (HE05I) for the major amendment to the FdA TV Production programme, which records the contribution of an external academic consultant and current students on the course [182].

62   The College's Annual Monitoring Reports provide assurance that programme learning outcomes remain appropriate to the level of the qualification and that they continue to align with relevant external points of reference, such as the FHEQ and QAA-published Subject Benchmark Statements [062-067]. For example, the Annual Monitoring Report for the BA Fine Art explicitly confirms that 'all learning outcomes meet the expectations of the awarding body' and that 'threshold academic standards set for the award/module(s) are being maintained in accordance with the Framework for HE Qualifications and subject benchmarks' [063]. The annual Quality Enhancement Report also provides assurance to the College's Senior Management Team that programmes map to the expectations set out in the QAA Degree Characteristics and Subject Benchmark Statements as appropriate, that programme outcomes meet the requirements at the relevant level of the FHEQ and that, where relevant, programmes continue to meet PSRB standards [132, 146]. Evidence of the latter can be seen, for example, in the validation documents for the FdSc Professional Healthcare Studies [027].

63   The documents reviewed by the team relating to the involvement of external stakeholders in the validation process [069], supporting evidence for validations [153], and evidence of student involvement in validations and modifications [182] showed that due consideration is given by the College to external and independent points of expertise,

including students. The Student Submission, and the minutes of the Student Senate meeting held in January 2020, report student consultation on the development of the Academic Regulations for Bachelor's Degrees and provide further confirmation of engagement with student feedback [136; 191]. Thus, for example, the Student Submission states that the 'Student Senate had the opportunity to review the new regulations' and 'could add input to ensure that [the regulations] will be fair to all types of students with varied lifestyles' [136]. The views expressed by students and academic staff at the College in meetings were largely consistent with the documentary evidence examined [M2, M3]. For instance, one student confirmed that he had been involved in the validation of a programme at the College and described how his feedback had been used as part of this process [M2]. The team thus formed the view that the College takes appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and external and independent points of expertise, including students, in the setting and maintaining of academic standards through programme approval.

64   The Academic Regulations require that the threshold standards for higher education qualifications offered by the College are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks [011, 015, 052]. As noted in paragraph 60, the College's process for the approval of new programmes consists of three formal stages [038]. The Strategic Planning Approval stage aims to establish whether there is a prima facie academic and business case to support the development of a full proposal [038]. The Programme Proposal Approval stage, which is mandatory for all programmes validated under the College's awarding powers, seeks confirmation that the proposal adheres to the College's Academic Regulations and HE Codes of Practice and is also used to guide the next stage of programme development [038]. The purpose of the Full Programme Approval stage is to confirm that new or significantly amended programmes have been designed appropriately, and that there are suitable arrangements for teaching and assessment [038]. Alignment of any proposed programme to the FHEQ and other relevant external points of reference, such as QAA Degree Characteristics and Subject Benchmark Statements, must be evidenced at each stage of the validation process [038]. The College has developed appropriate template documents to support each stage of its validation process and completed templates reviewed by the team confirmed that they are suited to this purpose [014; 032; 038].

65   The sample of programme validations and amendments examined by the team showed that programmes are approved only when academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with the College's own academic frameworks and regulations [025-027, 151]. Thus, for example, the validation documents for the FdA Tourism Management programme explicitly confirm that the programme follows the College's quality assurance standards and that it was developed in line with appropriate external points of reference [025]. The documentation also shows that the external academic consultant appointed for the validation of this programme confirmed that the learning outcomes are aligned to the FHEQ and relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statements [025]. When programme proposals are not granted approval, there are clear rationales for the decisions taken [061]. The team thus formed the view that programme approval arrangements at the College are robust, 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 its own academic frameworks and regulations.

66   The College's Academic Regulations for Foundation and Bachelor's Degrees require programmes to be set at the standard appropriate to the level of the award as described in the FHEQ, and state that credit and qualifications are awarded only where assessment demonstrates the achievement of relevant learning outcomes [011, 015, 052]. The Assessment of Students Code of Practice explicitly requires that assessment design is in line with the standards appropriate to the level of the award as described in the FHEQ [042]. This Code of Practice also sets out a detailed process designed to ensure that academic standards in assessment are maintained and that assessments are conducted 'by

competent and impartial markers using methods that enable rigour, probity and fairness' [042]. The College's Assessment Task Proforma (ATP) verifies that assessment tasks are aligned to the internally approved validation documentation, the modules' intended learning outcomes and the relevant FHEQ level descriptors [170]. The team's review of examination board documents [012], which were clear and detailed, and of transcripts of academic records [018], showed that the College had followed its internal processes and procedures for assessment and for the tracking of credits and awards correctly. The team formed the view that credit and qualifications are awarded where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes at threshold standards has been demonstrated.

67   The College's Academic Regulations set the expectation that all foundation and bachelor's degrees are subject to revalidation every six years to ensure programme currency [011, 015, 052]. The Continuous Improvement and Student Engagement in Quality Code of Practice [036] provides a structured framework for continuous improvement in relation to academic governance and the roles and responsibilities of staff in securing and maintaining standards, including in relation to programme monitoring and review [036]. All programmes must also be monitored annually through the production of Annual Monitoring Reports in order to manage and safeguard academic standards. These periodic programme reviews, conducted by a panel of academic or professional peers, are carried out based on evidence of programme performance and may lead to module or programme amendments as part of the continuous enhancement of the College's academic portfolio [011, 015, 052]. The representative sample of recent Annual Monitoring Reports examined by the team confirm that programme learning outcomes remain appropriate to the level of the qualification and that they continue to align with relevant external points of reference [062-067]. For instance, the Annual Monitoring Report for the BA Independent Games Design programme explicitly confirms that the programme learning outcomes are appropriate to the level of the qualification and the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements [062].

68   The College intends to adopt a series of strategic measures to ensure that academic standards are being maintained following its application to extend degree awarding powers and the planned merger with East Riding College [172]. For example, as described in Criterion A1, the College has invested in several group-wide roles to make sure that practice at each campus meets the expected standards [172]. The Executive Director of Quality Improvement and Learner Success and the Academic Registrar plan to work closely with Senior Management Teams across campuses to ensure the application of standards at each is consistent [172]. AASSC, which has oversight of academic standards for all College-validated degrees, will increase the frequency of its meetings from three to six per year and will expand its membership to include all Vice Principals, the Executive Director of Quality Improvement and Learner Success, and at least two representatives from East Riding College [172]. Based on the evidence, the team was able to determine that the College's programme approval and monitoring arrangements for academic standards are sound and explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and maintained.

69   The College appoints at least one external examiner for all provision leading to a foundation or bachelor's degree [011, 015, 052]. The Academic Regulations for Foundation and Bachelor's Degrees state explicitly that external examiners are expected to provide feedback and recommendations on whether threshold academic standards are maintained by the College in accordance with the FHEQ and any applicable Subject Benchmark Statements [011, 015, 052]. External examiners are also expected to comment on whether academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which they have experience [011, 015, 052], although, as discussed in paragraph 114, there is a lack of consistent involvement of external examiners in approving all assessment tasks. External examiners are required to formally endorse the outcomes of the assessment processes they have been appointed to scrutinise, a record of

which is kept in the minutes of the Module Board of Examiners [011, 015, 052]. The College's Board of Examiners and External Examiners Code of Practice [039] also formally recognises the functions of the external examining process as defined in the UK Code of Practice, which include ensuring that the threshold academic standards of each award and its component parts is set and maintained at the appropriate level, and providing assurance that the standards of programmes are comparable to those of other higher education providers. The evidence examined by the team showed that the College takes appropriate account of comments and recommendations by external examiners [031, 062-067, 146] and that analysis of this feedback on foundation degrees is considered at institutional level by the HE Strategic Enhancement Group [054]. The team determined that the provisions in place for external examining allow the College to make use of appropriate external and independent expertise in establishing and maintaining threshold academic standards and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications.

Conclusions

70   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*, in particular Annex 4.

71   The College has sound arrangements for the setting and maintenance of academic standards in the approval of programmes, for operationalising its codes of practice governing higher education, for monitoring of programmes in respect of academic standards, and for taking account of external points of reference and independent expertise. Evidence from these arrangements demonstrate that the College has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining academic standards and that it designs and delivers programmes that meet the threshold standards of the FHEQ. These mechanisms are systematically built into programme design, approval and monitoring and involve external input at each stage. The weakness in relation to the lack of consistent involvement of external examiners in approving all assessment tasks has been acknowledged by the College and is considered further in Criterion B3. The assessment team concludes that the criterion is met.

Criterion B3 - Quality of the academic experience

72   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.

73   The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers* (December 2019).

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

74   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 described in Annex 4 and 5 of this Guidance as follows.

a   To verify that the College operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes, the team examined documentation relating to validation, specifically the Academic Regulations for Foundation Degrees and the College suite of Codes of Practice [035-052] including the code of practice on Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes [038], additional clarification provided by the College about validation [203], the Validation Log [142], the course risk assessment document [134], the validation documents for three foundation degree programmes [025-027] and of two further programmes [069; 070] offered by the College as evidence of the use of external expertise, and the record of validations in progress 2018-19 [124]. The team also considered the Approach to Extending Powers to Level 6 and Merger document [172] and evidence of the deliberative committee structure [003], including minutes of HESEG [054], AASSC [055], HEQAC [107] and the HE Coordinators Committee [114]. Information provided for staff on the College's intranet [059], the Community and Practice timetable [122], evidence of employer consultation in the planned development of a BSc Engineering [190] and evidence of student involvement in validations and modifications [182] was also considered. The team held meetings with senior staff [M1], students [M2], academic staff [M3] and professional support staff [M4] in relation to all the above.

b   To determine whether the College articulates and implements a strategic approach to learning and teaching and to the academic development of students, the team considered a range of documentation, specifically information provided about the overarching College's strategic objectives [https://tecpartnership.com/strategic-objectives-strategies/ and https://tecpartnership.com/documents/strategic_plan/GI_Strategic_Plan.pdf], a draft strategic plan for 2020-21 [071], the Academic Regulations [052; 015] the code of practice on Teaching, Research and Scholarship [037], the Teaching and Learning policy [024], the deliberative committee structure [003], HEQAC minutes [107], the Quality Enhancement Report for 2018-19 [132], Self-evaluation and Enhancement Documents (SEEDs) [131], the Partner Quality Enhancement Report [016],

programme specifications contained in validation documentation for three foundation degree programmes [025–027], the Community and Practice timetable [122], the student submission [136, 137], the course risk assessment document and evidence of its oversight [134; 107], information about the teaching and learning observation system [https://grimsby.ac.uk/documents/highereducation/quality/HE04/HE04-Teaching-Research-Scholarship.pdf] and an explanatory paper from the College about its approach towards and planning for a teaching and learning strategy [193]. Information on learning resources was reviewed through website materials on campus facilities [https://grimsby.ac.uk/campus-facilities/], documentation that underpins health and safety, including the Health and Safety Policy [075], the Safeguarding Policy [079] and risk assessments [078; 076; 179], information about signage [073; 074] and information about training for staff in providing an inclusive classroom [077; 169]. In addition, to assess learning opportunities provided to students that may be studying at a distance, the team considered the Management of Placement Learning in Higher Education Code of Practice [050], a student placement handbook [081] together with a case study [080] and examples of placement support provided by the College [082]. To determine whether every student is enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development the team examined the Assessment of Students Code of Practice [042] and assignment briefs for two programmes [084-087]. Written statements [RR1] and evidence from meetings with senior staff [M1, M5], students [M2], academic staff [M3], and professional support staff [M4] were also considered.

c   To verify that the College operates valid and reliable processes of assessment, the team considered the Academic Regulations for Foundation Degrees [052] together with the codes of practice on Assessment of Students, on Board of Examiners and External Examiners, on Academic Misconduct and on Admissions, Appeals and Accreditation of Prior Learning Codes of Practice [042; 039, 040, 044], the deliberative committee structure [003] and the processes followed to moderate assessment tasks [097]. Evidence of these processes in operation included external examiner feedback about internal moderation [012; 099; 100], an Examining Board Case Study [012], minutes of the examination board [089, 090], EMT [053], the HE Oversight Committee [004] and AASSC [055], the operation of the system for accreditation of prior learning (APL) [143] and a report on APL prepared for a forthcoming HEQAC [186], a template module handbook [144] two student handbooks for foundation degree programmes [093; 094], three examples of assignment briefs for foundation degree programmes [084; 086; 087] and the generic marking criteria [148]. Assessment information was also obtained from examples of the work of the Academic Achievement and Success coaches [091, 092, 126-127], the validation documentation for three foundation degrees [025-027], the orientation timetable [095], the Student Support Strategy [164; 165] and the scope of Learner Services [https://grimsby.ac.uk/learner-services/]. Committee documentation was also considered, including minutes of HESEG [007], a Report on Student Support presented to HEQAC [128], a paper presented to HESEG on Student Support [007], AASSC Academic Misconduct Paper [096], the College Quality Enhancement Report [132] and SEEDs [131], and the Replacement HE Standards Staffing Structure [130]. The team also considered the Student Submission [136] and views of students [M2] as well as written [RR1, RR2] and verbal statements from senior, [M1, M5] academic [M3] and professional support staff [M4].

d   To identify and assess the College's use of external examiners, the team considered the Academic Regulations for Foundation Degrees [052], the Board of Examiners and External Examiners and Assessment of Students Codes of Practice

[039, 042], together with information about the appointment and induction of external examiners [088; 098] to understand how they are used and appointed. It studied evidence of the documentation used to underpin the assessment approval processes [097] and examined information about external examiner involvement in the moderation of assessment tasks provided in annual monitoring reports [063; 132], examining board minutes, associated external examiner reports [012; 089; 090; 099; 100] and the external examiner report format [https://grimsby.ac.uk/quality-and-standards-handbook-home/#1562312947438-d1465872-2c10] to assess the effective operation of these processes. The team also considered College oversight of external examiner feedback in the College response to external examiners document [031], Self-evaluation and Enhancement Documents [131], the College Quality Enhancement Report [132], the College's annual Quality Enhancement Report [016] and in HE Oversight Committee minutes [004]. It studied annual programme monitoring reports for three foundation degree programmes and two bachelor's degree programmes to see the impact of external examiner feedback in annual review [062-067]. The team reviewed the operation of examination boards [012], reports from external examiners for two foundation degree programmes and the College's responses [099;100], and external examiner oversight reports [031]. It also met senior staff [M1] and academic staff [M3] and considered written responses from the College [RR1].

e   To identify and evaluate the College's procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints and to assess whether they enable enhancement, the team considered the codes of practice on Admissions, Appeals and Accreditation of Prior Learning [040], on Academic Appeals [049] and on Complaints and Concerns [051], the Quality Enhancement Report [132], evidence of changes to regulations as a result of students appeals [184], the Approach to Extending Powers to Level 6 and Merger document [172]. It also considered the minutes of HE Oversight Committee, HEQAC and AASSC [004; 101; 106; 107; 055] to understand the oversight of these processes. It reviewed the appeal and complaints logs for the past three years [102; 103], evidence of oversight of appeals [173], together with examples of letters sent to students to inform them of the outcomes of appeals and complaints [104; 105]. It looked at the information provided on the College website [https://grimsby.ac.uk/] and reviewed student handbooks for two foundation degrees [093; 094] to understand what is provided for students. The team also spoke to students [M2].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

75   The assessment team considered samples of evidence as follows.

76   The team considered a representative sample of three sets of validation documentation used by the College to approve new programmes, specifically those for the validations of FdA Tourism Management and FdA Events Management, of FdSc Mental Health Studies and of FdSc Professional Healthcare Studies. These documents were considered for the purpose specified in paragraph 74c. This sample is representative because it is drawn from the College's foundation degree provision and comprises a large programme (FdSc Professional Healthcare Studies, 40 students) and two smaller programmes (FdA Tourism Management, 20 students, and FdSc Mental Health Studies, five students). This represents a total of 15% of students on foundation degree programmes.

