Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Navitas UK Holdings Ltd

International College Robert Gordon University

April 2016

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at International College Robert Gordon University (ICRGU).The review took place from 14 to 15 April 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Anne Peat
- Professor Alan Jago.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by ICRGU and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)[1] setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - the setting and maintenance of academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
  - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

In Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) there is also a check on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG). This check has the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure of their education provider.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

In reviewing International College Robert Gordon University, the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The themes for the academic year 2015-16 are Digital Literacy and Student Employability,[2] and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[3] A dedicated section explains the method for Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges).[4] For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code
[2] Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges):
www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Navitas UK's provision at International College Robert Gordon University

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at International College Robert Gordon University (ICRGU).

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of Navitas and ICRGU's degree-awarding body **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities is **commended.**
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at ICRGU:

- the collaborative approach to studio-based joint teaching on the architecture programme which enables students to experience university in a secure setting (Expectation B3)
- the systematic consideration of student views that informs progression and transition arrangements (Expectation B4).

Enhancement of student learning opportunities

ICRGU has developed its approach to enhancement within the framework set out by Navitas UK. ICRGU is party to the strategic aims of the provider and is committed to enhancement which includes the establishment of a College Enhancement Team (CET) which reports to the College Learning and Teaching Board.

ICRGU has developed a series of objectives that seek to enhance the student experience. These are outlined as a set of actions in minutes of the CET. These are reviewed at each meeting of the team and updates recorded. Current actions focus on the development of a student buddy programme, additional computing skills classes, alumni visits and improvements to accommodation.

Theme: Digital Literacy

Digital Literacy Strategy is part of Navitas UK's enhancement framework; the Virtual Learning Strategy 2015-16 applies to the UK college community who use the virtual learning environment (VLE). The strategy is to ensure all College students can access appropriate material to support their studies, encourage and support College staff to take an active role in student learning, promote staff development, ensure the tools are appropriate to support student learning and ensure appropriate training is provided for staff and students. The strategy makes it clear the need to ensure digital literacy is embedded in the curriculum and that appropriate resources are available.

About International College Robert Gordon University

The International College at Robert Gordon University (ICRGU) is an affiliate College of Robert Gordon University. The Recognition and Articulation Agreement (RAA) was signed on 29th April 2010. The College is located on the University campus in a central situation.

ICRGU recruited students for the first time in September 2011. The portfolio of courses taught at the College has increased from five courses in 2011 to seven courses in 2015.

The courses are delivered by ICRGU teaching staff under a Navitas standard delivery model. Students who are successful on the foundation (Pharmacy) or first year degree programme progress to year one (Pharmacy) or year two (all other undergraduate courses) taught and assessed by Robert Gordon University. Students who are successful on the pre-master's programme progress to master's courses taught and assessed by Robert Gordon University.

The College has three academic intakes per year (September, February and May).

Navitas and Robert Gordon University (RGU/the University) agreed that ICRGU, as an Affiliate College of the University, provide undergraduate and postgraduate pathway programmes as detailed in the RAA. Each Pathway is a single Undergraduate or Postgraduate Programme delivered by ICRGU and the University, comprising a series of Stages of study, following successful completion of which students will be awarded an appropriate degree by the University.

The College Principal/Director is responsible for the operations and management of the College, for establishing and maintaining a successful working relationship with the University, for ensuring that programmes are delivered in accordance with the arrangements set out in the RAA, for ongoing liaison with the University and for the quality processes including annual monitoring.

The College Principal/Director is supported by a senior management team consisting of a Director of Marketing and Admissions, and the Manager Student Services. The College Principal/Director is responsible for the educational environment of the College, the student experience, quality and academic standards, oversight of administrative processes and management and development of academic and service staff. The Manager Student Services is responsible for managing the key aspects of the student life-cycle with regard to records and reporting compliance, student support and welfare services, orientation and information services, student accommodation, immigration status and student inclusion and engagement. The Director of Marketing and Admissions is responsible for the strategic direction and management of the College's marketing activities and managing the marketing team.

The Navitas UK Director of Corporate Services supports ICRGU to ensure the College follows the guidelines set out by the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). The UKVI policy and guidance is an integral part of the management of ICRGU and UK immigration policy and guidance is used to advise, support and enhance the College action plan where appropriate.

A comprehensive periodic programme review of ICRGU by Robert Gordon University is scheduled to take place in 2017 and will provide a thorough review of the partnership and programmes delivered at the College.

Explanation of the findings about International College Robert Gordon University

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a brief glossary at the end of this report. A fuller glossary of terms is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the review method, also on the QAA website.

1   Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by Navitas and on behalf of the degree-awarding body

Expectation (A1): In order to secure threshold academic standards, degree-awarding bodies:

a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FHEQIS) are met by:

- **positioning their qualifications at the appropriate level of the relevant framework for higher education qualifications**
- **ensuring that programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptor in the relevant framework for higher education qualifications**
- **naming qualifications in accordance with the titling conventions specified in the frameworks for higher education qualifications**
- **awarding qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes**

b) consider and take account of QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics

c) where they award UK credit, assign credit values and design programmes that align with the specifications of the relevant national credit framework

d) consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

Quality Code, *Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards*

Findings

1.1   ICRGU does not separately make awards as the College provision and its levels of study form part of the educational offering of the University's undergraduate and postgraduate degree qualification at the appropriate level of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The University awards mark the achievement of the outcomes set out in the SCQF qualification descriptors. The governance structures established between ICRGU and the University are the principal bodies responsible for the regulation, governance and quality assurance of the academic work of the College. They approve recommendations for the introduction of programmes of study. Navitas UK has oversight of the standards of the College provision through the programme approval process, receiving summaries of Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) reports and annual monitoring reports (AMRs).

1.2   The review team tested the arrangements described in College documentation explaining the processes for the approval and monitoring of programmes, documents produced during programme approval, and AMRs.

1.3   The review team concludes that the policies and procedures that ensured the programmes met UK threshold standards through alignment with SCQF were implemented effectively. There was a clear process in place for the approval of programmes. Programme

specifications refer to levels of the SCQF, Subject Benchmark Statements and intended learning outcomes, which are informed by national guidance. AMRs include reference to the appropriateness of aims, objectives and intended learning outcomes.

1.4   The consideration of documentation and discussions with staff confirmed that the College employs qualification frameworks effectively in its published approval, review and assessment processes. The review team therefore affirms the assertions made by ICRGU and that the College meets the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.

Quality Code, *Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards*

Findings

1.5   A very close working relationship between RGU and ICRGU has developed over the last five to six years. RGU knew what it wanted from the partnership. Senior academics meet every four or six weeks and mutual trust and understanding has developed over the period of the partnership.