77   The team considered a representative sample of two programme handbooks, specifically those for FdSc Football Coaching and Youth Development and for FdA Counselling Studies. These documents were considered for the purpose specified in paragraph 74c and 74e.This sample is representative because it is drawn from the College's foundation degree provision and comprises the handbook for the largest such programme by

student number, namely the FdA Counselling Studies (74 students) and the handbook for one of the smallest such programmes by student number, namely the FdSc Football Coaching and Youth Development (12 students).

78   The team considered a representative sample of annual monitoring reports consisting of the two most recent reports for each of BA Independent Games Design, BA Fine Art, BA Counselling, FdA Tourism and Events, FdSc Mental Health Studies, and FdSc Professional Healthcare Studies. These documents were considered for the purpose specified in paragraph 74d. This sample is representative because it is drawn from the College's foundation degree and bachelor's degree provision and includes programmes with a total of 129 students, representing 13% of students on such programmes.

79   The team considered a representative sample of assessment briefs at Level 4 and at Level 5 for FdA Performing Arts and for FdSc Community Mental Health. These documents were considered for the purpose specified in paragraph 74b. This sample was representative because it was drawn from the College's foundation degree provision and includes programmes with a total of 49 students, representing 5% of students on such programmes.

80   The team considered a representative sample of external examiner's reports for 2018-19 and the College's responses, for FDA Counselling Studies and for FDA Early Childhood Studies. These documents were considered for the purpose specified in paragraph 74d. This sample was representative because it was drawn from the College's foundation degree provision and includes programmes with a total of 144 students, representing 15% of students on such programmes.

What the evidence shows

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

Design and approval of programmes

82   Approval and validation are subject to the Academic Regulations for Foundation Degrees [052]. The College's suite of HE Codes of Practice includes the Code of Practice on Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes [038] which outlines the steps and provides clarity as to how the College operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes as well as for periodic review/major modification. Internally, the steps include checks throughout the process, overseen by the HE Quality Office, and specify that formal sign-off is provided by the chair of AASSC with final sign-off provided by the Executive Management Team [038]. The College's plans for the operation of extended powers [172] confirm its intention that this process will continue. The evidence the team reviewed gave it confidence that the committee structure [003] allows for opportunities to develop and test programme proposals while the team noted that the Code of Practice [038] allows HEQAC to maintain oversight of validations in progress. The operational plan for the new powers [172] documents in detail the changes that will be made to the HE Codes of Practice if the Level 6 application is successful, together with a timetable for future programme revalidations which was considered realistic by the team.

83   HEQAC maintains oversight of intended validations and their resource requirements [107]. The College operates a risk assessment process [134] to ensure resource requirements for programmes are understood and managed, which is considered at HEQAC [107; 054]. The Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes Code of Practice [038] sets out a mandatory programme evaluation for all existing programmes undergoing major amendment or reaching the end of the previous validation's lifespan [https://grimsby.ac.uk/quality-and-standards-handbook-home/#1562312947637-86c33bf7-6dc2 accessed 17 February 2020]. Inherent in validation processes is a requirement to

review the outcomes of the programme in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of the existing curriculum and student satisfaction. Through undertaking the review of the evidence the team noted that as part of a validation in 2019 [025] this review did not take place. As such, the team was unclear as to how the College had followed its own process in this case. The College explained [142] that this was because the necessary form did not exist at the time, but that there were informal discussions [M5]. The team noted the additional clarification [203] in which the College acknowledged the issue that the code of practice had not been adhered to. The College also went further and stated its intention to resolve this issue by making changes to the revalidation process by September 2020 and by ensuring that all major amendments follow the prescribed process. The team therefore is content that there are processes in place to ensure that any programme reapproval/major modifications are dealt with appropriately. However, the team concluded that there is a potential risk to quality if these processes are not followed, and in particular that any potential for not considering the strengths and weaknesses of an existing programme could impact on the quality of the outcome of this review process.

84   The College's suite of HE Codes of Practice [035-052] are readily available on the College website and internally on the College's intranet; the HE Quality Office maintains the 'Shared Resources' page for staff employed by the College for information on programme design and development [001, 059]. Academic staff affirmed that they are also provided with information via emails, on the virtual learning environment (VLE) and through their departments, and that they can access advice from their curriculum manager and from the Quality Team and the University of Hull [M3]. The new role of the HE Quality Manager is intended to further support the provision of advice to staff [M4]. Community and Practice sessions are also used to support staff, such as the session focusing on validating degrees with multiple pathways [122]. Senior staff [M1] reported that, as the College moves into design and delivery at Level 6, it will strengthen its self-critical academic community through the weekly Community and Practice sessions that provide a platform for staff to present their research and scholarship and also provide information on changes in policy and practice. However, low levels of attendance by academic staff at these sessions has been raised as a concern at the HE Coordinators Group in March 2019 [114] and again more recently by HEQAC in March 2020 [107]. The College's plans for the operation of its intended powers [172] include, as a target, the aim that 100% of Community and Practice sessions will enable staff to enhance their practice and/or scholarship and that every member of staff will attend 60% of timetabled sessions. In the view of the team, staff attendance at Community and Practice sessions means it is not currently adequate as a primary means of information and support for academic staff, but other actions which the College has taken, specifically the provision of information on the intranet and on the VLE and the appointment of a higher education manager have the potential to provide more consistent guidance and support for staff.

85   Stage 3 of the programme approval process involves a Full Approvals Panel initially convening as a reading group and leading subsequently to a full approval event, provided conditions are met [038]. The chair of the panel formally advises the chair of AASSC whether the programme can proceed, who in turn issues a confirmation of permission to proceed [038]. The HE Quality Team ensures that the signatures of the Executive Management Team required to formally adopt the course under College awarding powers are completed [038]. Progress through the programme approval process is monitored by AASSC, whose minutes [055] show that it confirms full approval reports. The log of validations in progress [124] demonstrates that the HE Quality Office maintains oversight of programme validations, and the forward validations log [142] affirms that, in future, validations will be further tracked by means of a report to AASSC on progress.

86   A programme cannot be approved without independent externality. At Stage 2 the team is asked to provide the name and contact details of at least one academic recognised

in the subject(s) in which the programme is based. This must not be a current or recent external examiner. This information is used to obtain an external independent view of the appropriateness of the academic standards of the programme [https://grimsby.ac.uk/quality-and-standards-handbook-home/#1562312947637-86c33bf7-6dc2, 038]. The approvals of both the FdSc Football Coaching and Development in the Community and of the BA Music Production [069, 070] involved both consultation with local employers and also the participation of an external academic and an employer at the full approval meeting, demonstrating external input to the approval process. There is evidence of employer involvement for a planned development in engineering [190]. Neither employers nor students were involved at the final approval panel for FdA Tourism Management, FdSc Mental Health Studies and FdSc Professional Healthcare Studies, though the panels included an external academic [025–027]. Some of the students whom the assessment team met confirmed that they had participated in validations [182; M2].

87   The approval documentation and programme specifications for the BA Business Management (with three named pathways) and BA Music Production (with two named pathways and with full and part-time modes) show that coherence of these programmes is secured through clearly articulated modular structures with a significant volume of shared modules [070]. A Community and Practice session has taken place focusing on validating degrees with multiple pathways to support staff [122]. Academic staff told the team that programmes with several pathways always had a single programme leader and one staff team in order to maintain coherence [M3].

88   In order to proceed to a full approval event one of the conditions that must be met is the formal consultation by the programme team with the HE Learning Centre, who advises on the availability of the learning resources specified to operate the programme; this advice is in the form of a completed pro forma [038; https://grimsby.ac.uk/quality-and-standards-handbook-home/#1562312947637-86c33bf7-6dc2 accessed 18 February 2020]. The operation of this process is documented clearly in the approvals of the three foundation degree validations reviewed by the team [025-027]. A course risk assessment form [134] demonstrates that oversight of resource requirements is maintained and professional support staff [M4] affirmed that this risk assessment is considered by the Senior Management Team to ensure that resourcing is in place for newly validated programmes.

Learning and teaching

89   Senior staff confirmed to the team that the College does not currently have an explicit higher education strategy that makes specific reference to teaching and learning [M5]. The College is in the process of drafting an HE plan for 2020-21 under the auspices of the HE Oversight Group. While the current draft of this plan [071] affirms that 'learner success is our number one priority', the plan contained no reference to the measures the College would be taking to support students in achieving successful outcomes. The Teaching and Learning policy [024] offers detailed descriptions of the College's arrangements for appraising the quality of pedagogy through classroom observation but does not offer insight into how the College may support and ensure the quality of teaching and learning. During the assessment, the College provided the team with a document that sets out its plans for the development of the higher education Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which will follow the agreement of an overarching higher education Strategy and also of an overarching Teaching and Learning Strategy to include both further education and higher education that are both due to be developed [193]. The College confirmed that this document [193] had been generated specifically for the team and had therefore not yet been considered through any of the College's governance arrangements [M5]. While the team acknowledged this, it formed the view that the plans expressed within it had not had the opportunity to become fully developed and, as such, contained only a limited response to the lack of an overall strategic approach to supporting students to

achieve successful outcomes. In scrutinising the document [193] the team noted that there was an existing Teaching and Learning Strategy. But while a link was provided, it was confirmed to the assessment team [RR1] that this has been taken down by the College so that the references to the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) could be updated.

90 In the absence of documentary evidence which demonstrated a strategic commitment to supporting students to achieve successful outcomes, the team sought other evidence sources relating to the College's approach to teaching and learning, as follows.

91 While one of the College's corporate objectives is 'to ensure outstanding learner success is their number one priority', teaching and learning is not mentioned in these objectives [https://tecpartnership.com/strategic-objectives-strategies/ accessed 18 February 2020]. The objectives are expanded into College-based strategic plans structured around learner success, culture, financial security and brand and reputation but do not include references to teaching and learning [https://tecpartnership.com/documents/strategic_plan/GI_Strategic_Plan.pdf accessed 18 February 2020].

92 The current Foundation Degree Regulations [052] and the proposed Bachelor's Degree Academic Regulations [015] each state that, in meeting its powers and responsibilities, the College will ensure governance over the quality of teaching and scholarship, but include no further information about how this will be ensured.

93 One of the responsibilities of HEQAC [003] is to report on the College's ability to deliver high quality courses and this includes a bimonthly update on teaching and learning; however, from the evidence seen by the team, such as the minutes of meetings [107], it was unclear how HEQAC was doing this in practice.

94 Teaching and learning updates presented to SMT meetings and to the GIFHE Board concentrate on the operation of observations of teaching and not on the teaching itself [013].

95 The College operates a Code of Practice for Teaching, Research and Scholarship [037] that provides guidance on the processes used to develop teaching and research within the College. The College is in the process of designing a new, more appropriate higher education teaching and learning observation system appropriate to higher education teaching and learning [https://grimsby.ac.uk/documents/highereducation/quality/HE04/HE04-Teaching-Research-Scholarship.pdf accessed 18 February 2020; RR1]. In the view of the team, while these documents support the development of teaching staff, they did not demonstrate how a strategic approach was being designed to facilitate teaching and learning approaches that would support students in achieving successful outcomes.

96 The College's 2018-19 Quality Enhancement Report [132] has a section on key activity to improve the quality of the learning experience for students and in this report three areas are identified, namely: the Notice and Support to Improve schemes, external accreditation visits or stakeholder forums and observation of teaching and learning; no details are provided nor is there any information about a strategic approach to learning and teaching. The report [132] includes a summary of analyses of data on student retention and continuation; although it finds a number of areas of provision which have failed to meet targets and for which it asserts that 'significant work is needed to improve performance', it does not identify actions to address these issues. The consequences of this are discussed in paragraph 189.

97 School-level Self-evaluation and Enhancement Documents (SEED) include a section on teaching, learning and enhancement that give attention to teaching and assessment practice [131]. While programme specifications include a teaching and learning

strategy, of the examples provided to the team, that for FdSc Mental Health Studies is well-developed whereas the others offer only generalised explanations of the learning and teaching approach [025-027]. Academic staff whom the team met [M3] were unable to describe a strategy for higher education learning and teaching but affirmed that teaching is informed by close relationships with employers, that staff hold qualifications at least one level higher than the level taught and that expectations in terms of academic level are made clear. The team heard from senior staff [M1] that the Community and Practice programme is intended to support the development of a higher education academic community: the list of topics of this programme [122] shows that it includes some relating to teaching and learning; however, the team also noted the low levels of attendance by academic staff [107], as discussed at paragraph 84. The College's statement [183] on support for staff teaching at Level 6 affirms that, to support the fostering of a higher education community, staff are expected to achieve Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy within two years of starting higher education teaching; this policy was affirmed also by academic staff [M3].

98   The team concluded that the College's current foundation degree provision is operating without a strategic framework for teaching and learning. Therefore, from the evidence provided, the team was unclear how the College has embedded a strategic commitment to ensuring the quality of higher education learning and teaching across the College. While the College has clear statements about its aims to support students in achieving successful outcomes, the team could not discern how this was being embedded within its oversight of how programmes were designed and delivered. As such, the assessment team considers that, in the absence of a strategic approach to guide the assurance of teaching and learning, there is a risk that the College may be unable to secure a high quality academic experience for current and future students.

99   With regards to learning resources, the College's website provides information about the shared campus facilities [https://grimsby.ac.uk/campus-facilities/ accessed 18 February 2020]. The College maintains a separate University Centre for its higher education students giving access to students for approximately 360 days of the year. The Student Submission [137] affirms the positive views of students about the quality of learning resources within the University Centre. Students whom the team met affirmed that many of them are based in the University Centre, but that the space is not solely dedicated to them as some further education students can also use the space; hence, in their view, the University Centre did not create a solely higher education experience. Senior staff told the assessment team [M5] that this was a deliberate approach in order to encourage aspiration among younger students with ambitions to enter higher education.

100   The College has a detailed Health and Safety Policy [075]. There are clear risk assessments for general teaching areas, laboratories and for the Learning Centre [076; 179; 078]. A Safeguarding Policy is in place and the use of signage around the building promotes a culture of tolerance and inclusion and this approach was positively recognised by Ofsted in 2017 [079; 073; 074]. The College operates a risk assessment process that requires a Course Risk Assessment [134] to be considered at HEQAC so that resource requirements for programmes are understood and managed, and minutes of HEQAC confirms this practice in operation [107].

101   Resources provided for students at programme level are described in programme specifications [025-027]. Learning resources are considered as part of the annual monitoring processes and include external examiner observations [016; 031]. The outcomes of the 2019 National Student Survey as reported through the Partner Quality Enhancement Report [016] show that, of an unknown number of respondents, 79% indicated satisfaction with learning resources, while in 2018, 67% agreed that 'IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well', 81% agreed that 'The library resources (for example, books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well' and 78% agreed that

'I have been able to access course-specific resources (for example equipment, facilities, software, collections) when I needed to'. The College has taken a range of actions relating to the provision of learning resources, specifically the setting up of Tech Champions to provide student-to-student support for IT, investment in new computers throughout the University Centre, a book-ordering service in the University Centre, and funding for new texts [132]. Staff whom the team met identified a range of specialist facilities that have been secured in the light of student and external examiner feedback [M3; M4]. The Student Submission [136] expresses positive views about library provision and the support available within the library, and this was endorsed by the students whom the team met [M2]. Level 6 students met do not make use of library resources at the University of Hull and expressed satisfaction with library provision at the College [M2]. An online course to provide staff with the skills needed to run an inclusive classroom is made available and 18 academic staff have completed this course of the total of 116 who teach in higher education [077; 169].

102   The Management of Placement Learning in Higher Education Code of Practice [050] outlines the rights and responsibilities of the College in ensuring an effective placement learning experience for students studying on higher education programmes. Placement learning within the remit of this Code of Practice relates to any planned period of learning experience, normally outside the College, for which the student is enrolled and for which the learning outcomes are an intended part of a programme of study. It also includes those circumstances where students have arranged their own learning opportunity with a placement provider, with the approval of the College. The Code of Practice [050] sets out the responsibilities of the placement team for securing, approving and allocating placements: the team is required to ensure that all documentation is checked for suitability and the placement providers' commitment to fulfilling their roles and responsibilities under health and safety legislation in the workplace. The team saw evidence that this had been carried out for a student placement in the example provided [080]. Students are provided with a placement handbook, which contains the practice learning agreement, safety review report and visit forms [050] and a programme-level placement handbook which is detailed and helpful [081]. Examples provided by the College of the resolution of issues concerning placements show that it takes a proactive approach to supporting students on placement [082]. The higher education placement team provides support to students and hosted a daily drop-in support session to support over 500 students in 2018-19 [132]. The students whom the team met confirmed the view that support for placements is good and that they feel supported in being able to meet the relevant learning outcomes [M2].

103   The Code of Practice on Assessment of Students [042] provides guidance on how outcomes from assessment are to be used to enable students to monitor their progress and further their academic development. In particular, students can expect timely feedback on assessed work within four weeks to ensure that they are able to use feedback to inform other assessments, and written feedback must include an indication of whether the assessed learning outcomes have been achieved or not achieved. Where learning outcomes have not been achieved, written tutor feedback must provide a clear explanation and offer ways to meet the learning outcomes through resubmission or resit. Written feedback must refer to the strengths and weaknesses of the submission and include actions for future development. External examiners' reports [031] confirm that good feedback practice helps clarify what constitutes good performance in terms of goals, criteria, and expected standards, facilitates the development of reflection and self-assessment in learning, delivers high-quality information to students about their learning and that students are given good guidance as to how they might improve. The Partner Quality Enhancement Report confirms that Level 4 students are provided with study skills books [016]. Assignment briefs reviewed by the team are clearly laid out and provide students with the information they need to succeed [084–087]. Students whom the team met [M2] raised concerns about some inconsistency between feedback received on formative assessment and that ultimately

provided for summative assessment but affirmed that expectations for assessment are clear and the learning outcomes and assessment criteria are highlighted.

Assessment

104   Assessment, reassessment and mitigation are subject to the Academic Regulations for Foundation Degrees [052] and to Codes of Practice in place to support assessment processes, specifically for the Assessment of Students [042], for the Board of Examiners and External Examiners [039] and for Admissions, Appeals and Accreditation of Prior Learning [040]. Taken together, these codes of practice provide an appropriate framework for the operation of valid and reliable processes of assessment by demonstrating an approach to assessment that is comprehensive and detailed in its coverage.

105   In setting assessments, the College employs a formal process for the drafting of the specific assessment tasks, which is managed by the relevant programme leader [097]. This requires confirmation by an internal moderator that the assessment task criteria are relevant to the module requirements and learning outcomes [097]. Students are provided with specific assignment briefs that detail the tasks they are required to complete. Academic staff met by the team were clear about the processes they followed to ensure valid and reliable assessment [M3]. Outcomes from examining boards are reported to the AASSC and then to EMT [055; 053]: minutes of examining boards and external examiners' reports attest to appropriate use of internal moderation processes and further confirm that internal moderation processes are thorough and well documented [012; 089; 099; 100]. Effective operation of examining boards, including engagement with external examiners, is evident in the minutes reviewed by the team [012; 089; 090].

106   The College operates a formally documented process for the accreditation of prior learning (APL) and provided several examples of this process in action, showing a careful mapping of prior learning to programme-level modules [143]. The APL policy [040] requires an annual report to HEQAC with statistical data relating to students admitted with credit: although such a report has not previously been prepared, an inaugural oversight report [186] has now been prepared for a forthcoming HEQAC meeting in May 2020, thereby providing clearer oversight of the operation of the APL process. The weakness in previous reporting carries low risk because past students admitted with credit have been drawn from the College's own provision [M1]. Additionally, the presentation of an annual report has now been written into the deliberative committee structure with oversight through HEQAC to be included in the report on 'reliable, fair and inclusive admissions systems' [RR1; RR2].

107   Transparent identification of the learning outcomes being assessed gives students the information they need to understand how academic judgements are made and to discuss this with tutors if necessary. A key opportunity for this is via student handbooks, which provide students with the module specifications [093; 094]. Assignment briefs do not consistently specify the learning outcomes; in the examples reviewed by the team learning outcomes were always stated clearly in assessment briefs for one programme but not for another [084–087]. However, all the students whom the team met affirmed that they received clear information about the assessment of learning outcomes [084–087; M2]. The Academic Achievement Coach and weekly tutorials with academic staff provide direct individual support to students and examples of their work provided by the College and meetings with professional support staff confirmed that these roles enable students to understand the basis on which academic judgements are made [091; M4]. The template module handbook is available to staff and includes the general marking criteria [144; 148]. Students whom the team met spoke in positive terms of support from staff, including the success coaches, programme leaders and those working in the library [M2]. The Assessment of Students Code of Practice makes provision for formative assessment in every module [042] and the approach to this is set out in student handbooks [093; 094]. Academic staff highlighted the

use of dedicated tutorial time either in groups or individually and the use of formative assessment to support students' academic development [M3].

108 The terms of reference of the HEQAC require it to provide assurance to EMT and the HE Oversight Committee that the College is enabling student development and achievement, as included in the College Improvement Plan considered by the HE Oversight Committee [SED 17; 003; 004]. A description of the available support for learning is included in all programme specifications and its suitability is considered as part of course approval [025-027].

109 The Learner Services Strategy [164, 165] outlines the College's approach to student support, which is led and coordinated by Learner Services by providing success coaches, academic achievement coaches and student support officers, and by operating the Learning Centre. Success coaches provide pastoral support for students who are considered to be at risk, re-engaging them with their studies and signposting them to other support services. In meetings with the team, professional support staff verified that success coaches discuss progress in one-to-one reviews and helps students access any support they need to achieve their goals [M4]. The students whom the team met affirmed that they consider Success Coaches to be effective in supporting their academic development [https://grimsby.ac.uk/learner-services/ accessed 19 February 2020; 007; M2]. The recent (March 2020) report to HEQAC of student support activities [128] summarised the work of the College's Learner Services but was found by HEQAC [107] to be lacking in data and impact measures which indicates a weakness in the self-evaluation of the work of Learner Services.

110 Academic staff told the team that programme structure supports students to develop academic skills, starting at Level 4 with study skills, moving to Level 5 with more independent research and to their dissertation at Level 6 [M3]. Minutes of HESEG [007] show that academic achievement coaches provide one-to-one sessions or group workshops for students who are not entitled to additional learning support but who may have identified that they are struggling academically. HESEG minutes [007] and programme validation documentation [025] show that coaches support higher education students with their academic needs, in the form of workshops, for example, on grade improvement, essay writing, referencing and critical analysis, and also support students who need to re-sit examinations. In 2018-19, 521 higher education students had one-to-one sessions with academic achievement coaches and 461 students attended workshops [126]. Examples provided by the College of the impact of the academic achievement and Success Coaches demonstrate their effectiveness in supporting student engagement and achievement [091; 092; 126; 127]. Helpful guidance sheets, videos, and other resources are available on the VLE, enabling students to take a proactive approach to their learning [007]. The Student Submission [136] and students whom the team met [M2] expressed positive views about the supportive environment at the College and about how important this has been in enabling them to be successful.

111 The Academic Misconduct Code of Practice [044] details the procedures that must be followed in cases of academic malpractice, and governs matters relating to the criteria and decisions for issuing cautions or penalties for cases of proven academic misconduct. The College delegates the governance of academic misconduct to AASSC, which receives bimonthly reports from Academic Misconduct Panels for all higher education provision [145; 003]. The College maintains oversight of academic malpractice through a report presented to the HE Oversight Committee [004] and a full report presented to AASSC in February 2020 identified seven cases of plagiarism [096]. Academic misconduct is not addressed as part of student induction but information is provided in student handbooks [093; 094; 095]. The students whom the team met all expressed confidence that they knew how to avoid academic misconduct and knew that advice is contained in their handbooks [M2].

112   Processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are governed by the Assessment of Students Code of Practice [042]. Associated with this are a range of pro formas to support the process covering the assessment task, second marking or moderating, generic marking criteria and policy in respect of reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities. The College requires that all marking undertaken by newly appointed tutors is second marked [RR1; M4]. Course managers appoint a mentor for new members of staff who help train them for assessment. The College has recently appointed a Quality Manager for Higher Education who intends to work with the Staff Development Manager to design and monitor training packages for staff training and development [130; RR1; M4]. The Quality Enhancement Report and Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Self-evaluation and Enhancement Document (SEED) both highlighted student concerns about the timelines of feedback on assessed work [132; 131] arising from staff-student committee feedback and module evaluation questionnaires. However, the students whom the team met did not raise any such concerns in the context of discussion of assessment [M2], and the Student Submission [136] was silent in respect of student views about assessment feedback. Nevertheless, senior staff affirmed that the College plans to improve oversight in this area in the next academic year [M5].

External examining

113   Boards of Examiners and External Examiners are subject to the Academic Regulations for Foundation Degrees [052]. The Board of Examiners and External Examiners Code of Practice sets out the requirements for external examiners' appointments, for their role in the assessment process and for consideration of their reports [039]. The College follows a formal process for the appointment of external examiners, with decisions taken at HESEG (now HEQAC) [039; M1]. The Code of Practice does not make reference to the support of inexperienced external examiners or external examiner induction, but an example of the induction and mentoring of an external examiner [088] shows that support for inexperienced examiners is considered as part of the appointment process [088]. External examiners are provided with a helpful induction presentation [098].

114   According to the Board of Examiners and External Examiners Code of Practice [039], prepared examination papers must in every instance be seen and approved by an external examiner before release to any student, and external examiners have the right to see and approve the form and content of all summative assessment tasks and briefs in accordance with programme regulations and before assessment tasks/briefs are published to the student. This means that the current Code of Practice does not require external examiners to moderate all assessment tasks. Assessment tracking pro formas [097] track assessment plans for each module, in line with approved course documentation, and are subject to approval by an internal moderator and by an external examiner [RR1]. However, the sample provided to the team was not approved by an external examiner [097] and, as such, the team did not have sufficient evidence to determine how the pro formas are used to engage external examiners and utilise their expertise. The team also noted comments in annual monitoring reports [063] which identify that external examiners have not consistently been involved in the moderation of assessment tasks. The 2018-19 Quality Enhancement Report [132] confirms that no system was in place to ensure that all assessment tasks were approved by an external examiner in 2018-19, but affirms that in future this will be overseen by the relevant programme leader. At the time of the assessment, the team was made aware that there was no documented process to implement this intended course of action. As such, the team could not make a determination that any prospective plan was robust. The College reports that external examiners report no dissatisfaction about the process with no material impact on standards [RR1]. The academic staff whom the team met reported the moderation of assessment tasks by external examiners did happen consistently in their particular areas [M3]. External examiners' reports and an exam board case study reviewed by the team confirmed that examiners had been able to consider sufficient samples of student work and

attest to appropriate use of internal moderation processes [012, 099, 100]. Minutes of examining boards show that external examiners further confirm that internal moderation processes are rigorous and well documented [089; 090]. Nevertheless, the team found that the College's Code of Practice [039] does not fully demonstrate that external examiners moderate assessment tasks in all cases, and that, although the College has acknowledged the weakness, the team saw no evidence of a robust plan to address this. As such, the team considered that the evidence of inconsistent use of external expertise in the moderation of assessments, and the lack of evidence regarding a plan to address this, represents a potential risk to standards.

115   The Board of Examiners and External Examiners Code of Practice [039] states that all external examiners' reports are scrutinised by the Academic Registrar and HE Quality Officer and an institutional analysis produced. The College's annual Quality Enhancement Report includes planned actions and outcomes resulting from external examiners' reports [031]. This report is considered at AASSC and HEQAC and minutes of the HE Oversight Committee show that it receives and considers external examiner feedback [004].