1.6   The College governance structure was established at the beginning of the partnership and is described in the Articulation Agreement; it consists of a number of committees with representatives from the College, RGU and Navitas UK. The Joint Strategic Management Board (JSMB) oversees the management of the relationship with three subcommittees feeding into it; AAC whose purpose is to oversee academic matters and review the effectiveness of the academic infrastructure; the Operations Advisory Committee (OAC) responsible for the operational arm of the governance structure; and the Marketing Advisory Committee (MAC) which provides the College Marketing and Recruitment Team and the University International Office with a formal process through which joint planning and market intelligence can be shared.

1.7   Navitas UK policies and regulations have been localised by the College to form the College Policies and Regulations (CPRs), they are frequently reviewed by Navitas UK to ensure the College governance and academic framework and regulations meet the Quality Code Benchmarks. The CPRs are set in consultation with RGU and documented in the Operations Manual for the partnership; they are benchmarked against relevant University regulations.

1.8   The College Director Principal is ultimately responsible for the maintenance of quality standards in the College and the successful working relationship with the University ensuring programmes are delivered in accordance with the RAA. The Principal and Senior Management Team have oversight of all aspects of the operation of the College including quality and compliance management.

1.9   RGU, as the degree-awarding body, ensures the requirements of the FHEQIS are aligned and threshold academic standards are met. The Director of Student Experience and Academic Quality Navitas UK ensures the chapters of the Quality Code are mapped to Navitas Policy and Procedures.

1.10   The governance structure established between the College and the University is responsible for the regulation, governance and quality assurance of the academic work of the College. The University has overall responsibility for academic standards and quality of award. Navitas has oversight through the programme approval process and AMRs.

1.11   The College does not make awards as its provision forms part of the educational offering of RGU. The University assesses the achievement of the outcomes set out in the framework qualification descriptors SCQF Levels 10 and 11. The level of study is indicated in the programme specification and achievement of the outcomes demonstrated through the assessment process with credit used as a measure of study.

1.12   Under the standard delivery model, assessment is undertaken by the College and moderation by the University.

1.13   The College Examination Board and Progression Board have responsibility to consider successful completion and progression onto the next level or, if unsuccessful at reassessment, the withdrawal of the student.

1.14   The College does not permit recognition of certificated or experiential learning as exemption from the requirements of the programme.

1.15   The review team looked at the setting and maintenance of academic standards and how it is vested in the senior academic authority of the University. The team looked at the CPRs, Operations Manual and the membership and terms of reference of the governance committees. The team looked at the notes of meetings and talked to staff and students to determine how the structures work and staff and student involvement.

1.16   The evidence showed robust academic governance arrangements are in place with responsibility for setting and maintaining academic standards vested in the senior academic authority of the University, with oversight by Navitas UK.

1.17   It is clear from the evidence that staff and students are aware of the governance arrangements and the information provided is clear and easy to understand.

1.18   The review team concludes that academic standards are systematically and consistently applied in order to secure standards are met and maintained, they are aligned to the appropriate level of the FHEQIS. The College's policies align with the Navitas framework and appropriate University policies and regulations. The governance structure has staff representatives from the College, University and Navitas. The team therefore affirms the assertions made that ICRGU meets the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

Quality Code, *Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards*

Findings

1.19   The College Policy and Regulation provides details of the process for programme design, development and approval, to ensure the processes are applied systematically and operate consistently across the College.

1.20   New programmes and major modifications require approval by RGU and Navitas UK who ensure they align with external reference points and standards are maintained. A risk-based approach is used applying greater scrutiny where there is more risk.

1.21   The robust approval process ensures academic standards are set at a level that meets UK threshold standards; this is done through external scrutiny and expert academic advice. The learning outcomes and the appropriateness of the learning and teaching assessment methods used to achieve this are considered at the five-stage approval process.

1.22   Programme specifications are used as a definitive reference point for all publicly available information. They contain information about aims, learning outcomes, content and assessment strategy. The programme specifications are available for teaching staff and used as a reference point for annual monitoring.

1.23   Definitive Module Documents (DMDs) and Module Guides set out key features of each module and outline the teaching schedule.

1.24   The AAC has oversight of all the regulations, governance and quality assurance of academic work of the College and considers and approves the introduction of new modules or programmes of study leading to an award.

1.25   College policies and regulations, details of programmes; programme specifications, DMDs and Module Guides are posted on the student portal. Student achievement is reported and stored on MAZE (the student management system) and details are transferred onto the University System providing details for students' transcripts. Students can access MAZE using the student portal.

1.26   The approval of new programmes is a robust five-stage process commensurate with Navitas UK guidance and involves Navitas UK, RGU and the College working together at each level of the process with an external specialist involved in the Scrutiny Panel, which is chaired by the University Deputy Principal/VC responsible for academic quality assurance.

1.27   The review team looked at the programme specifications, DMDs, qualification and intended learning outcomes, the access and availability of the portal for key stakeholders and the Student College Handbook. The team talked to staff and student representatives who confirmed information about programmes is available on the student portal.

1.28   The evidence demonstrates that the programme specifications and learning outcomes are consistent with the SCQF and they are reviewed during annual monitoring which involves the University. Students are provided with the appropriate programme specification on registration, due notice is given of any changes; this was confirmed by

student representatives. The team was informed of the process for introducing a new programme, an example given was the School of Creative Arts approached the College as a result of a gap that had been recognised by the School. The team noted the timescale for approval varied from three to 12 months. Reapproval when curriculum changes are necessary can be at School level but more extensive changes to a module requires a reapproval event. This, however, would normally only take place every six years.

1.29   Students confirm the information provided with regard to programmes is clear and easy to access. An introductory event re the portal is timetabled for the beginning of each module and students feel well prepared.

1.30   Programme information and details of student achievement is stored on the student management system - MAZE. A new system - Navigate - is due to be introduced in autumn 2016; it is currently being piloted in Australia.

1.31   The review team concludes that a definitive record of each programme and its learning outcomes is maintained and demonstrates compliance with the academic framework. The information is available for staff and student via the portal. It is used as a reference point for the delivery of the programme, by teaching staff, internal and external examiners and for subsequent monitoring and review. The records are updated as and when amendments are made. The review team therefore affirms the assertions made that ICRGU meets the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards*

Findings

1.32   Academic standards for all ICRGU's provision are set by their partner University, through their formal programme approval process, as the degree-awarding body. Such approval requires that the provision meets the requirements of the University's regulations and their academic framework. Any changes to programmes have to be formally approved to ensure that these standards will continue to be met. The approval of new programmes and changes to existing programmes involve the College, the University and Navitas UK.