116   Minutes of examining boards show that they operate effectively in accordance with requirements and that external examiners are present [012]. External examiners provide verbal feedback at the meeting of the board and this is followed up in their written report [012]. External examiners generally provide thorough reports, but the report format does not ask them to comment specifically on the achievement of intended learning outcomes. Responses to reports take the form of a letter from the HE Quality Officer, and examples of such letters [099, 100] show that they provide a considered response and are timely in addressing issues raised by the external examiner. Minutes of the HE Oversight Committee demonstrate that the College has seriously considered and responded to concerns raised by external examiners in relation to staffing and learning resources in a number of programme areas [031].

117   Issues arising from external examiners' reports are currently addressed in the University of Hull PQER reports. Although the structure of the College SEEDs does not require external examiner feedback to be considered, some reports do include this for specific actions [016; 131]. At programme level, the annual programme monitoring reports provide reflection on external examiner feedback [062-067]. Senior staff, in discussion with the team, identified an example of changes to assessment that had been made as a result of external examiner feedback [M1].

118   The Code of Practice on Assessment of Students specifies that written feedback must include an indication of whether the assessed learning outcomes have been achieved or not achieved. [042] However, currently, the College's external examiner report format [https://grimsby.ac.uk/quality-and-standards-handbook-home/#1562312947438-d1465872-2c10] does not explicitly ask external examiners to comment on achievement of the intended learning outcomes, and while the team did not see any evidence to the contrary, this still represents a weakness in obtaining external assurance that intended learning outcomes have been met [012].

Academic appeals and student complaints

119   Processes for the management of academic appeals are governed by the codes of practice for Academic Appeals [049] and for Admissions, Appeals and Accreditation of Prior Learning [040]; procedures for handling complaints are governed by the HE Concerns and Complaints Policy [051]. A review of these confirms that the procedures are comprehensive, fair and have clear timelines. The College's approach to extending powers to Level 6 [172] shows that it has considered whether the code of practice for academic appeals [049] would require revision following the granting of Level 6 powers and has found that no material

changes are needed. The College maintains oversight of academic appeals and complaints through an annual report presented to the HE Oversight Committee [004], while minutes of AASSC [055] and of HEQAC [107] show that they monitor the operation of the College's processes by receiving in-year updates on the numbers of appeals and complaints respectively.

120   Information about complaints is available from the homepage of the College's website and in student handbooks [https://grimsby.ac.uk accessed 19 February 2020; 093; 094]. Students whom the team met expressed awareness of how to make a complaint and some reported having raised concerns informally with staff: although students found programme-level staff to be responsive and supportive, they affirmed that not all concerns were fully addressed by the College [M2]. The complaints log showed that in 2018-19 there were a total of 19 complaints raised by students. Although all cases had been resolved, the time taken to resolve some of them was in excess of the 30 days allowed for in the Complaints Policy [051]: although minutes of HEQAC [107] show that the committee considered the College's report on complaints, it did not show evidence that it had considered the timescales for their resolution.

121   Letters sent to applicants [101] who are unsuccessful in gaining a place at the College include information about how to appeal together with a link to the appropriate policy and in 2018-19 there were four appeals against admissions decisions. Admission appeals are considered at AASSC [102; 055]. Information is provided about academic appeals in student handbooks and while there are no links to the appeals policy [093; 094], students [M2] affirmed that the appeals process is available on the College's website and on the VLE. Review of the appeals log indicated that there were 13 appeals during the 2018-19 academic year, all of which had been resolved, and generally within or close to the timescales set out in the appeals process [102].

122   Logs are kept of complaints and appeals but these do not provide details of the outcomes [102; 103]. Overview reports about complaints are provided to HEQAC and about appeals to AASSC, and these include the outcomes [106; 107; 055, 173]. These reports offer an account of how the process has been managed, but do not document any subsequent enhancement that has been made. The Quality Enhancement Report 2018-19 [132] identifies that no data is currently gathered regarding changes made to practice following a complaint or appeal, but affirms that data will begin to be gathered in 2019-20 by the HE Quality Office on appeals and by the Further Education Quality Office for complaints. It was noted at HEQAC in December 2019 that improvements are being made in light of findings from complaints investigations but recommendations are not captured to their fullest [107]. Minutes of the Progression and Standards Committee (later replaced by AASSC) for 2019 [184] show an example of changes to practice and policy arising from successful appeals, specifically the introduction of an 'HE Person Specification' and a standardised template for admissions interviews, indicating that action to improve processes is undertaken. Students are provided with written outcomes to their complaints or appeals in the form of Completion of Procedures letters and those reviewed by the team were appropriately worded and clearly signposted complainants to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if further recourse was required [104; 105].

Conclusions

123   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*, in particular Annex 4.

124   The team considers that the College has comprehensive and transparent regulations relating to the award of academic credit and qualifications, which are supported

by appropriate and coherent Codes of Practice. Together, these largely support the design and delivery of courses and qualifications intended to provide a high-quality academic experience for students.

125   In reviewing the available evidence, the team identified that the Code of Practice for the Assessment of Students does not require external examiners to approve all assessment tasks. The team also noted that not all assessment tasks had been approved by an external examiner in 2018-19 and, as such, there was a weakness in how the College had assured that the assessments all met the required standards. In discussion with College staff, the team was informed that there was work planned which is intended to remedy this.

126   The team found that the College provides a supportive learning environment in which students can monitor their progress and further their academic development in order to demonstrate good academic practice, though the team noted the College's acknowledgment that timeliness of the return of student work needs to be more closely overseen. Processes for marking assessments are well regulated and external examiners confirm this.

127   From the evidence provided, the team noted a number of instances when the College's Codes of Practice had not been fully adhered to. Specifically, the team noted that there were weaknesses in the documented programme evaluation undertaken as part of the reapproval of a programme or the approval of major modifications; the formal oversight of APL decisions (a weakness which is mitigated by the existence of a credible plan in the form of a forthcoming report to HEQAC); the formal capture of information regarding changes made to practice following a complaint or appeal; and external examiners' reports not explicitly commenting on the achievement of intended learning outcomes, a requirement of the Code of Practice for Assessment of Students.

128   In assessing the evidence provided, the assessment team could not find evidence to confirm that the College has a robust strategic approach to assuring the quality of learning and teaching. The team also concluded that the evidence provided, demonstrating the actions being undertaken to remedy this, were not yet fully developed or did not sufficiently address the issues raised. The team therefore concluded that the evidence did not demonstrate that the College has a secure basis on which to make judgements about the quality of teaching and learning in relation to the achievement of learning outcomes. The team considered this to presents a significant potential risk to the quality of students' educational experience.

129   In considering its conclusion, the team noted potential weaknesses in respect of programme design and development, oversight of the operation of APL processes, the moderation of assessment tasks by external examiners and the effectiveness of procedures for handling complaints. In addition, the team gave particular weight to the lack of evidence of a strategic approach to teaching and learning. The team considered this particularly concerning as this may indicate a potential risk that the College would not be able to establish a robust approach to programme assurance and delivery at Level 6 which would be sufficient to secure a high quality academic experience to all students. While there was evidence of good practice, the weaknesses collectively present a potentially significant risk to the quality of provision a student may receive. The team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is not met.

Criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff

Criterion C1 - The role of academic and professional staff

130   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.

131   The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers* (December 2019).

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

132   The QAA assessment team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the *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 described in Annex 4 and 5 of this Guidance as follows.

a   To determine whether staff involved in teaching or supporting learning, and in the assessment of student work have relevant learning, teaching and assessment practices, the team reviewed the Teaching, Research and Scholarship Code of Practice (HE04) [037], the Recognised Teacher Status records [019], the Scholarship and Staffing Profile logs [028, 129, 198], the Staff List Externality log [155], samples of staff CVs or 'HE Experience' logs [108, 141], the scholarship evidence [020], staff scholarship case studies [033], the Community and Practice register [175], the Remission Evidence log [185], and the views of academic staff [M3].

b   To assess whether staff involved in teaching, learning and assessment have academic and (where applicable) professional expertise, the team examined the College's Submission [001], the Teaching, Research and Scholarship Code of Practice (HE04) [037], the Scholarship and Staffing Profile logs [028, 129, 198], the Approach to Strategic Measures of Success [071], the Approach to Extending Powers to Level 6 and Merger document [172], the Staff List Externality log [155], samples of staff CVs or 'HE Experience' logs [108, 141], evidence relating to human resources [023], samples of job descriptions [160-163], the Video Student Submission [137], and the views of students [M2].

c   To identify the means by which staff involved in teaching, learning and assessment have active engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge, the team considered the College's Submission [001], the Teaching, Research and Scholarship Code of Practice (HE04) [037], evidence relating to human resources [023], the Teaching and Learning policies [024], Scholarship and Staffing Profile logs [028, 129, 198], the Panel Membership log [021], the Approach to Strategic Measures of Success [071], the Approach to Extending Powers to Level 6 and Merger document [172], the Community and Practice register [175], the

scholarship evidence [020], the scholarship log [133], and the remission evidence [185].

d   To confirm that staff involved in teaching, learning and assessment have understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline and that such knowledge and understanding directly inform and enhance their teaching, the team reviewed the Teaching, Research and Scholarship Code of Practice (HE04) [037], the remission guidance [029], the scholarship log [133], the remission evidence [185], evidence relating to human resources [023], the Teaching and Learning policies [024], the scholarship evidence [020], the 'GI Creates' staff scholarship case studies [033], the Scholarship and Staffing Profile log [198], samples of staff CVs or 'HE Experience' logs [108, 141], the UCG scholarship [122], the scholarship log [133], the Video Student Submission [137], the remission evidence [185], the Higher Education Oversight Committee (HE Oversight Committee) minutes and papers [004], and the views of students and staff [M2, M3]. This evidence was also reviewed in order to confirm that such staff have active engagement with research and/or advanced scholarship to a level commensurate with the level and subject of the qualifications being offered.

e   To assess whether staff have opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice, the team considered the College's Submission [001], the Teaching and Learning policies [024], the validation forms [014], the Teaching, Research and Scholarship Code of Practice (HE04) [037], the remission guidance [029] and evidence [185], the Community and Practice register [175] and the views of academic staff [M3].

f   To check whether staff have development opportunities aimed at enabling them to enhance their practice and scholarship, the team looked at evidence relating to human resources [023], the Teaching and Learning policies [024], the 'Level 6 Staff and How They Were Supported' log [183], the Teaching, Research and Scholarship Code of Practice (HE04) [037], the HE Oversight Committee minutes and papers [004], the remission guidance [029] and evidence [185], the scholarship evidence [020], HE Quality Improvement Toolkit [113], the scholarship log [133], the Scholarship and Staffing Profile logs [198], the Community and Practice register [175] and the views of academic and professional support staff [M3, M4].

g   To verify whether staff have opportunities to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design and to engage with the activities of other higher education providers, the team considered the evidence relating to human resources [023], the Teaching and Learning policies [024], the 'Level 6 Staff and How They Were Supported' log [183], the Community and Practice register [175], the remission evidence [185], the Approach to Strategic Measures of Success [071], the scholarship log [133], the Scholarship and Staffing Profile log [198] and the views of academic staff [M3].

h   To confirm that staff involved in assessment of student work have expertise in providing feedback on assessment which is timely, constructive and developmental, the team reviewed summaries of external examiners' reports and responses by the College [031] and also held meetings with academic staff [M3].

i   To determine whether staff with key programme management responsibilities have relevant experience of curriculum development and assessment design, the team reviewed samples of staff CVs or 'HE Experience' logs [108, 141], the Community and Practice register [175] and the views of academic staff [M3].

j   To assess whether such staff also have relevant engagement with the activities of other providers of higher education, such as external examining, the team considered Scholarship and Staffing Profile logs [028, 129, 198], the Staff List Externality log [155], samples of staff CVs or 'HE Experience' logs [108, 141], the Approach to Strategic Measures of Success [071] and the Approach to Extending Powers to Level 6 and Merger document [172].

k   To establish how the College assesses the skills and expertise required to teach all students and the appropriate staff:student ratios, the team examined the College's Academic Regulations for Foundation Degrees [011, 052], the proposed Academic Regulations for Bachelor's Degrees [015], the Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes Code of Practice [038], validation forms [014], examples of external examiner reports and responses by the College [031], minutes of HEQAC [107] and the views of students and senior staff [M1, M2, M5].

l   To confirm whether the College has appropriate staff recruitment practices, the team looked at the UGG 2020 Strategy [022], evidence relating to human resources [023] and job descriptions of a Learner Adviser [162], a Student Success Coach [160], an Academic Achievement Coach [163] and a Graduate Counsellor [161]. The team also canvassed the views of senior staff [M1].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

133   The assessment team considered samples of evidence as follows.

134   The team considered a representative sample of CVs of 12 academic staff. These documents were considered for the purposes specified in paragraph 132a, 132b, 132d, 132i, and 132j. This sample was representative because it included staff with and staff without key programme management responsibilities, and included staff whose highest qualification is at Level 5, staff whose highest qualification is at Level 6, staff whose highest qualification is at Level 7, and staff whose highest qualification is at Level 8.

What the evidence shows

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

136   The College assures itself that all staff involved in teaching or supporting learning, and in the assessment of student work have relevant learning, teaching and assessment practices through the application of its Teaching, Research and Scholarship Code of Practice [037]. All members of staff engaged in delivering or supporting programmes leading to awards at Level 6 must first obtain Recognised Teacher Status (RTS) [037]. To gain this recognition, the academic qualifications of staff should be relevant to the discipline and at least 'one FHEQ level above that which they wish to teach and have a PGCE or Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) or be working towards [one]' [001, 037]. Examination of the RTS records shows that the College carefully monitors the implementation of this approach to ensuring that its staff are suitably qualified and experienced for their roles [019].