1.33   The review team found that ICRGU has processes in place for the design and approval of modules and programmes, which ensure that academic standards are set at the appropriate level meeting UK threshold standards.

1.34   The review team tested the effectiveness of ICRGU's procedures for programme approval by examining policy documents and manuals, documentation for programme approval and amendment.

1.35   The review team found that the policies and procedures for programme approval and change are effectively implemented. They incorporate the academic regulations of the University and UK threshold standards. All modules have a DMD which details all learning outcomes and assessment requirements. Staff use standard templates for DMDs and programme information.

1.36   The review team concludes that ICRGU, with the support of its University and Navitas UK, operate programme approval procedures which ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meet UK threshold standards and are in accordance with the relevant academic frameworks and regulations. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:

- **the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment**
- **both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.**

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards*

Findings

1.37   The College provision forms part of the educational offering of the University, the University awards and marks the achievement of outcomes as per the SCQF Level 10 and 11 qualification descriptors, thus ensuring the learning outcomes required for each level of study at the College in the programme specification are achieved through a robust assessment process.

1.38   The University uses credit as a measure of study and assessment in line with the FHEQIS. The governance structure established between the College and University are the principal bodies responsible for regulations, governance, quality assurance and academic work of the College and have overall responsibility for academic standards.

1.39   Programme learning outcomes are detailed in the programme specification and define the knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes gained from successful completion of the programme. DMDs set out learning outcomes to be assessed at module level and indicate the summative assessment method to enable the student to demonstrate the learning outcomes and weighting. The programme approval process, ensures that the learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptors of FHEQIS and relate to the programme aims, Subject Benchmark Statements and the University programmes. The programme specifications are used as the definitive reference point for all publicly available information, they are a source of information for students and staff, a reference point for annual monitoring and a source of information for members of the University who act as externals.

1.40   The CPRs sets out the College requirement in relation to the assessment of students and make it clear each student must be assessed in accordance with the programme specification. The assessments demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes and the definitive module guides detail the assessment type, duration, method, topic, schedule and weighting. The College Learning and Teaching Board is responsible for overseeing the arrangements and policies for the assessment of students.

1.41   The role of module panels and board of examiners in the assessment process are clear in the CPRs and include the College Principal/Director, lecturers, academic support officers and the University link tutor. The panels determine grades and overall academic performance on modules, confirming integrity of marks through moderation.

1.42   The College is committed to producing excellent student outcomes and experience, which prepares students for onward progression to the partner University; they ensure academic standards are aligned to the appropriate level of the SCQF. It is clear the College does not make the awards, the level of study forms part of the educational offering of the University.

1.43   Assessment decisions on the award of credit are reached through a process approved by the Senior Academic authority of the University. The College determines the process for the scrutiny of marks awarded by the College under the partnership arrangements with the University. The College does not permit recognition of certificated or experiential learning for the purpose of exemption.

1.44   The College operates a three-stage assessment process - module panels, exam boards and progression boards delegated by that authority. The module panel oversees the assessment of modules, the exam board receives all module results and makes a decision on whether resits are required. The progression board receives all module results and makes a decision on progression to the next stage of the pathway. College and University membership of the respective boards is outlined in the Operations Manual. Students who do not meet the minimum requirement following reassessment are required to withdraw; this information is included in the Student Handbook.

1.45   The review team looked at the CPRs, Operations Manual, Navitas Guide to the Role of the external examiner, terms of reference and membership of the module panels and board of examiners and looked at how the policies were operationalised by talking to staff and students.

1.46   The evidence demonstrated that staff are aware of the assessment process, along with the University link tutor and subject specialist who internally moderate to ensure a consistent approach, which maintains academic standards across the discipline.

1.47   Student representatives who met the review team confirmed they are aware of the assessment guidelines and marking criteria, which are included in the Module Guide, programme specifications and DMDs. The DMD for Fundamentals of UK Law demonstrate a variety of assessment methods are used. The Module Guide was introduced to be more student friendly. Assessment regulations are systematically and consistently applied to secure academic standards and students are aware of the regulations.

1.48   The assessment process, the use of internal and external examiners and the governance arrangements through module panels and exam boards was confirmed by staff who met the review team. University academics also confirmed that they were asked if the academic standards and achievements of students was comparable with those at their own institutions.

1.49   Staff and students have access to external examiner reports through the VLE.

1.50   The review team concludes that appropriate assessment is used to judge student performance against the standards set, providing students with an opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes. The degree-awarding body is involved at all levels from the approval and the ongoing monitoring and assessment process, which are approved, by the senior academic authority. The University has ultimate responsibility for the award of academic credit with Navitas UK having the overview. The information on assessments is easily accessible to staff and students through the VLE and it is there that staff and students have access to external examiner reports. The review team therefore affirms the assertions made that ICRGU meets the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of Risk: Low

Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards*

Findings

1.51   The College monitors its programmes to ensure that UK threshold academic standards are being achieved and that academic standards are being maintained. This is achieved by consideration, annual monitoring and periodic review reports. Responsibility for the standards of programmes offered at ICRGU is through the AAC. AAC reports to the Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board.

1.52   The review team found that the policies and processes in place for programme monitoring and review are designed to ensure that UK threshold standards are achieved and the academic standards of the awarding body are being maintained.

1.53   In order to assess the effectiveness of ICRGU's procedures for programme monitoring and review, the review team looked at policy documents, manuals, committee minutes, and AMRs.

1.54   The review team found that the policies and procedures in place for programme monitoring and review are implemented effectively and demonstrate that UK threshold standards are achieved and the academic standards of RGU are maintained. ICRGU regularly reports to Navitas UK in its annual monitoring on a number of key indicators including student performance, progression, pass rates, retention and completion. Statistical data on student performance is analysed in the annual programme monitoring report for each programme. The report also contains a commentary on learning outcomes and there is reference to student feedback.

1.55   The review team concludes that ICRGU, with the support of Navitas UK and RGU, operates effective monitoring and review processes that demonstrate UK threshold standards are achieved and academic standards are maintained. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the degree-awarding body are appropriately set and maintained.**

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards*

Findings

1.56   The University plays a key role in the College core quality assurance processes responsible for setting and maintaining academic standards.

1.57   The University acts as the external through the appointment of a link tutor, and subject specialist from the appropriate School who plays a key role in the College core quality assurance processes.

1.58   The approval process agreed with the University ensures that academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standards and are aligned with external reference points; this is achieved through the use of external scrutiny and expert academic advice.

1.59   The College Learning and Teaching Board monitors and reviews academic standards within the College in accordance with University policy to ensure that UK threshold academic standards are achieved.

1.60   The College annual monitoring process is outlined in the College Policy and Regulations. The link tutor contributes to the AMR through feedback and examination progression board commentary; the link tutor also attends the AAC. External scrutiny is also provided at University periodic review; the next review is scheduled for 2017.

1.61   Navitas UK appoints the external examiner for the Interactive Learning Skills and Communication (ILSC) module; detailed guidelines have been developed by Navitas on the role of the external examiner to ensure understanding of the expectations of the Quality Code.

1.62   The RAA clearly states RGU acts as the external and plays a key role in the College core quality assurance processes responsible for setting and maintaining academic standards. The subject discipline staff from the University moderate the work and are required to confirm they are satisfied with the threshold academic standards, ensure they are at the appropriate level in accordance with the SCQF and Subject Benchmark Statements. They are asked to confirm academic standards and achievements of students are comparable with those at their own levels. The final approval of new programmes is the responsibility of the University and Navitas UK.

1.63   The approval process for new programmes involves a scrutiny panel which includes a member from a School other than the one presenting the programme for approval and an independent external academic who fulfils the role without conflict of interest.

1.64   All programmes are subject to annual monitoring and evaluation, which includes feedback from link tutors and subject specialist moderators, the reviews are considered by the College through its governance committee structure.

1.65   Navitas UK's guidance on programme design emphasises consistency with external reference points.

1.66   The review team looked at the CPRs, Navitas Guide to External Examiner, programme annual reports and the Operations Manual documents for details of externality. The team also reviewed the RAA and talked to University staff about their role as an external and College staff about the use of subject specialist and the relationship.

1.67   The evidence shows that external expertise is used at key stages of setting and maintain academic standards. The University link tutor and subject specialist have a significant role in providing externality to the College on a regular basis, with outside subject specialists being commissioned for key events such as Approval and Periodic Reviews. The team noted external examiner reports are available for staff and students on the VLE. The staff who met the review team explained how externals are involved at each level of the process including development, approval, annual monitoring, periodic review and assessment.

1.68   Navitas UK have commissioned external consultants to review the College partnerships to assess and enhance relationships; staff are aware and questionnaires have been distributed and telephone interviews arranged.

1.69   The team concludes that there is independent expertise obtained at key stages of the process of setting and maintaining academic standards and the team noted the College and University's commitment to maintaining standards through benchmarking of external reference points and involvement of external subject specialists. The external is the link tutor or subject specialist from the appropriate School of the University, or for a new programme approval and periodic review a subject specialist external to the University is appointed. The review team therefore affirms the assertions made that ICRGU meets the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by on behalf of the awarding bodies: Summary of findings

1.70   In reaching its judgement about the maintenance of academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.71   The College effectively uses the processes of its awarding body, Robert Gordon University, in ensuring that academic standards are maintained in line with the relevant level of the FHEQIS and external reference points. The College's own internal processes, including rigorous programme approval and monitoring procedures, also make a valuable contribution to the maintenance of standards. There are appropriate opportunities for the use of external expertise within these processes.

1.72   The College has met all seven Expectations is this area and the associated level of risk is low. Therefore, the review team concludes that the College's maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body **meets** UK expectations.

2   Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes

Quality Code, *Chapter B1: Programme Design and Approval*

Findings

2.1   ICRGU works with its partner University (RGU) within the overall framework set down by Navitas UK. All the processes and procedures involved in programme design and approval are outlined in the Operations Manual. Any proposal for a new programme from the College has to be signed off by Navitas UK before it goes to the University for initial approval. There is a close working relationship between the relevant University School and ICRGU in developing any new programme. Final approval for ICRGU programmes must also be given by Navitas UK. Programmes are subject to University periodic review - the next such review is planned for 2017.

2.2   The review team found that ICRGU has appropriate policies and procedures in place for programme design and approval in order to meet the relevant Expectation of the Quality Code

2.3   In order to test the effectiveness of ICRGU's procedures, the review team examined policy documents and the Operations Manual. The team read appropriate committee minutes, examined documents associated with developing new modules and new programmes, and met staff involved in programme design and approval.

2.4   All the documents seen by the review team showed that ICRGU implements Navitas UK's and the University's policies and procedures for the design, approval and change of programmes effectively. New programmes and changes to existing programmes are discussed and approved when appropriate at the AAC and at the Joint Strategic partnership Board. Documentation made available to the review team concerning the recent approval of new pathways showed the type of programme and module details produced. The approval panel are required to consider the quality and standards of the proposed programme.

2.5   The review team concludes that ICRGU with Navitas UK and RGU operates effective processes for the design, approval and change of programmes. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that the level of associated risk is low

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B2): Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.

Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission*

Findings

2.6 The College in alignment with the University strategy for internationalisation is committed to widening participation.

2.7 The RAA outlines the entry criteria, successful completion and progression criteria. Navitas Policy and Regulations, and College Policy and Regulations set out the policies and procedures for admissions and are approved by the QaSO and the Navitas UK compliance team who undertake mock audits.

2.8 Navitas Director of Corporate Services has oversight of compliance with Tier 4, with Head of Compliant Systems and Services. The College Director/Principal manages the recruitment, selection and admission within the requirement of UKVI, Tier 4 sponsor guidance, UK immigration rules and the Quality Code. They also fulfil the conditions required by Navitas UK as documented in the Operations Manual.

2.9 The College Principal/Director is a member of the University Compliance Group, it includes as standing agenda items UKVI performance indicators and basic compliance assessment. The principal also attends UKVI events and sponsored workshops.

2.10 The College Admissions Officer has up-to-date knowledge and UK Council for International Student Affairs training to carry out the role. Admissions are overseen by the College Director of Marketing and Admissions who works closely with the University Deputy Principal, Admissions Office, Schools and International Office to ensure the effective recruitment, selection and admission of students. Operational oversight is via the formal partnership meeting which occurs three times per year via the Marketing Advisory Committee attended by College and University staff and chaired by the Director of Marketing and Admissions. In addition, JSPMB provides strategic oversight.

2.11 The review team found that ICRGU has appropriate policies and procedures in place for recruitment, selection and admission in order to meet the relevant Expectation of the Quality Code.

2.12 In order to test the effectiveness of ICRGU's procedures, the review team examined CPRs to determine the admissions process, notes of JSMB and talked to College staff about their role in the admissions process and asked students about the information supplied and the process of applying to the College.

2.13 The evidence demonstrates that the College through their CPRs makes provision for the equitable treatment of a diverse group of prospective students and the admissions criteria is clear for standard and non-standard applicants. Staff of the College involved in admissions and agents are trained for their role and compliance checks undertaken. Students met by the team confirm the information provided is easy to understand and follow.