137   Staff at the College involved in teaching, supporting and assessing students have relevant academic and, where applicable, professional qualifications, as evidenced by the Scholarship and Staffing Profile logs [028, 129, 198] and the Staff List Externality log [155]. A representative sample of staff CVs [108, 141] reviewed by the team also confirmed this to be the case. Their learning, teaching and assessment practices remain current to enable effective delivery at Level 6 through engagement with reflection and evaluation of professional practice [175, 185], and with subject-specific and educational scholarship [020, 033, 133, 185], thus meeting the objective identified in the Teaching, Research and

Scholarship Code of Practice (HE04) of ensuring that 'all staff engage in continued professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practice where appropriate' [037]. For instance, the team saw evidence that a member of academic staff has made use of her experience in television scriptwriting to engage students in writing episodes of a televised drama broadcast [033]; a publication by a member of professional support staff identifies ways of improving pedagogic practice to develop student motivation [020]; and the list of 'remission activities' [185] shows that 25 members of academic staff in 2018-19 were engaged in scholarship and development relating to pedagogy and enhancing student engagement in learning. Members of academic staff gave examples of how their professional practice is informed by reflection, evaluation, and subject-specific and educational scholarship [M3]. They also confirmed that they have opportunities to consider developments and enhancements in teaching, learning and assessment [M3]. The team formed the view that staff involved in teaching or supporting learning, and in the assessment of student work have learning, teaching and assessment practices that are informed by their engagement in scholarship and reflection.

138   The College's Teaching, Research and Scholarship Code of Practice calls attention to the need to ensure that 'Higher Education teaching staff have the correct qualifications and experience.' [037]. In its Submission, the College notes that staff 'are expected to be qualified at, at least one FHEQ level above that which they wish to teach and have a PGCE or Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) or be working towards [one]' [001]. Examination of the Scholarship and Staffing Profile logs submitted by the College confirms that this expectation is being met [028, 129, 198]. In the context of a total of 116 staff who undertake teaching of higher education, the Scholarship and Staffing Profile Logs [129, 198] show that a total of 41 members of academic staff have qualifications at Level 7, and six are qualified to Level 8, while the Scholarship and Staffing Profile log [198] shows that 76 members of staff have a teaching qualification of a total of 116 who teach in higher education. The College's Submission [001] affirms that members of staff are offered funding to undertake training related to their role, including a two-thirds contribution towards postgraduate teaching qualifications and a 50% contribution towards obtaining further qualifications at Levels 7 and 8. Scholarship profiles [129, 198] show that the College is currently funding staff to complete six PGCE qualifications, 23 qualifications at Level 7, and two qualifications at Level 8. Staff completing qualifications at Levels 7 or 8 are also eligible for remission of teaching hours to support their studies [001]. A total of 26 members of staff currently hold Advance HE fellowships [129, 198]; the College's plans for implementation of extended powers [172] and the Approach to Strategic Measures of Success [071] show that it intends to increase this number significantly in the future.

139   Staffing profiles [129, 198] and the list of external engagements by staff [155] show that about 25 members of staff are members of professional bodies and associations relevant to their discipline areas, such as the Nursing Medical Council, the National Association of Probation Officers, the British Psychological Society, and the Chartered Society of Designers. The representative sample of CVs [141] examined and the log of staff external experience [108] from staff teaching on both foundation and bachelor's degree programmes, including those with key programme management responsibilities, shows that they have appropriate academic and, where applicable, professional expertise [108, 141]. A review of the job descriptions provided also supports this observation [023, 160-163]. Students whom the team met [M2] commented positively on the academic and professional qualifications of staff at the College, and this view was also expressed in the student video submission [137]. The team was able to determine that staff involved in teaching or supporting learning, and in the assessment of student work, have relevant academic and, where applicable, professional expertise.

140   The Teaching, Research and Scholarship Code of Practice [037] sets the expectation that 'all staff engage in continued professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy'. To achieve this objective, all new members of staff are required to complete 'Teacher Essentials' training as part of their induction as outlined in the human resources materials [001, 023]. The Teaching and Learning Policy states that staff are allocated a Quality Manager to agree a support and coaching plan based on their current level of experience and skills [024]. New members of staff must also take part in at least one ungraded developmental observation and peer learning opportunity within the first six weeks of employment, with further observations of teaching taking place throughout the year to support their engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge [024]. The College offered an in-house training programme validated by the Higher Education Academy, and subsequently 14 members of staff obtained Advance HE recognition as shown by staffing profiles [129, 198]: a total of 26 staff currently hold Advance HE fellowships [129, 198].

141   The Scholarship and Staffing Profile and Panel Membership logs [021, 028, 129, 198] show that four members of staff currently have appointments as external examiners, and that 27 have served on internal validation panels, which provides evidence of engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge. As strategic objectives for the future, the College aims for every member of staff to achieve fellowship of the Higher Education Academy within two years of starting teaching, and for 30% of its higher education staff to have external examiner roles [071; 172]. Additional evidence of the staff at the College actively engaging with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge can be found in the Teaching Remission Scheme [029, 185], which enables academic staff to seek a reduction in teaching hours in order to carry out research or scholarly activity. The outputs of the scheme have often had a clear pedagogical focus linked to enhancements in teaching, learning and assessment practice [020, 133, 185], such as a collaborative project with TV and Film Production students or research on self-efficacy and academic behaviour [185]. Records of staff activities [129, 198] show that the College also facilitates the external engagement of its staff with pedagogic developments of their discipline knowledge, for example, by supporting them financially to complete teaching qualifications related to their role. The team thus formed the view that academic staff have active engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge.

142   The Teaching, Research and Scholarship Code of Practice [037] outlines the approach to developing research capacity among all staff at the College. This code emphasises the need to ensure that all higher education staff at the College 'undertake appropriate, relevant, high quality research and scholarly activity' [037]. This objective is partly realised through the College's Teaching Remission Scheme [029]. All higher education teaching staff 'are expected to make contributions to the research and scholarship profile of [the College]' [037] and are encouraged to seek remission from contracted teaching hours for that purpose [029]. Engagement with research and scholarship is also recorded centrally as part of the staff appraisal scheme and directly affects the professional development targets set, as shown in the Recruitment Overview [023] and the Teaching and Learning Policy [024]. The team examined examples of research and scholarly activity presented through internally held logs and case studies [020, 033, 122, 133, 137, 185]. While limited in scope and external impact, activities are reasonably current and advanced to a level commensurate with the level and subject of the qualifications being offered. Some members of staff have an emerging research profile, with peer-reviewed publications [020; 108; 141].

143   The HE Observation Guidance 2018-19 acknowledges that research and scholarship and their effect on teaching, learning and assessment practices is a distinctive characteristic of higher education [024]. Accordingly, all observers of teaching at Level 6 are required to comment on the impact of the instructor's engagement with research and

scholarship on the teaching, learning and assessment practices [024]. The minutes from the February 2020 meeting of the Higher Education Oversight Committee show that, of observations of teaching at Level 6, 97% in 2018-19 and 93% in 2019-20 showed evidence of the embedding of research and scholarship into teaching, learning and assessment practices [004]. Students whom the team met commented positively on this aspect of their learning and also as part of their video submission [M2, 137]. Records of the Teaching Remission Scheme show that participants engage in evaluation and reflection on how their activities have informed and enhanced their teaching, learning and assessment practices [185]. The team formed the view that, on the whole, staff actively engage in current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline, and that such knowledge and understanding directly informs and enhances their teaching.

144   Staff at the College are offered opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice through the Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy 2018-19 [001, 024]. This policy aims to 'recognise, disseminate and promote innovative and outstanding practice' and empower staff 'to work together to develop practice' [024]. The policy makes effective use of a range of approaches to self-assessment and evaluation of learning, teaching and assessment practices, such as ungraded developmental observations, 'learning walks', and peer observations [024]. All teaching staff at the College are observed delivering teaching at least annually. The College's template for new programme validations affirms that issues or concerns raised regarding the standard of teaching and learning are addressed by means of an action plan discussed and agreed between the member of staff and their line manager [014]. The Teaching, Research and Scholarship Code of Practice [037], which describes the College's approach to developing teaching and research, highlights the importance of ensuring that staff engage in 'the evaluation of professional practice'. Thus, for example, the Teaching Remission Scheme requires participants to engage in reflection and evaluation of how their activities have informed and enhanced their teaching practice [029, 037; 185]. The sharing of best practice in learning, teaching and assessment among staff at the College also features prominently in the Community and Practice forum, which included nine sessions in this area since September 2019 [175]. The team was able to determine that opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice are available and taken up by academic staff.

145   The College aims to support the continuous professional development of all its staff involved in teaching or supporting learning, and in the assessment of student work [001]. As part of their contract of employment, new members of staff must commit to undertaking 'any continuous professional development needed for [their] role to maintain an up to date knowledge and awareness of good practice including any commercial/industrial updating' [023]. This support is operationalised in part through the College's Induction and Performance and Development Review policies [023], which involves Curriculum Managers and Quality Managers offering relevant staff professional development opportunities designed to enable them to enhance their practice and scholarship, and also through the Teaching, Research and Scholarship Code of Practice [037] and Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy 2018-19 [024]. A review of the documentation regarding scholarship demonstrates that such activity is supported by the Teaching Remission Scheme [020, 133, 185], often has a clear pedagogical focus and has enabled staff to enhance their practice, for example, by ensuring that taught sessions are informed by current research or industry standards, as shown in the HE Quality Improvement Toolkit [113]. A total of 24 members of staff benefitted from the College's Teaching Remission Scheme in 2018-19 [185]. The Scholarship and Staffing Profile log provides evidence of the scholarly activities of staff who did not take part in the Teaching Remission Scheme [198].

146   In further considering the support offered by the College towards the professional development of staff, the team noted that the 'Level 6 Staff Experience and How They Were

Supported' log offers a detailed record of how new members of staff at Level 6 were supported by more experienced mentors to enhance their practice [183]. The Community and Practice register provides a list of 45 staff development sessions offered by the College since September 2018, which were reasonably well attended [175]. In meetings with the team, academic staff and professional support staff confirmed that they had opportunities to enhance their practice and, where relevant, their scholarship [M3, M4]. The team was thus able to confirm that staff are able to access development opportunities aimed at enhancing practice and scholarship.

147   The Recruitment Overview [023] shows that new members of staff at the College must attend an induction programme and participate in any training and development opportunities deemed appropriate by the College and must also take part in the staff appraisal scheme. In line with these expectations, Curriculum Managers and Quality Managers offer all relevant staff professional development opportunities as part of the PDR process aimed at them gaining experience in curriculum development and assessment design [023; 024]. The log of level 6 staff experience and support offers a detailed record of how new members of staff at Level 6 were supported by more experienced mentors [183]. The Community and Practice register also includes four staff development sessions on curriculum and assessment design in the 2018-19 academic year, which were attended by 70 members of staff [175]. In meetings with the team, academic staff confirmed that they were actively encouraged to seek support from the College in curriculum development and assessment design, and also to engage with the activities of other higher education providers, for instance as external examiners [M3]: the Approach to Strategic Measures of Success sets the strategic aim that 30% of higher education staff should become external examiners [071].

148   Details of the 24 members of staff who benefitted from the College's Teaching Remission Scheme in 2018-19 [185] show that many used this period of remission to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design [133; 185]. The Scholarship and Staffing Profile log provides further evidence of the support staff received outside of the Teaching Remission Scheme [198]. This support enabled at least seven members of staff to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design [198]. The team was able to confirm that staff have opportunities to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design and to engage with the activities of other higher education colleges.

149   Although comments from external examiners on assessment and feedback occasionally point to areas requiring improvement, they consistently also identify feedback on assessment as examples of good practice. For instance, the external examiner for BA Digital Film and Television Production remarked that feedback is 'generally rich in detail and gave both feedback and "feed-forward" advice' [031] and the external examiner for FdA Performing Arts commented that the College's feedback 'helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards), facilitates the development of reflection and self-assessment in learning, and delivers high-quality information to students about their learning' [031]. External examiners' reports examined by the team for seven other programmes also comment positively on the quantity, quality and timeliness of the feedback given to students on their assessed work [031]. Academic staff confirmed [M3] that newly appointed teaching staff are initially supported by their manager or by the HE Quality Office in carrying out marking and feedback of assessments. The team thus formed the view that staff have appropriate expertise in providing feedback on assessment that is timely, constructive and developmental.

150   The samples of CVs or 'Experience Logs' examined by the team included those of 14 members of staff at the College with key programme management responsibilities [108, 141]. These CVs show a range of relevant experience of curriculum development and assessment design. For instance, some members of staff have experience of managing

curriculum changes in their subject areas, aligning the curriculum to industry standards and practice, and designing and planning assessments, while others have published research in curriculum design and higher education pedagogy. However, some CVs of staff with key programme management responsibilities do not provide evidence of relevant experience of curriculum development and assessment design. The Community and Practice register includes four staff development sessions on curriculum and assessment design led by members of staff with key programme management responsibilities at the College, which demonstrates their experience in these areas [175]. In meetings with the team, academic staff with key programme management responsibilities also offered examples of their experience of curriculum development and assessment design, which were current and relevant [M3]. The team formed the view that, on the whole, staff with key programme management responsibilities have relevant experience of curriculum development and assessment design.

151   According to the information in the College's Scholarship and Staffing Profile Logs [028, 129, 198], four members of teaching staff currently hold appointments as external examiners. The Staff Externality Log [155] identifies two members of staff with current external examiner appointments, and two with experience as validation panel members or external reviewers in the past four years; two further members of staff are listed as having previous experience as external examiners. The staff CVs examined by the team corroborated this information [108, 141]. In order to further increase the proportion of staff undertaking such roles, the Approach to Strategic Measures of Success [071] sets the strategic aim that 30% of higher education staff should become external examiners and the College's plans for the operation of its intended powers [172] reaffirms this aim. The team formed the view that few members of staff with key programme management responsibilities currently have relevant engagement with the activities of providers of higher education in other organisations although plans are in place to increase this engagement.

152   The Academic Regulations for Foundation and Bachelor's Degrees specify that, in meeting its powers and responsibilities, the College must ensure governance over the qualifications and experience of the teaching and support staff and over the quality of teaching and scholarship [011, 015, 052]. In line with both the Academic Regulations and the Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes Code of Practice, an assessment of staffing resource is considered at all stages of the formal programme approval process [011, 015, 038]. For example, the 'Stage 1 Validation - Strategic Planning Approval (HE05A)' pro forma includes a request for detailed information regarding the staff needed to run the proposed programme [014]. The 'Application for Programme Proposal Approval (HE05B)' pro forma, used as part of Stage 2 Validation, includes a request to attach the CVs of all staff who will deliver the programme [014]. The 'Stage 3 Reading Group Report (HE05H)', which is considered as part of the final Full Programme Approval stage, includes the same request and asks panel members to also confirm whether resource requirements have been taken into account and planned for the first intake [014].