2.14 There is evidence of the College and University working together operating a robust process for recruitment selection and admission. The responsibility lies with the College Director/Principal and Navitas UK having oversight.

2.15   There is evidence of a procedure for handling appeals and complaints about recruitment, selection and admission decisions, which is on the website. Students who met the review team were aware of this. Students confirm the website is easy to navigate and has all the information they needed from accommodation to what to study. What they found particularly useful was being able to talk to a representative from the Marketing Department at the College.

2.16   A strategy is in place to deal with declining numbers, recently experienced due to the fall in the price of oil. The College has been looking at other countries and to expand the portfolio of programmes offered.

2.17   The review team concludes that the recruitment, selection, and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete a higher education programme. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that the level of associated risk is low

Expectation: Met
Level of Risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.18   ICRGU's approach to effective learning and teaching is set out in the Navitas UK Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan and informed by Navitas UK's policy frameworks and the requirements of its partner University. The Strategic Plan sets out the broad aims and objectives, and ICRGU has produced an action plan which is informed by annual programme monitoring reports as well as periodic review. The College Learning and Teaching Board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the learning and teaching objectives. The responsibilities of ICRGU and the University in relation to learning resources, staffing, and programme delivery are set out in the ICRGU Operations Manual.

2.19   The review team found that ICRGU has appropriate policies and processes in place in relation to learning and teaching in order to meet the relevant Expectation of the Quality Code.

2.20   In order to test the effectiveness of ICRGU's policies and procedures, the review team examined policy documents and supporting action plans. The team also looked at committee minutes, items related to teaching staff including teaching observation, and the student charter. The review team met staff and students to discuss matters related to teaching and learning.

2.21   ICRGU is responsible for the appointment of staff teaching on its programmes, and recruits staff in accordance with Navitas UK policies and procedures. The University often assists with the recruitment process by providing recommendations and link tutors participate in interview panels. All ICRGU staff have right of access to all facilities and resources in the University, including staff development opportunities. All staff are given an induction and are subject to both management and peer observation of teaching.

2.22   Students that the review team met were positive about the teaching and the level of support they received. The students confirmed that they receive timely and helpful feedback on their work. In addition they commented that all the staff were approachable and offered additional support whenever it was necessary. Additional sessions were organised for students needing particular teaching support. The review team saw evidence of innovative teaching particularly in the collaborative approach to studio-based joint teaching on the architecture programme which enables students to experience university in a secure setting, which is **good practice**.

2.23   Students have access to learning resources both at ICRGU and in the University. Students who met the review team said that they found the learning resources available to them, including the library, computing and laboratory facilities and the VLE, appropriate to all their needs. There is an Academic Handbook and all teaching material and necessary information about their programme, the College and the University is available online.

2.24   ICRGU has a Student Charter which sets out the expectations and obligations of both the College and its students**.**

2.25   ICRGU collects feedback on teaching through a student survey each semester for each module, and also through matters raised by students at the Student Forum, and at the Teaching and Learning Board.

2.26   The review team concludes that ICRGU in conjunction with Navitas UK and the University work effectively with its staff and students to review and improve the provision of learning opportunities that enable independent learning, depth of study and critical thinking. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.27   ICRGU works within the framework set by Navitas UK for supporting student development. It has a strong commitment to enabling students to develop their academic and personal potential. There is a clear structure in place to provide support and academic services, led by the Manager Student Services and the College Director. In addition, students have access to specialist services in the University. The quality of the student experience is seen as key from first contact to graduation.

2.28   The review team found that ICRGU has appropriate policies and processes in place to monitor and evaluate the services and resources needed to enable students to develop their potential.

2.29   In order to test the effectiveness of ICRGU's policies and procedures the review team looked at policies and processes, committee minutes and handbooks. The review team also discussed the availability of academic and support services and the development of skills for higher education with staff and students.

2.30   The review team concludes that ICRGU provides a range of effective services that enable students to develop their academic and personal potential.Once on the programme the quality of student experience is seen as central, this is achieved by adopting and embedding a number of key principles in delivering and supporting its programmes. A key element of the way in which students are supported is by the provision of a 'core' comprehensive learning skills acquisition module known as the ILSC module. The provision of this module prepares students for successful transition to university study.

2.31   To ensure the appropriate level of student support is provided the staff continually monitor each student's academic performance and overall experience during their time in the College. Students who are underperforming are placed in the Student in Jeopardy programme and they receive targeted additional support. Students are taught in small groups to facilitate the acquisition of module learning outcomes. They receive additional support through tutorial group work. Students that the review team met were positive about the way the College enabled them to develop and achieve. There is a clear focus by ICRGU on building effective transition processes from their Navitas programmes into their university degrees. A number of different tactics are used to achieve this objective. These include working closely with link tutors, using University laboratories and other facilities, and taster classes. There has been systematic work with the University in managing transition. The work with the University in managing and supporting student transitions which enables students to progress effectively is **good practice**. Information about student services is provided in student handbooks and is available online through the VLE.

2.32   Overall, the review team concludes that ICRGU with Navitas UK and RGU operates effectively to enable students to develop their academic and personal potential, and that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.33   ICRGU works within the framework for student engagement set out by Navitas UK. There are elected student representatives who sit on a number of College committees including the College Teaching and Learning Board for items related to the 'Student Voice', the CET and the Student Forum. Following these meetings any actions taken by the College are fed back to both staff and students. Students are surveyed regularly, they complete module and course evaluations. The results of these surveys are used in annual monitoring and are sent to relevant service areas for action.

2.34   The review team found that ICRGU has appropriate policies and processes in place for student engagement.

2.35   In order to test the effectiveness of the College's policies and procedures the review team looked at relevant policies and supporting documentation, and committee minutes. The review team discussed student engagement with both staff and students.

2.36   The review team concludes that ICRGU provides numerous opportunities for student engagement that are effective in allowing the student voice to be heard at all levels. The review team also concludes that ICRGU responds effectively to student views and makes sure that students are made aware of the value of their contribution.

2.37   Students are encouraged to be student representatives and receive training at the first Student Forum meeting. Students met by the team said that they were able to make their voice heard at the committees, and that College staff listened to their views and took appropriate actions whenever possible. Students who serve as student representatives are given a certificate at an award ceremony for undertaking the role. Any action taken by committees is publicised by posters and other forms of communication, including a You Said, We Did notice.

2.38   Staff and students who met the review team gave examples of changes that had happened as a result of student comment either at meetings or through student surveys. The review team noted examples in committee minutes of issues raised by students being discussed and action taken as a result.

2.39   The level of informal engagement between staff and students is high. Staff have an open door policy and welcome informal contact. Student integration is encouraged by placing the student cohort into different clans which involves inter-clan competitions, rewarding participation and organising prize-giving.

2.40   The review team concludes that the College takes deliberate steps in conjunction with its student body to promote a range of opportunities to engage in quality assurance and enhancement. Overall the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B6): Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.

Quality Code, *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning*

Findings

2.41   The CPRs govern the assessment of students and are included in the Operations Manual. The assessment strategy is considered an important part of the programme design and considered carefully during the approval process to ensure benchmarking and the assessment tasks, methods and timing are appropriate and allow students to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes outlined in the module guide. The continued validity is reviewed at annual monitoring and periodic review.

2.42   The DMDs provide information on assessment type, duration, method, topic, schedule and weighting. To ensure students can demonstrate achievement of the programme learning outcomes a range of summative assessments are used across the provision. Reference points are 'The Good Practice Guide to Assessment and Feedback' created by Navitas UK. Benchmarking of assessments is through external academic scrutiny at programme approval, annual monitoring, external examiner feedback and periodic review.

2.43   Students are prepared for academic writing through the ILSC module which aims to develop good academic practice and to prepare students for UK higher education studies and the next stage of the University pathway. The regulations are benchmarked against the University regulations to ensure as far as possible they provide appropriate preparation for students once they progress onto the University stage of the pathway.

2.44   The review team looked at the Operations Manual, CPRs and checked their application through talking to staff and students. The team also looked at the DMDs and programme specifications and reviewed the assessment methods to ensure all learning outcomes are assessed.

2.45   Adjustments are made for students with a disability. Information for students with a disability is included in the policy, detailing adjustments that can be made. Students who are struggling academically are referred to the Student in Jeopardy programme providing additional support.

2.46   The College Policy addresses the regulations for assessment offences and information for students on plagiarism is covered in the Academic Handbook.

2.47   The processes for marking and moderation of assessed work are clear and staff are prepared for the role. It involves the University link tutor and subject specialist from the relevant School as the external. Navitas supports the policy of anonymous marking for formal exams but not course work. It is the responsibility of the Learning and Teaching Board to oversee the assessment arrangements and ensure students are assessed fairly and equitably.

2.48   The role and membership of the module panels and examination boards are clearly outlined in the policy and the requirements and entitlement for reassessment in the programme specification and DMDs.

2.49   A record of student achievement is reported on the student record system MAZE which students can access via the student VLE. A matrix of progression details is included in the Learning and Teaching Report produced annually and submitted to Navitas UK.

2.50   Students confirm the Academic Handbook specifies the rules and regulations of plagiarism. Students agreed the grading criteria for all subjects are very clear. Students are aware of the process for submitting mitigating circumstances and how to appeal against a decision; the information is found on the VLE and forms can be downloaded or they can ask staff for the appropriate form to complete.

2.51   The College has introduced student prizes as an incentive to reward high achievers, a prize per semester is given to discipline clusters.

2.52   The team concludes that equitable, valid and reliable assessment processes are in place enabling every student to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes for the credit of the qualification being sought. The information provided for staff and students is accessible and easy to understand. Students acknowledge the different assessment methods prepare them for the University stage of the pathway. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of associated risk is low

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.53   The University acts as an external and plays a key role in the College quality assurance process. External moderation is normally carried out by the University link tutor or subject specialist. Benchmarking is through internal and external moderation.

2.54   The link tutors contribute to the AMR through moderation and examination and progression board commentary. The link tutor also attends the AAC, and commentary on College provision and progressed students performances is received by the committee.

2.55   The College policy is clear with regard to external moderation and ensures the expectation of *Chapter B7* of the Quality Code is met. The undergraduate and postgraduate programmes form part of the standard delivery model; Undergraduate Pathway Stage 1, University Foundation is internally moderated, Undergraduate Pathway Stage 2, First Year Degree is externally moderated by the University and the Postgraduate Pathway Stage 1, Pre-master's is externally moderated by the University.

2.56   For the Integrated Delivery Model the Undergraduate Pathway Stage 2, First Year degree is University assessed and the Postgraduate Pathway Stage 1, Pre-master's is University assessed. External moderation for all stage 2 modules is carried out by the University subject specialist from the appropriate School.

2.57   Navitas UK has recently issued guidance on the role of external examiner to ensure there is understanding of the expectations of the Quality Code, *Chapter B7*. Navitas UK can see the CVs of external examiners to review IELTS experience.

2.58   There is a clear process for marking and moderation with the link tutor and subject specialist from relevant School undertaking the external moderation role. The duration of the link tutors role can be cyclical, the period is dictated by the University. An external examiner for the ILSC module is appointed by Navitas UK; this is currently under discussion.

2.59   The review team looked at the Articulation Agreement, CPRs, Operational Manual, Navitas UK External Examiner Guidance, the VLE and programme annual reports. The application of CPRs was discussed with staff and students.

2.60   The evidence shows that clear external examiner guidance, policies and regulations exist. The CVs of external examiners are made available to Navitas UK upon request; these are reviewed for IELTS experience. The staff and students confirm external examiner reports are made available on the VLE and the reports are fit for purpose.

2.61   The review team concludes the Expectation is met; the degree-awarding body makes appropriate use of external examiners. The University acts as the external, as per the Articulation Agreement, through the link tutor and subject specialist. Navitas UK has issued a Guide to External Examiners to ensure an understanding of the Quality Code *Chapter B7*. Navitas can see the CVs of external examiners upon request. The College may wish to consider identifying the duration of the link tutor or subject specialists appointment as moderator to align with *Chapter B7*.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B8): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.

Quality Code, *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review*

Findings

2.62   ICRGU works with the University within an overall framework provided by Navitas UK. AMRs are produced for each programme using a standard template. They are submitted to the College Learning and Teaching Board, and when approved by that Board they are sent to the AAC. Copies of the reports are also sent to Navitas UK.

2.63   Periodic review of ICRGU's provision is undertaken using University procedures. The first such review will occur in 2017. These procedures will involve a panel appointed by the University who make recommendations to AAC.

2.64   The review team found that ICRGU has appropriate policies and processes in place for the monitoring and review of its programmes in order to maintain standards and enhance the quality of learning opportunities.

2.65   In order to test the effectiveness of ICRGU's procedures, the review team examined policy documents, looked at monitoring and review reports, examined committee minutes, and met staff responsible for annual monitoring and review.

2.66   The evidence seen by the review team showed that ICRGU implements both Navitas UK and the University's policies and procedures for the monitoring and periodic review of programmes effectively. AMRs include data on student numbers and progression, student feedback, and commentary on the student experience, reviewing learning and teaching, moderation, commentary on facilities and resources, and the implementation of the previous year's action plan.