153   External examiners for some programmes, specifically BA Counselling Studies, BA Independent Games Design, BA Fine Art, and FdA Tourism Management/Events Management, have raised concerns in regard to the level of staffing resource and the skills/expertise required to teach all students [031]. Similar concerns were expressed by some, though not all, students met by the team [M2]. The minutes of HEQAC of March 2020 also report concerns about staffing resource in relation to BA Human Scale Prop Making, BA Special Effects Make-up Design and Prosthetics, BSc Computing Technologies, and FdSc Computing Technologies [107]. The College is managing these concerns effectively through targeted action plans at programme level and the creation of a Staffing Risk Assessment register [107]; senior staff [M1, M5] were able to offer examples of risk management in practice. The team formed the view that the College has made a rigorous assessment of the

skills/expertise required to teach all students and the appropriate staff/student ratios, and is taking effective action to address concerns about staffing resources.

154   The UCG 2020 Strategy sets out the College's strategic aims and objectives, which include attracting and retaining 'high quality, dedicated and inspiring new staff' [022]. Staff are recruited in line with the College policies [001, 023]. As demonstrated by Recruitment Overview [023] and by job descriptions of staff roles [160-163], recruitment practices are fair, consistent, non-discriminatory, inclusive and conducive to the recruitment of staff with appropriate experience, qualifications and professional expertise. For example, the Recruitment Overview [023] sets out a clear and detailed process for staff recruitment consisting of multiple stages, with key actions identified at each stage; recent letters of reference for staff candidates are requested and checked by the College. Job descriptions reviewed by the team [160-163] clearly set out the skills/expertise and competencies required for the roles advertised. Newly appointed members of staff are required to attend induction and participate in any training and development deemed appropriate by the College, as well as in the staff appraisal scheme [023]. The College's Human Resources policies [023] express detailed and clear processes for the induction, probation and performance and development reviews of staff, and senior staff [M1] were able to describe the College's approach to staff recruitment. All new managers are expected to complete a mandatory online training module on 'Equality and Diversity' and 'Safer Recruitment' [001]. The team was able to determine that the College has appropriate staff recruitment practices.

Conclusions

155   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*, in particular Annex 4.

156   The team found that all staff involved in teaching or supporting learning and in the assessment of student work have learning, teaching and assessment practices and, where applicable, professional expertise, that are appropriate to the College's higher education provision and are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship. The teaching remission scheme is effective in enabling staff involved in teaching or supporting learning to develop an active engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge. The team noted that, although the research and scholarly activity examined was limited in scope and external impact, it was reasonably current and advanced to a level commensurate with the level and subject of the qualifications being offered. The team thus formed the view that, on the whole, staff involved in teaching or supporting learning, and in the assessment of student work have understanding of, and active engagement in, current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline, and that such knowledge and understanding directly informs and enhances their teaching. While CVs of some staff with key programme management responsibilities do not provide evidence of curriculum development and assessment design, staff with such responsibilities have, on the whole, engaged in these processes at the College. The College has made a rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach all students and the appropriate staff:student ratios, and has clear and detailed policies for the recruitment and performance review of staff.

157   On the basis of the information in the College's Scholarship and Staffing Profile Logs, the team formed the view that few members of staff with key programme management responsibilities currently have relevant engagement with the activities of providers of higher education in other organisations. This weakness does not, however, present a significant risk to quality or standards, because, as discussed in paragraph 63, the College takes account of relevant external and independent points of expertise in the setting and maintaining of academic standards in the process of programme approval.

158   The assessment team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

Criterion D: Environment for supporting students

Criterion D1 - Enabling student development and achievement

159   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.

160   The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers* (December 2019).

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

161   The QAA assessment team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the *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 described in Annex 4 and 5 of this Guidance as follows.

a   To examine the extent to which the College takes a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to enabling student development and achievement for its students, the team reviewed the Deliberative Committee Structure [003], minutes of Executive Management Team [053] and Corporation [187], minutes and papers of the HE Oversight Committee [004] and HEQAC [107; 128; 186], the draft Approach to Strategic Measure of Success [071], and evidence from a College working group [201].

b   To verify students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way and that different students' choices and needs are accounted for, the team reviewed the Codes of Practice on Published Information and Consumer Protection [035] and on Retention and Engagement of Students [041], Induction Plans [095], the College prospectus [109], Programme marketing leaflets [110], AASSC minutes and papers [009; 055; 157], Senior and Executive Management Team minutes [053; 123; 159], information submitted to the Competition and Markets Authority [111; 166-167], an Advertising and Consumer Protection Report [168], the Code of Practice Log and Website Change Log [177], the views of students [M2], and the College's website.

c   To evaluate the effectiveness of the monitoring of student and staff advisory support and counselling services and to verify that any resources needs arising are considered, the team reviewed Success Coach Case Studies [092], the Learner Services Strategy [125], the Success Coach Review [127] and the Learner Services Self-Assessment Report [189; 194]. The team also sought the views of students [M2] and professional support staff [M4].

d   To ensure that the College's administrative support systems enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure, accurate and fit-for-purpose information, the team reviewed the Deliberative Committee Structure [003], a 'HE On A Page' Report [034], quality improvement

plans at programme, curriculum area and faculty level [115–117], annual monitoring reports for three bachelor's degree programmes and three foundation degree programmes [062-067], minutes of the HE Strategic Enhancement Group [068], of the Senior Management Team [123] and HEQAC minutes and papers [107; 128]. The team also sought the views of academic staff [M3] and professional support staff [M4] and considered the Request for documentation after initial analysis Responses [RR1].

e   To evaluate the opportunities provided for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression, the team reviewed approval documentation for three bachelor degree programmes [070], a review of the Success Coach role with example case studies [092; 127], a review of the Academic Achievement Coach role with case studies [091; 126], Student Submission [136; 137], documentation describing the College's careers service [112; 178] and professional support staff job descriptions [160; 163]. The team also obtained the views of academic staff [M3] and students [M2].

f   To assess the opportunities provided for all students to develop skills to make effective use of the learning resources provided, including the safe and effective use of specialist facilities, and the use of digital and virtual environments, the team reviewed the Partner Quality Enhancement Report [016], summaries of external examiners' reports [031], the Quality Enhancement Report 2018-19 [132], the views of academic staff [M3] and students [M2], and the College's website.

g   To confirm the College's approach is guided by a commitment to equity, the team reviewed the UCG 2020 Strategy [022], the College's codes of practice [035–052], minutes of HE Meetings with SMT [149; 171], minutes of the Student Senate [152], the Approach to Extending Powers to Level 6 and Merger document [172], and a description of support and training for the Student Senate [200].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

162   The assessment team considered samples of evidence as follows.

163   The team considered a representative sample of annual monitoring reports consisting of the two most recent reports for each of BA Independent Games Design, BA Fine Art, BA Counselling, FdA Tourism and Events, FdSc Mental Health Studies, and FdSc Professional Healthcare Studies. These documents were considered for the purpose specified in paragraph 161d. This sample is representative because it is drawn from the College's foundation degree and bachelor's degree provision and includes programmes with a total of 129 students, representing 13% of students on such programmes.

What the evidence shows

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

165   The College's approach to student development and achievement is articulated by the College Approach Strategy, which states that the College aims 'to strive for excellence and innovation in all that we do.' [071] The strategic plan, which is reviewed annually by the Corporation, has a number of 'Measures of Progress' which operationalise the broader aims and aspirations of the strategic plan [071; 201]. The measures relating to student development and achievement broadly sit under the 'Learner Success' strand of the strategic plan, for example, one of the measures relates to ensuring that all higher education programmes have 'a wraparound enhancement programme which improves employability' [071]. The deliberative committee structure [003] states that, operationally, the HEQAC is responsible for driving quality and performance in higher education, including responsibility

for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the interventions designed to improve student development and achievement. It does this through, for example, receiving comprehensive reports detailing student support delivery at each site [128; 186]. The committee structure [003] indicates that HEQAC is responsible for providing assurance to the EMT and to the Corporation that the College continues to enable student development and achievement. Minutes from the HE Oversight Committee, EMT, and Corporation examined by the team [004, 053, 187] show evidence of substantive discussion relating to student achievement, not least the scrutiny of continuation and retention metrics. Overall, the evidence provided indicates that the College takes a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement.

166   The Code of Practice relating to Published Information and Consumer Protection [035] outlines the approach to marketing and advertising to prospective students and the public and affirms the College's commitment to ensuring that published information relating to its higher education provision is complete, accurate and verifiable. The College's website [https://grimsby.ac.uk] contains detailed information relating to the College's higher education provision, which is also published in the prospectus and programme leaflets, examples of which were reviewed by the team [109; 110].

167   The HE Quality Team undertakes an annual review of published information [035] in which it uses its Programme Information Form [111] to audit every item of published information for accuracy, completeness, and compliance with consumer protection regulations. Completed examples of the form demonstrate that the annual review is comprehensive and would allow the College to identify erroneous data [166; 167]. Additionally, a completed log of changes to the College's Codes of Practice [035-052] and its website demonstrates an ongoing commitment to ensuring the accuracy and validity of published information [177]. These review activities feed into an annual Advertising and Consumer Protection Report [035, 168] produced by the HE Quality Team, which is submitted to AASSC and then to the Senior Management Team (SMT), and which outlines changes to advertising to ensure continued compliance with Competition and Markets Authority regulations. Minutes from AASSC [009, 055, 157], SMT [123], the Scarborough campus SMT [159], and the EMT [053] reflect consideration of the report, although contain little, however, by way of substantive discussion or evaluation.

168   An induction programme is provided during which students are introduced to the College and its approach to higher education as outlined in the Code of Practice for Retention and Engagement of Students [041]. This Code specifies a minimum set of information which must be provided to students, thereby ensuring that students on different programmes receive the same core information relating to accessing learning and teaching spaces, as well as an understanding of how to access student support and counselling services [041]. The completed induction plans from 2019-20 [095] demonstrate that students received an induction which is comprehensive in that it includes information about the academic calendar, student support arrangements, tutorial plans, progress checking, assessment arrangements and student representation. Students met by the team confirmed that their expectations of studying with the College had been largely met, with several students commenting positively on their access to high-quality industry-standard equipment [M2]. The evidence provided during the review demonstrates that students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in a comprehensive and effective way.

169   The support and counselling services provided by the Learner Services Team is outlined in the Learner Services Strategy. [125] The principal mechanism by which the effectiveness of student advisory, support and counselling services is monitored is through the production of the Learner Services self-assessment report (SAR) [194] and the accompanying annual Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) [189]. The production of the SAR ensures that key strengths and areas for improvement can be identified and then either built

on or addressed in the accompanying QIP. [194] The Learner Services SAR from 2018-19 [194] contains a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the support and counselling service, including a review of the QIP targets from the previous year and the use of higher education-related data, for example, student satisfaction rates, to determine performance. Several key strengths are identified, including that 'the Intensive Support Team work to ensure that learners feel safe is highly effective' and that the 'resources support for all learners is outstanding'. These points were reinforced by students met by the team who were overwhelmingly positive about the breadth and depth of the support, providing several compelling personal reflections on the impact either of the student support or counselling service had on their experience while studying [M2].

170   Professional support staff told the team [M4] that the College also conducts in-year reviews of the effectiveness of student support and counselling services. An example of this includes the review [127] the College undertook of the impact of introducing the Success Coach role in 2018-19, specifically for higher education students, and designed to provide 'pastoral support to students at The University Centre throughout their programmes of study'. This review includes several case studies and direct feedback from higher education students supported by the Success Coaches and an evaluation of datasets, including attendance, retention and progression data [127]. It found that the Success Coach team has a 'pivotal role in providing pastoral support to students', a view reinforced by student testimonials and case studies [092], which show students commending the support provided by the Success Coach team. The Success Coach role was designed to provide 'pastoral support to students at the University Centre Grimsby throughout their programmes of study' and evidence seen by the team confirmed that it met that aim.

171   The College has a broad range of student support measures in place. The completion of the SAR and QIP in addition to in-year reviews of targeted interventions enable the College to monitor the effectiveness of the student support and counselling services effectively.

172   The College's HE Quality Office is the primary source of information and data relating to student progression and performance, which it provides to academic and professional support staff via the 'HE On A Page' dashboard [034] on a weekly basis. The dashboard reports continuation, retention, attendance and NSS data by faculty and programme. The team heard from both academic staff [M3] and professional support staff [M4] that the dashboard is used extensively throughout the College and is especially helpful for identifying trends around student progression and, more broadly, student performance. This data feeds directly into the College's governance arrangements via HEQAC, which the deliberative committee structure [003] states is responsible for driving performance in higher education across the College. Minutes from HEQAC [107] and from SMT [123] reflect discussion, albeit limited, of data on student progression and performance.

173   Data on student progression and achievement is annually reported at programme level in annual monitoring reports. The assessment team considered six reports in respect of 2018-19 and five in respect of 2017-18 [062-067]. Although the College's and the University's templates for reporting invite the inclusion of data on and commentary about progression and completion, the team found that there was inconsistent inclusion of such data: only three of six reports in 2018-19, and only three of five reports in 2017-18, included data on student progression and achievement. For the programmes in this sample whose annual monitoring reports included such data, cohort pass rates ranged from 80% to 100% in 2018-19, and from 63% to 100% in 2017-18. The overall pass rate across all the College's higher education programmes was 82% in 2018-19 [062]. HEQAC is responsible for oversight of internal annual monitoring reports [RR1]. Its minutes [068] for the period September 2018 to October 2019 do not show any evidence of consideration of programme-level annual monitoring reports nor, specifically, any evidence of consideration of data on

student progression and achievement. However, the team also found that, as described in the previous paragraph and in Criterion E1, the College's use of data on 'HE on a Page' [034], including data relating to student attendance, progression and achievement, broken down by faculty, programme, and cohort, allows teaching staff and senior staff to regularly monitor attendance and progression and is used by the Senior Management Team. In addition, Quality Improvement Plans at faculty, curriculum area and programme level [115-117] show evidence of the identification and follow-up of actions aimed at addressing the need to improve continuation rates. Overall, the team concluded that, while there are weaknesses in its arrangements for reporting on and considering data within the annual monitoring process, the College has systems which enable it to gather and monitor data relating to student progression and performance, although consistent application of all the mechanisms used by the College is variable.

174   The College's higher education provision is designed to supply students with the necessary general knowledge and subject-specific skills to achieve future study or employment, as shown, for instance, in the specification of the FdSc Professional Healthcare Studies [027] and in the evidence of employer consultation in the planned development of a BSc Engineering [190]. Programme documentation contained in validation documentation for programmes with opportunities for additional placements or internships include descriptions of these opportunities and of the skills to which they may lead [070]. Academic staff told the team [M3] that the design of individual programmes takes into consideration the development of academic skills tailored to the appropriate level of study, for example, students at Level 4 are provided with broader and more general study skills support, whereas students at Level 6 undertake an independent research project. Additionally, Success Coaches and Academic Achievement Coaches, based within the Learner Services Team, can provide one-to-one tailored support to students identified as in need of such support, as outlined by the job descriptions of these roles [160; 163] Case studies of the Success Coachs [092] and Academic Achievement Coaches [091] in action demonstrate students overwhelmingly positive about the support provided. The job description for the higher education Academic Achievement Coach [163] outlines this role as being to 'coordinate, deliver, and monitor a range of services and activities to support higher education students with their academic studies': this includes responsibility for developing a programme of academic and professional skills-related workshops and seminars [126], and the programme of these events from 2018-19 demonstrates a broad and comprehensive programme of study skills sessions, including specific sessions on academic writing, critical analysis, and referencing [126].

175   An explanation by the Skills and Employability Manager [178] outlines the role of the HE Skills and Employability Team, also based within the Learner Services Team, as supporting students in 'their transition into the graduate jobs market by providing a range of employability services to students.' This includes organising a range of employment-related activities, such as running mock interviews, alongside organising visits to industry partners and careers fairs. The College's Talent Dock hosts all student employment opportunities. [https://talentdock.grimsby.ac.uk (Talent Dock website); 112], creating a single point of reference for students seeking employment during their programme of study. Students whom the team met [M2] commented positively on the range and level of careers support available to them, and this view is supported by the Student Submission [136; 137]. The clear focus on developing academic skills within programmes of study and the support provided by the Learner Services Team allows students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal, and professional progression.

176   The College currently provides higher education across two campuses, one in Scarborough and the other in Grimsby. As described in the 2018-19 Quality Enhancement Report [132] the College has invested in the University Centre Grimsby (UCG), a separate centre for its higher education students that provides general study space as well as

specialist teaching and learning resources [https://grimsby.ac.uk (College Website)]. The College reviews the extent and suitability of learning resources provided, including the use of specialist facilities, on an annual basis through the production of Partner Quality Enhancement Reports [016] in which areas for improvement are identified and in line with the requirements of the University of Hull. The summary of external examiners' reports [031] shows that external examiners consider learning resources and generally affirm that the learning resources available to students are suitable. In the course of the meeting with students [M2], some students reported high levels of satisfaction with the resources available to them, while others highlighted two courses, the BA Independent Games Design and the BA Fine Art, in which they considered opportunities for them to develop skills necessary to make effective use of the learning resources were limited. Meetings with students and academic staff confirmed that the College's VLE is used by staff and by students with both groups commenting positively on the availability of online resources [M2; M3]. Comments from external examiners [031] confirm the suitability of online learning resources available via the VLE. The review team noted issues identified by students in relation to two programmes but concluded that, in general, the College ensures that students develop the skills necessary to make effective use of the learning resources provided.

177   The College's strategy, outlined in the University Centre Grimsby (UCG) Strategy 2020 [022], is to be a 'learning organisation of choice for students, employers and the communities we serve, enriching lives and improving prosperity of all'. This sentiment is reflected throughout and reinforced in the Codes of Practice which outline the approach towards higher education, assessment, and student development and achievement [035–052]. The College is committed to engaging with students, as evidenced, for example, through regular meetings of higher education Student Representatives with SMT representatives [149, 152, 171] and ongoing support for the Student Senate [200], although, as noted in Criterion A1, there is only limited evidence of such engagement taking place in practice. The team heard from academic staff, professional support staff and senior staff about their strong emphasis on serving the community and ensuring that students, whatever their background, should be enabled to succeed. [M1; M3–5]. The UCG Strategy 2020 [022], the policies and processes outlined in the codes of practice [035–051], as well as the plans outlined in the Approach to Extending Powers to Level 6 and Merger document [172], evidence that the College's approach is guided by a commitment to equity.

Conclusions

178   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*, in particular Annex 4.

179   Overall, the evidence provided demonstrates that the College takes a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to now it determines and evaluates the enabling of student development and achievement. There are strengths demonstrated in relation to the criterion, specifically that students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in a comprehensive and effective way with programme teams enabled to tailor the induction programme taking into account different students' choices and needs; the broad range of student support measures in place and the completion of the SAR and QIP in addition to in-year reviews of targeted interventions which allow the College to monitor the effectiveness of the student support and counselling services effectively.

180   Although there are weaknesses in its arrangements for reporting on and considering data within the annual monitoring process, the College has systems which enable it to gather and monitor data relating to student progression and performance. The clear focus on developing academic skills within programmes of study and the support provided by the Learner Services Team allows students to develop skills that enable their

academic, personal, and professional progression. In general, the College ensures that students develop the skills necessary to make effective use of the learning resources provided, including the use of specialist facilities, digital and virtual environments. The College's strategy as articulated in the UCG Strategy 2020, its other policies and plans, in addition to its commitment to working with all students as partners in the delivery of higher education evidence that its approach is guided by a commitment to equity. The assessment team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

Criterion E: Evaluation of performance

Criterion E1 - Evaluation of performance

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

181   The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers* (December 2019).

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

182   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 described in Annex 4 and 5 of this Guidance.

183   Specifically, the assessment team considered or assessed the following.

a   To identify and assess the College's approach to undertaking critical self-assessment of its higher education provision, the team considered the Academic Regulations [052], the Code of Practice on Continuous Improvement and Student Engagement [036], the Quality Improvement and Assurance Policy together with an explanation of its status [118; 156] and minutes of the HE Oversight Committee [004]. To gain a full picture of annual monitoring processes it reviewed the 2018-19 Quality Enhancement Report [132] and the Governor minutes and Annual Assurance Statement used in lieu of a Quality Enhancement Report in the period from 2016 to 2018 [188], the Partner Quality Enhancement Report for the University of Hull [016], quality improvement plans at programme, curriculum area and faculty level [115–117] and annual monitoring reports for three bachelor's degree programmes and three foundation degree programmes [062-067] plus information about the programmes in Notice to Improve, together with examples of enhancement [121; 119; 150]. The team also met academic staff [M3] and further written clarifications were also provided by the College [RR1; RR2].

b   To determine how the College identifies and monitors actions arising from scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision the team examined the deliberative committee structure [003], the staffing structure [005] and minutes of the HE Oversight Committee and of the Senior Management Team [004, 123]. It also reviewed 'HE On a Page' [034] and the associated minutes of the fortnightly meetings of the Principal and Vice-Principals [120], the Approach to Extending Powers to Level 6 and Merger document [172] and plans to review the Support to Improve process [113]. It discussed this area with senior staff, academic staff and professional support staff [M1; M3; M4]. Further written clarifications were also provided by the College [RR1; RR2].

c   To understand how the College draws on ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation to inform programme design, approval, delivery and review, the team considered evidence of the senior staff external profile provided by the College contained in its submission [001] and HE staff scholarship and staff development [020; 133; 185]. It reviewed information about academic staff scholarly activity, including data about staff with HEA fellowships and about the College's

ambition to increase external examiner appointments [198; 071; 028; 129]. It reviewed the activity and attendance at Community and Practice sessions [175] and discussed this area with academic staff [M3]. Further written clarifications were also provided by the College [RR1].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

184   The assessment team considered samples of evidence as follows.

185   The team considered a representative sample of annual monitoring reports consisting of the two most recent annual monitoring reports for each of BA Independent Games Design, BA Fine Art, BA Counselling, FdA Tourism and Events, FdSc Mental Health Studies, and FdSc Professional Healthcare Studies. These documents were considered for the purpose specified in paragraph 183a. This sample is representative because it is drawn from the College's foundation degree and bachelor's degree provision and includes programmes with a total of 129 students, representing 13% of students on such programmes.

186   The team also considered random samples of plans and reports relating to the College's use of annual monitoring processes in its evaluation of its performance. The sample consisted of one faculty quality improvement plan (for digital and creative industries), two curriculum area quality improvement plans (for business and for animal management), and four programme quality improvement plans (for business management, business, early childhood studies and for primary education studies). These documents were considered for the purpose specified in paragraph 183a.

What the evidence shows

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

188   Monitoring and review are subject to the Academic Regulations for Foundation Degrees relating to the operation and performance of foundation degree programmes. These articulate how the College safeguards standards and quality and promotes continual improvement through the setting of actions and also how it contributes to sharing of practice [052].

189   The Code of Practice for Continuous Improvement and Student Engagement in Quality [036] sets out the processes for annual and periodic review. Each programme must complete an annual monitoring report and submit it to the HE Quality Office: examples of such reports [062-067] show that they address areas such as student and external examiner feedback, student support and assessment. The College was able to identify [119] a range of programme-level enhancements that have been identified via the annual programme monitoring process, many of which are related to student employability, and, as discussed in Criterion A1, there are clear arrangements for oversight of annual monitoring of programmes. Programme leaders of any programmes which are judged to not meet minimum standards are invited to an AMR review meeting, though to date no such meetings have been needed [036; RR2]. However, HESEG's minutes [150] note that some programme teams are struggling to incorporate the College's key performance indicators and programme data into their analysis in annual monitoring reports in order to set appropriate targets. This was evident from the sample reviewed by the team (see paragraph 173) although the minutes of HESEG do not identify any steps towards addressing this issue. As noted in Criterion B3, although the Quality Enhancement Report for 2018-19 [132] includes a summary of analyses of data on student retention and continuation and identifies a number of areas of provision which have failed to meet targets and for which it asserts that 'significant work is needed to improve performance', it does not identify actions to address these issues. In view of these weaknesses, the team formed the view that there is

insufficient evidence to show that oversight of annual monitoring has been carried out robustly. However, this failing is mitigated by the College's use of the key data sets in 'HE On a Page' [034], as discussed in paragraph 194, which provides for more frequent and timely monitoring of data.

190   The Code of Practice [036] requires each faculty to produce an annual Self-Evaluation and Enhancement Document (SEED) which builds on consideration of student feedback, annual monitoring of programmes, external examiner reports, and any previous periodic or other review. Following this process, any school or department which does not perform to threshold benchmark standards would be referred to the 'Support to Improve' process, as set out in the College's Quality Improvement & Assurance Policy [118], and as discussed in paragraph 194. A written statement to the team from the Director of Quality [156] stated that the Quality Improvement & Assurance Policy is being reviewed to ensure that it is fit for purpose across the organisation but offered no insight into the process or timescales of this review.

191   Quality improvement plans are prepared at programme, curriculum area, and faculty level and these data-driven reports provide a critical self-assessment of student attendance, progression, attainment, and responses to the NSS and to module evaluation questionnaires [115-117]. The reports for curriculum areas and faculty are RAG-rated [118; 115-117]. If a programme is still underperforming against threshold benchmark standards after the annual review process, it is placed in 'Notice to Improve', which, as described in the Quality Improvement & Assurance Policy [118], leads to assistance to the programme team from the Quality and Standards Team to ensure that a full range of performance data is used to assess the effectiveness of the provision and to ensure that the levels of performance expected by the College are achieved. The College currently has 23 programmes in the Notice to Improve process as is reported through the Quality Enhancement Report (QER) [001; 121; 150]. Minutes of the HE Oversight Committee [004] show that Assistant Principals work closely with programme teams to resolve issues specific to programmes, which include attendance, placement capacity, student recruitment and staffing. Academic staff told the assessment team [M3] that, as borne out by the log of programmes subject to Notice to Improve [121], this process has highlighted areas for enhancement in programme delivery such as extra study skills support, improvements in technological provision and placement and employability support.

192   The production and scrutiny of an annual Quality Enhancement Report (QER) allows the Corporation to assure itself that standards of awards are maintained [036]. The College reported [RR1] that for 2016-17 and 2017-18 it did not produce a QER but that the Corporation relied instead on the detailed information regarding a range of metrics, and the associated actions, contained in the Annual Assurance Statement to HEFCE/OfS [188]. In 2018-19 the College reintroduced the QER, which is signed off by SMT [132; RR1; RR2]. The report of the Annual Monitoring, Review and Enhancement of Programmes and the Partner Quality Enhancement Reports [016], both for the University of Hull, contain detailed information about areas for enhancement, planned actions, and the evidence on which they are based. Although the team noted the contrast between the College QER and the monitoring required by the University of Hull, which requires more detailed information and therefore opportunity for more granular self-assessment, it formed the view that the College's arrangements for assuring the standards of awards through the annual Quality Enhancement Report are sufficient.

193   The HE Oversight Committee has devolved responsibility from the Corporation for scrutiny and monitoring of academic provision. It discharges this through detailed analysis of student performance and the setting of KPIs as demonstrated through the minutes and papers reviewed by the team [001; 003; 004]. The College has set out how the membership of the HE Oversight Committee will be extended to include the Chair of the local board of

East Riding College if the proposed merger takes place [172]. The HE Quality Office provides the organisational infrastructure, and this has recently been strengthened with the appointment of an HE Quality Manager [005].

194   Key data sets are gathered weekly using a report called 'HE On a Page' [034]. This allows all staff to see the key data, including data relating to student attendance, progression and achievement, broken down by faculty, programme, and cohort. Academic staff make particular use of this report to monitor attendance regularly and it informs their annual monitoring report [034; M3]. Success Coaches access data on attendance and progression [M4]. This report is used in a fortnightly meeting by the Curriculum and Quality Strategy Group, chaired by the Principal, who holds Associate Principals to account for the data in their area [120], using 'HE On a Page' [034] to show current data trends surrounding student performance. The minutes of these meetings show that they focus on driving up attendance, module evaluation questionnaire response rates, teaching observations and the quality of monitoring reports [120]. In addition, minutes of the Senior Management Team [123] show evidence of consideration of data [034] on student continuation and of awareness of actions: minutes show that the meeting of April 2019 acknowledged the need for 'improvement in continuation' but did not identify how this was to be achieved. Where data shows poor performance, two quality-led measures can be used to improve performance; the first is used where data shows issues at programme level which may lead to the 'Notice to Improve' process as discussed in paragraph 191. Where data shows poor performance across an entire school then the approach applied is 'Support to Improve'. Although the Support to Improve process has not been used since 2015, the College affirmed that it is reviewing the process, with the intention of separating it for higher education and for further education provision [RR1], and supplied draft documentation for the revised approach [113].