2.67   The periodic review planned for 2017 will concern itself with the broader operational relationships between ICRGU and the University, with less emphasis on subjects. This will involve input from key individuals in both institutions, who will develop a reflective analysis which will be considered by a panel.

2.68   The review team concludes that ICRGU in conjunction with the University operates effective processes for the monitoring and review of its provision. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.

Quality Code, *Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints*

Findings

2.69   The College instructions on handling of complaints and appeals is contained within the Operations Manual and College Policies and Regulations, which students and staff can access via the VLE.

2.70   The Appeals and Grievance Policy provides details of what the student can appeal against. It states in the policy that generally all appeals are made informally.

2.71   Appeals can be made against results, completion of part of the programme, progression to the next stage and entitlement of award. Appeal is generally made on an informal basis and records are maintained. Students studying on a College pathway have the right to appeal against the outcome of an assessment on the grounds of extenuating circumstances affecting their performance, or a material irregularity in the assessment. The procedure and application form is included in the policy.

2.72   Staff are informed of the CPRs and have access via the staff portal, support is provided by the academic services office and the College Principal/Director.

2.73   Students are only subject to University procedures for appeals once they are studying on a University stage of a pathway.

2.74   Students are subject to the College complaints procedures for issues relating to their experience at the College. A register is maintained and appropriate record of all complaints received.

2.75   Students may complain directly to the University, through the University's Complaints Procedure, if the complaint is about issues relating directly to the University, for example complaints about the student's experience while in a University School or service, in accessing University resources or services, or about an act or perceived omission on the part of a member of staff of a School or Department of the University.

2.76   Information about who to make the complaint to is made clear to students in the Student Handbook. College students may complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) if they remain dissatisfied having exhausted the complaints procedure. A flow chart clearly demonstrates the process.

2.77   Repeated concerns are discussed at the College Learning and Teaching Board and discussed at the College senior management meetings.

2.78   The review team looked at the Operations Manual, CPRs, Student Handbook and the VLE; they also sought clarification of the process through talking to staff and students.

2.79   The evidence shows clear processes are in place for handling student complaints and appeals and staff and students are aware of the process. Students' Voice is thought to have empowered students and they feel confident to ask questions therefore reducing the need for making a formal complaint.

2.80   Students who wish to appeal or complain would seek advice from the Academic or Student Service Team for information on the procedure, they are referred to the 'information pack' given at enrolment which contains the Student Handbook, Academic Handbook and insurance policy summary sheet.

2.81   Students met by the team were aware of the appeals and complaints procedure, and the forms to complete. An example was given of students who made a complaint about noise in the accommodation during exam periods; this was addressed and dealt with favourably by the College.

2.82   The evidence shows very few complaints are made as the majority of issues are dealt with informally, students are aware of the process should they wish to make a complaint or appeal against an academic decision.

2.83   The review team concludes the process for making a complaint or appeal is clear and easy to access, it is transparent and fair. Although the majority of complaints and appeals are handled informally there is a clear pathway to the College Director/Principal should escalation be required. If still unresolved it will be referred to the Navitas CEO. It is only if a complaint relates directly to the University, for example University resources, that the Universities complaints procedure can be used. A log of complaints and appeals is maintained and included in the annual report. Overall, the review team concludes the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.84   In reaching its commended judgement about the quality of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.85   All of the Expectations in this area are met and the associated level of risk is low in each case. The team identified two features of good practice. There are no recommendations.

2.86   The features of good practice include the collaborative approach to studio-based joint teaching on the architecture programme which enables students to experience university in a secure setting and the systematic consideration of student views that informs progression and transition arrangements.

2.87   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at International College Robert Gordon University is **commended**.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College communicates its mission values and overall strategy online and in print. The College uses a range of media for publishing information. The College takes account of the Navitas Strategic Plan and the University Strategic Plan. Navitas UK have a centralised department to assist with the design of communications and marketing material.

3.2 The College works closely with the University on the development and approval of both on and off line materials. They also work with the General Manager Sales and Marketing Navitas UK to create a coordinated approach to the vetting and marketing of published information. The College material is signed off by the partner University in advance of publication with Navitas UK having an overview.

3.3 Information for prospective students is available online, recruitment fairs, virtual presentations and social media as well as printed material. Full information on the process for application and admission to the College is provided on the College website and linked to the University website which contains links directing students who are looking for a relevant pathway programme through to the College website. The content is fully developed by the College and the design and formatting undertaken by Navitas Central Design Unit based in Australia. There is a close working relationship between the University and College who have corporate guidelines to ensure consistency and accuracy across all materials.

3.4 The Annual Student Recruitment brochure is the main off line source of information for students and is updated each year. The approval process includes checking by University Head of International Student Recruitment and Exchanges, University Head of Communications, University Deputy Principal and Vice Chancellor, College Principal and College Director of Marketing and Admission.

3.5 The University Prospectus now contains a link to the College.

3.6 Online information for prospective students and members of the public is available via the College website, and the University website contains links directing students who are looking for relevant pathway programmes through to the College website. Subject-specific flyers are regularly developed for new or existing courses; the College and University provide the content.

3.7 Student services contact the student prior to arrival by email with arrival instructions. Information for enrolled students is also provided by email, the College VLE, the College Student Handbook, which provides all essential information including; academic calendar, emergency contact numbers, safety security and emergency procedures, College contacts, support services, tuition fees, student records, academic regulations, visa issues and information about facilities and services. Further non-academic information is provided during the induction and a range of information for students to access via the portal.

3.8   Students receive confirmation of attainment from the College detailing achievements, and on graduation from the University the credits from the first year of studies are recognised on the University Higher education Achievement record (HEAR).

3.9   All the information is available for staff through the portal and in addition there is the Staff Handbook and staff portal guide.

3.10   The review team reviewed online information, printed material, the Student Handbook and the VLE. Discussion with staff and students also took place regarding ease of access, accuracy and usefulness of information.

3.11   There is evidence of a sound strong relationship between the College and University and evidence of good partnership working with regard to published information.

3.12   Students confirm they liked the website and information is easy to navigate and had all the information needed from accommodation to what could be studied. What the students found particularly important was being able to chat with a representative in the College marketing department. That process for application and admission is published on the website and there is no difficulty accessing it; it is clear and easy to understand.

3.13   Students are provided with a Welcome Pack and Student Guide during induction. They confirmed that, during the induction, they are taught how to use the College VLE, which they find easy to navigate. They are also given access to the University VLE and have no difficulty using both.