195   There are a variety of means by which the College draws on external ideas and expertise to inform its activities and plans. Records of staff research and scholarly activity show evidence of academics actively engaged in research and scholarship relating to programme design and development and on teaching [020; 133]. The College hosts an annual teaching and learning conference for staff and students to present scholarly activity and research, and share ideas and practice [020]. Additionally [020], academic staff may attend the annual conference of the University of Hull to meet and engage with attendees from other higher education providers. Records of scholarship show that the College has also [020] been a part of the Association of Colleges Scholarship project and staff have attended its annual conference. As well as conferences, weekly Community and Practice sessions take place [175], which, as described in Criterion A1, offers an opportunity for staff to be consulted on best practices, discuss changes to codes of practice, and share scholarly activity and good practice from their teaching and learning, though the College has acknowledged its concern about levels of attendance (see paragraph 84). Through the teaching remission scheme the College enables a range of staff development that supports staff in programme design, approval, delivery and review, for example attending a validation panel at the University of Hull and attendance at professional conferences [185]. In addition, the College is also encouraging staff to gain fellowship of HEA and to secure external examiner appointments as demonstrated in the scholarship records and strategic measures [028, 071, 129, 198]. This is expected to increase staff knowledge and expertise in programme design, approval, delivery and review and academic staff met by the team offered several examples of engagement by members of staff with the activities of other higher education providers with a view to increasing their experience in curriculum development [M3].

196   The College is externally networked through its membership of the Mixed Economy Group of which the College's CEO was Vice-Chair during 2018-20 [001]. The College is an invited member of the Association of Colleges HE Policy Group, which the Academic Registrar attends [001]. The Academic Registrar also contributed to a reading group for the

QAA Quality Code Advice and Guidance Documents organised by the Association of Colleges Policy Group [001].

Conclusions

197   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*, in particular Annex 4.

198   The team found that sufficient, valid, credible and reliable evidence is available that demonstrates that the College has in place the means of critically reviewing its own performance at all levels throughout the organisation, and that there are several strengths demonstrated in relation to this criterion. Arrangements for annual monitoring are sufficient; although there is a lack of robust use of data in programme annual monitoring reports to inform target setting, the reports identify strengths and failings at programme level and offer evidence of action taken to address failings. Weaknesses in annual monitoring are mitigated also by the College's use of key data in 'HE On a Page': thus, the team did not consider this to present a significant risk to quality or standards or the achievement of the criterion.

199   In its use of 'HE On a Page', the College has introduced an effective means of bringing all programme data into a simple format that can be used by a variety of staff. This, and the regular review of such data, provide clear mechanisms for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision through the Notice to Improve process and this is a clear strength. The College employs a range of approaches to encourage ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation to support its arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review. Senior staff are engaged in a number of external fora and teaching staff are supported to undertake a wide range of activities, including conference attendance, engagement as external examiners and fellowship of HEA and this demonstrates that the College is proactive in continually developing its staff in ways that will directly inform programme design, approval, delivery and review. The Community and Practice sessions provide an internal opportunity for academic staff to share good practice, though levels of attendance are a concern.

200   The team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

Full DAPs overarching criterion

201   The Full DAPs overarching criterion is that 'the provider is a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems.

Conclusions

202   The College has supported the growth of an academic community principally by enabling academic staff engaged in the delivery of higher education to contribute to the development of policy and practice and to the design and development of programmes. Academic staff showed awareness of their part in consultation on the College's strategies and in monitoring, reviewing and developing the College's provision. As discussed within Criterion C1, staff involved in teaching or supporting learning, and in the assessment of student work, have opportunities to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design. Additionally, the College has supported the development of curricula and pedagogy informed by research and scholarship: staff involved in teaching or supporting learning, and in the assessment of student work, have active engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge, and research and scholarly activity is reasonably current and advanced to a level commensurate with the level and subject of the qualifications being offered. The team formed the view that there is a cohesive academic community which supports the College's mission, aims and values.

203   The College has sound arrangements for the assurance of standards. As described in Criterion B2, the Code of Practice for Continuous Improvement and Student Engagement in Quality provides a structured framework for the continuous improvement of academic programmes; programme approval arrangements are robust, applied consistently, and ensure that standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard; processes for the assessment of student work are sufficient to ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated; and, although there is a weakness in relation to the consistent involvement of external examiners in approving all assessment tasks, the College makes use of external independent expertise in establishing and maintaining threshold academic standards and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications. As described in Criterion B3, the College has sound arrangements at its most senior level for receiving, considering and responding to issues raised by its external examiners. The team formed the view that the College has demonstrated a clear and sustained commitment to the assurance of standards at all levels of the organisation.

204   Although the team identified some weaknesses in the College's arrangements, it noted that the College had acknowledged most weaknesses and in nearly all cases had presented plans to address them, for instance in relation to the involvement of external examiners in approving assessment tasks, to the oversight of admission with credit, to the lack of documented programme evaluation undertaken as part of programme reapproval, and to the development of a strategic approach to teaching and learning. The team considered that this represented evidence of a self-critical approach enabling the College to identify limitations or deficiencies in its activities and to take remedial action.

205   The College's academic regulations and the related policies and processes embedded in its Codes of Practice provide an appropriate and coherent framework for the implementation of its awarding powers. The dedicated higher education quality infrastructure is sufficient to monitor and oversee the implementation of academic regulations and policies and procedures. The College's arrangements for the approval and review of its programmes are sound and consistently applied. There is a credible plan for the extension of its awarding powers which lays out the approach to managing standards and quality and has a realistic

schedule for the validation of Level 6 provision. The recent creation of, and appointment to, a post as HE Quality Manager supports the view that the College is committed to ensuring effective management of the quality of its higher education provision. The team formed the view that, despite some weaknesses in the implementation of some policies, the College's quality systems are well designed and generally applied consistently and, in preparation for the extension of its powers, have been monitored and reviewed.

206   The team formed the view that the College has a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems.

Annexes

Evidence

001 Submission GIFHE
002 Evidence List GIFHE
003 Deliberative Committee Structure
004 HE Oversight Committee Minutes and Papers
005 HE Standards Staffing Structure
006 Code of Practice Log
007 Student Support SEG Minutes
008 HE03A Committee Structure v2
009 AASSC Papers
010 Governance Structures
011 Academic Regulations changes Sep 19
012 Exam Board Case Study
013 Teaching and Learning Reporting
014 Validation Forms
015 Proposed Bachelors Degree Regulations
016 PQER AMREP Reports and meetings
017 Central Record of Validated Programmes
018 Award Details
019 RTS Records
020 Scholarship Evidence
021 Panel Membership
022 UCG2020
023 Human Resources Evidence
024 Teaching and Learning Policy
025 FdA Tourism and Events Validation Process
026 FdSc Mental Health Studies Validation Process
027 FdSc Professional Health Care validation process
028 Scholarship and Staffing Profile Log
029 Remission Guidance
030 Timeline for Governance Changes
031 EE to AMR Evidence
032 HE05I Stage 3 FPA Minutes v2
033 GI Creates Scholarship Case Studies Draft v1
034 HE On a Page
035 HE02 CoP Published Information and Consumer Protection 101
036 HE03 Continuous Improvement and Student Engagement in Quality v11
037 HE04 Teaching Research and Scholarship v101
038 HE05 Validation and Amendment of Programmes v14
039 HE06 Board of Examiners and External Examiners v11
040 HE07 Admissions Appeals and Accreditation of Prior Learning Transfers v11
041 HE08 Retention and Engagement of Students v10
042 HE09 Assessment of Students 101
043 HE10 Mitigating Circumstances and Short Extensions 311
044 HE11 Academic Misconduct v17 NTC
045 HE12 Fitness to study v13 NTC
046 HE13 Fitness to Practise v121
047 HE14 Ethics Approval Staff and Students v43 NTC
048 HE15 Intellectual Property Rights v21

049 HE16 Academic Appeals v131
050 HE17 Management of Placement Learning in Higher Education 101
051 HE20 HE Concerns and Complaints Policy v11 NTC
052 HE01 Academic Regulations Foundation Degrees v211 Jan 2020
053 EMT Minute Extracts relating to HE since March 2018
054 SEG Meetings 1819 1920
055 AASSC Minutes 5220
056 Examples of modifications to programmes
057 Minutes 6112020
058 Student Senate Minutes 29012020
059 Definitive HE Docs Pictures
060 Course closures EMT 03032020
061 Stage 1 Proposals 3 App 3 Not App
062 AMRs BA Ind Game Des
063 AMRs BA Fine Art
064 AMRs BA Counselling Studies
065 AMRs FdA Tour Mgt and Event Mgt
066 AMRs FdSc Mental Health Studies
067 AMR FdSc Prof Healthcare Studies
068 HE Strategic Enhancement Group minutes
069 External stakeholders in validation
070 BABM Game Design and Music Validation Documents
071 TEC Partnership Approach to Strategic Measures of Success Draft V3
072 35a See it Say it Well sort it Poster
073 35b Racism, inclusion and Prevent posters and signage
074 35c Ofsted extract
075 35d Health and Safety Policy
076 35e General Classroom Risk Assessment
077 35f Access for All Criteria
078 35g 24 hour Learning Centre Risk Assessment
079 35h Safeguarding Policy 2020
080 Sched 3 Citizens Advice 1
081 FdSc Community Mental Health Student Handbook 2019
082 Examples of placement team resolving issues from student feedback
083 Assessment Feedback for progress
084 L4 FD Performing Arts Assessment
085 L5 FD Performing Arts Assessment
086 L4 FD Community Mental Health Assessment
087 L5 FD Community Mental Health Assessment
088 K Flynn EE mentor
089 FD Tourism and AniMgt SBMins
090 HCI Grimsby SBMins
091 Academic Achievement Coach Examples
092 Success Coach Case Studies
093 FdSc Football Caching and Youth Development Handbooks
094 FdA Counselling Studies Handbooks
095 Orientation and Tutorial Plans
096 AASSC Academic Misconduct
097 Assessment Approval
098 Grimsby EE Induction Presentation
099 FdA Counselling Studies EE
100 FdEd Early Childhood Studies EE
101 HE Rejection Letter Template

102	Appeal log last 3 years
103	Complaints log last 3 years
104	Two Complaint Examples Not Redacted
105	Two Appeal Letter Examples Not redacted
106	Evidence of learning and discussion regarding appeals
107	HEQAC Draft Minutes
108	Experience Logs and External engagement
109	UCG Prospectus 2020
110	3 Foundation 3 Bachelors Programme Leaflets
111	HE02A CMA Programme Information form
112	Documentation that describes and showcases the careers service
113	Higher Education S2I Quality Improvement Toolkit 1920 draft v1
114	Coordinators 1819 1920
115	One Faculty Quality Improvement Plan
116	Two Curriculum Area Quality Improvement Plans
117	Four Programme Quality Improvement Plans
118	Quality Improvement & Assurance Policy
119	Programme Enhancement
120	Minutes of CQS
121	Programmes on Notice to Improve
122	UCG Scholarship
123	SMT Minute Extracts relating to HE since March 2018
124	Validations in progress 2018 19
125	Learner Services Strategy
126	Academic achievement coach 2018 19
127	HE Success Coach review 2018 19
128	HEQAC Report Student Support
129	Replacement Scholarship Profile
130	Replacement HE Standards Staffing Structure
131	SEEDs and SEED Validation Log
132	201819 Quality Enhancement Report
133	Scholarship
134	Course Risk Assessment
135	Replacement Evidence List
136	Student Submission for DAPs
137	Video Student Submission for DAPs
138	Replacement Evidence list 2
139	BDAP evidence strat plan
140	Curriculum Report
141	CVs of six staff
142	Validation Log and explanation
143	APL Evidence
144	Template module handbook
145	Academic Misconduct explanation
146	Full QEReport 1920 sub to SMT
147	Coordinators 1819 1920
148	HE09G Generic Marking Criteria for Degree Programmes
149	HE Meeting with SMT 12022019
150	AMR reporting lines replacing 68
151	Examples of modifications to programmes
152	Student Senate Meetings 20192020
153	Supporting Validation Evidence
154	HE Standards Staffing Structure v3

155 Staff List Externality
156 Response from director quality
157 AASSC Minutes 5220
158 STEC CQS Minute Extracts relating to HE
159 STEC SMT Minute Extracts relating to HE
160 Success Coach JD
161 Graduate Counsellor JD
162 Learner Advisor
163 HE Academic Achievement Coach
164 Learner Services Strategy rep 125
165 Explanation by Dir Learner Services
166 Example CMA Forms
167 CMA Forms for HN
168 Advertising and Consumer Protection Report 20192020
169 Access for All info
170 ATP Examples
171 HE Meet with SMT Minutes 20192020
172 Approach to Extending Powers to Level 6 and Merger
173 Evidence of Oversight of Appeals
174 Support to improve Evidence from 2015
175 Community and Practice Register
176 Student Support and Professional Services
177 HE02B Code of Practice Log and website change log 20420
178 Employability by Skills and Employability Manager
179 General Laboratory RA 2020
180 Counselling Service
181 Replacement Evidence list 3
182 Evidence of student involvement in validations and modifications
183 Level 6 Staff Experience and how they were supported
184 Evidence of changes to regulations as a result of students appeals
185 Remission evidence
186 HEQAC Report Accreditation of Prior Learning 13may2020
187 Corporation Minute Extracts relating to HE Oversight Committee since March 2018
188 Governor minutes and papers Annual Assurance Statement
189 SAR Explanation
190 Engineering Evidence
191 Example of co creation of policies between students and staff
192 ESS 4Cast Purchase Plan and Tutorial registers
193 HE TLA Strategy planning and approaches
194 Learner Services SAR 1819
195 Most Senior Academic Board
196 Replacement Evidence List
197 Resources Availability
198 Scholarship additional information
199 Terms of reference HE committee
200 HE Student Senate Training and Support
201 UCG 2020 Evidence
202 Resources for HE programmes on teach out at STEC
203 Clarification around FdA Events and FdA Tourism Validations
204 Governance student Training
205 Evidence List
M1 Meeting with senior staff
M2 Meeting with students

M3 Meeting with academic staff
M4 Meeting with professional support staff
M5 Meeting with senior staff
RR1 The College's response to the assessment team's first request for further evidence and information
RR2 The College's response to the assessment team's second request for further evidence and information

Glossary

AASSC   Academic Authority and Standards Senior Committee
BDAP   Bachelor's Degree Awarding Powers
EMT   Executive Management Team
FDA   Foundation Degree Arts
FDAP   Foundation Degree Awarding Powers
FDSc   Foundation Degree Science
HEQAC   Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee
HESEG   HE Strategic Enhancement Group
PQER   Partner Quality Enhancement Report
QER   Quality Enhancement Report
SEED   Self-Evaluation and Enhancement Document
SMT   Senior Management Team
UCG   University College Grimsby