3.14   College academic regulations, policies and procedures are included in the Operations Manual and published on the website, a guidebook has been produced so all policies and manuals are in the same place and easily accessible to staff. A Sessional Handbook is provided for new lecturers, which requires a signed acknowledgement that they have read and understood.

3.15   The VLE demonstration confirmed all relevant programme information is available for staff and students. Students confirm all tutors use the VLE; it is easily accessible and updated regularly.

3.16   The review team concludes that information provided for prospective students, current students and staff is clear, easy to understand and accessible. It is updated regularly and a robust system is in place for checking accuracy of information, demonstrating a good working relationship between the College the University and Navitas UK who have oversight of all published material. Overall, the review team concludes the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.17   In reaching its judgement relating to the quality of information about learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.18   There are no recommendations or affirmations in this area.

3.19   The College has effective systems for the production and monitoring of information. The team recognises the effective use of the VLE for the provision of information for prospective students and for the management of assessment for current students.

3.20   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at International College Robert Gordon University **meets** UK expectations.

4   Commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunities

Findings

4.1   ICRGU has developed its approach to enhancement within the framework set out by Navitas UK. ICRGU is party to the strategic aims of Navitas UK and is committed to enhancement which includes the establishment of a CET which reports to the College Learning and Teaching Board.

4.2   ICRGU has developed a series of objectives that seek to enhance the student experience. These are outlined as a set of actions in minutes of the CET. These are reviewed at each meeting of the team and updates recorded. Current actions focus on the development of a student buddy programme, additional computing skills classes, alumni visits and improvements to accommodation.

4.3   ICRGU aims to make sure that there is continuous improvement to the students' learning opportunities and the student experience with consequent sharing of good practice. This is achieved by using a number of mechanisms including student feedback, link tutor feedback, and annual monitoring, all of which are publicised. In addition a number of initiatives providing support to both academic and support staff have been introduced. The students have been involved in Navitas UK College Student-led Teacher Recognition Awards which a member of staff from ICRGU has won. This is set in the context of the overall Navitas UK Learning and Teaching Strategy which includes a number of strategic indicators with related objectives to be achieved over the period of the strategy.

5   Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacy

Findings

5.1   The Digital Literacy Strategy is part of Navitas UK's enhancement framework; the Virtual Learning Strategy 2015-16 applies to the UK College community who use the VLE. The strategy is to ensure all College students can access appropriate material to support their studies, encourage and support College staff to take an active role in student learning, promote staff development, ensure the tools are appropriate to support student learning and ensure appropriate training is provided for staff and students. The strategy makes it clear the need to ensure digital literacy is embedded in the curriculum and that appropriate resources are available. The Operations Advisory Committee receives updates from the University on its IT strategy.

5.2   The College's Digital Literacy Strategy includes electronic submission and marking of assignments as appropriate, plagiarism-detection software has been used since 2014 and computer classes delivered for all students based on core packages and specific specialist software installed on College lab computers. Computer classes for all students was discussed by the CET in December 2015 when it was suggested it should be compulsory for all new students because of different levels of computer literacy among students.

5.3   Navitas UK's Introduction to IT November 2015 makes it clear how to get IT support, which is provided to Colleges by the Navitas IT team who visit periodically.

5.4   All lecturers and students have access to the VLE allowing access to course work, create discussion forums, plagiarism-detection software to upload assignments and provide feedback. The VLE is the medium for all resources, a VLE Guide is available for staff guidance on content.

5.5   Students are taught how to use the VLE during induction workshops and at the beginning of every module. A suggestion was made at the CET meeting that the VLE is not being used correctly by all students and although they have to enrol on the VLE during induction, more support was necessary and screen shots were suggested. Students confirm that they are given step-by-step introduction on how to use the student portal and the VLE; a frequently asked questions feature is making it more user-friendly.

5.6   The use of plagiarism-detection software is included in the ILSC module and students feel well prepared. The students also use the University VLE; they confirm they have no difficulty using the different platforms as they are very similar.

5.7   Students consider the VLE to be an important component of course delivery with lecture notes/presentations uploaded before or after the lecture. The College ensures students benefit from the digital literacy opportunities available.

5.8   Navigate is a new student information system which is currently being piloted in Australia; it is due to be introduced in autumn 2016. The VLE will continue to operate within Navigate.

5.9   The review team concludes that while the 2015-16 Virtual Learning Strategy is being implemented across the College network, digital learning is at the early stages of development. The focus to date has been primarily around the use of the VLE which is a good medium for staff and students. Students confirm on the whole it is easy to use and access, with all the information easily available; the frequently asked questions is making it more user-friendly. It is reassuring to know that, with the introduction of Navigate, the VLE will still operate as this appears to be working effectively. While the team acknowledged

there is some good practice among the academics and this is shared across the network, there is scope for further development to embed digital literacy within the curricula, as identified in the Virtual Learning Strategy aims.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 24-27 of the
Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) handbook

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality

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

Academic standards
The standards set by **degree-awarding bodies** for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

Award
A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended **learning outcomes** and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a **programme** or unit of study.

Blended learning
Learning delivered by a number of different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see **technology enhanced or enabled learning**).

Credit(s)
A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education **programmes of study**, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level.

Degree-awarding body
A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree awarding powers, research degree awarding powers or university title).

Distance learning
A course of study that does not involve face-to-face contact between students and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'.
See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award
The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for the same **programme** by two **degree-awarding bodies** who have jointly delivered the programme of study leading to them. See also **multiple award**.

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Embedded College
Colleges, often operating as part of a network, that are embedded on or near the campuses of two or more UK higher education institutions (HEI) and that primarily provide preparatory programmes for higher education

Enhancement
The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in our review processes.

Expectations
Statements in the **Quality Code** that set out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

Flexible and distributed learning
A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations.
See also **distance learning**.

Framework
A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

Framework for higher education qualifications
A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FHEQIS).

Good practice
A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

Learning opportunities
The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

Learning outcomes
What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

Operational definition
A formal definition of a term, establishing exactly what QAA means when using it in reviews and reports.

Programme (of study)
An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

Programme specifications
Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of programmes of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

Public information
Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

Quality Code
Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of
reference points for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the
higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the **Expectations** that all
providers are required to meet.

Reference points
Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can
be measured.

Subject Benchmark Statement
A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are
expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to
bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence
and identity.

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or **e-learning**)
Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

Threshold academic standard
The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be
eligible for an academic **award**. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national
frameworks and **Subject Benchmark Statements**.

Virtual learning environment (VLE)
An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user
interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such
resources as course handbooks, information and reading lists; blogs, message boards and
forums; recorded lectures; and/or facilities for online seminars (webinars).

Widening participation
Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.