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

International College Wales Swansea

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 Navitas UK International College Wales Swansea. The review took place from11 to 12 April 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Carol Vielba
- Mr Stuart Cannell (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Navitas UK at Internal College Wales Swansea 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 Navitas UK provision at International College Wales Swansea 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 Wales Swansea

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at International College Wales Swansea (ICWS).

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of Navitas and ICWS'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 International College Wales Swansea:

- the strong working relationship between the College and University which is effective in planning and implementing the ambitious growth strategy (Expectation B2)
- the 'one Swansea' philosophy of integration which underpins a smooth transition from College to University (Expectation B4)
- the effective processes for student engagement at all levels which ensure the student voice is heard and responded to (Expectation B5, Enhancement)
- the effective use of tracer data from the University in reviewing student performance and achievement (Expectations B8, C).

Theme: Digital Literacies

In accordance with the Navitas strategy on digital learning, the College promotes the use of virtual learning environments and makes extensive use of a Student Portal. The Navitas Interactive Learning Skills and Communication module particularly emphasises digital skills. Students are prepared effectively in digital literacy for their progression to the University.

About International College Wales Swansea

The mission of International College Wales Swansea (ICWS) is 'advancing knowledge and transforming lives through education and research' and its vision is 'To be regarded as the UK's leading Pathway College, providing opportunity and support to enable our students to achieve academic excellence'. Its core values include 'Rigour in enhancing our professional reputation and credibility' and 'Respect shown by celebrating, valuing and caring for people and the environment'.

ICWS is an affiliate college of Swansea University and one of the network of UK international colleges owned and operated by Navitas UK Holdings Ltd (Navitas UK) as part of its University Programmes Division. The partnership with the University began in 2007 and the first students entered in September 2008 to study Business, Engineering, Law and Politics. These are still the primary discipline areas but the portfolio has expanded into the Arts and Humanities and Human and Health Science, articulating with each school or college of the University. There have been two reviews of the Recognition of Articulation Agreement between College and the University, the most recent in 2014.

ICWS has worked closely with the University in securing educational oversight from QAA. It operates within UK Home Office regulations in relation to the UK Visas and Immigration's Tier 4 policy, solely under the licence of the University, an indication of the trust of both parties in the operational arrangements. The operational processes of ICWS are articulated in the jointly approved College Operation Manual which provides guidance to staff and reflects both the Quality Code and the requirements of the Home Office for the admission and monitoring of international students.

ICWS offers undergraduate and postgraduate pathways leading to a Swansea University degree. The undergraduate pathway operates at levels 3 to 6, with the level 3 Foundation programme and first year undergraduate programme being the responsibility of ICWS and levels 5 and 6 that of the University. The postgraduate pathway consists of ICWS's pre-master's programme pitched at level 6 and, at level 7, the master's degree of the University. There are two modes of delivery: the standard mode, in which ICWS is entirely responsible for the delivery, and the integrated mode where ICWS students take part in classes delivered by the University but with additional hours of support provided by ICWS. In both modes the University has oversight of programme quality. Over 2,000 students have progressed to the University since 2008.

The ICWS Strategic Plan aligns with the Navitas UK strategy map. It is underpinned by the Teaching and Assessment Strategy, taking into account the mission of the University and objectives of the Navitas global group. Currently there are operational action plans with respect to the QAA Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight, the ICWS Learning and Teaching Quality Action Plan, the ICWS Enhancement Plan and the Annual Monitoring Action Plan. In 2106 ICWS will be consolidating these into a single coherent plan.

The partnership between Navitas UK, the University and ICWS is governed by four committees: the Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board (JSPMB) with membership from senior management teams of ICWS and University; the Academic Advisory Committee, which provides oversight of academic matters and reports to the University Collaborative Partnership Board and Senate; the Operations Advisory Committee (OAC), a forum for operational matters; and the Marketing and Planning Advisory Committee (MPAC) responsible for joint planning and marketing activities. ICWS itself has 16 permanent staff, operating across functions such as marketing, admissions and academic and support services, led by the College Senior Management Team (CSMT). An academic team is employed on part-time contracts.

Since the last review by QAA in 2012 student numbers have been between 500 and 560 enrolments. Two new pathway options have been approved and new degree options from existing pathways approved. To support ICWS students at the new Bay Campus of the University ICWS has co-located administrative staff with University professional service teams in a new student hub. Key challenges for the future include ambitious growth aspirations for College and the University and attendant challenges for marketing, resources and alignment with the Quality Code and Home Office guidelines.

ICWS provision is benchmarked against the Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales (CQFW) and entry criteria are reviewed using NARIC equivalency statements.

In relation to transnational education activities in Mexico there was a limited confidence judgement in the QAA review in 2012 on the academic standards of the programme and a judgement that reliance could not be placed on the accuracy of information about the programme. These issues were addressed and the judgements were amended to confidence and reliance. There are no longer any agreements between ICWS and third party providers and any future developments will be made in accordance with the Quality Code and require sign-off from the Navitas General Manager (Europe).

There were two advisable and one desirable recommendations and six features of good practice identified in the 2012 review which have been built upon in line with the Navitas, University and College's culture of continuous improvement. In relation to the recommendation on consistently applying programme approval policies, the process now aligns with that of the University. The recommendation on formal recognition for modules passed has been addressed through the second Recognition and Articulation Agreement where it was agreed that credit should be recognised on transcripts. The recommendation of student engagement in quality assurance has been met through the establishment of the ICWS College Enhancement Committee.

Explanation of the findings about International College Wales Swansea

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 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 Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* 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   Academic standards for all ICWS provision are set by the degree awarding body, Swansea University, whose academic framework aligns with *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and other relevant UK and European reference points. Alignment is established during programme approval and monitored by the Academic Advisory Committee on behalf of the Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB).

1.2   The review team found that the policies and processes in place for the use of national frameworks, guidance and benchmarks would ensure that threshold academic standards are met.

1.3   The review team examined ICWS policies and procedures for the design, approval and monitoring of programmes; documents created during programme approval; programme specifications; committee terms of reference and minutes; and annual monitoring and periodic review reports.

1.4   The review team found that the policies and procedures intended to ensure that provision meets UK threshold standards through alignment with national frameworks are

implemented effectively. Panel reports on the approval of proposed programmes at ICWS confirm that their design and content is at an appropriate level. Programme specifications refer to Subject Benchmark Statements, credit points and intended learning outcomes, which are informed by national guidance. They also refer to the level of modules and programmes.

1.5   Annual monitoring reports comment on the continuing appropriateness of the curriculum and intended learning outcomes in relation to the FHEQ. The example of a periodic review report seen by the review team included recommendations for curriculum review to ensure that the requirements of the relevant level of the FHEQ are fully met.

1.6   On the basis of the evidence provided, the review team concludes that ICWS, with the support of its parent organisation, Navitas UK, and its university partner, operates procedures which ensure that its provision aligns with the FHEQ and other national frameworks and guidance. The Expectation in *Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards* is met in both design and operation and the risk in this area 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

1.7   ICWS's partner university has overall responsibility for the maintenance and delivery of academic standards leading to the award of its qualifications. The academic and governance framework is set out and agreed upon during the localisation process at the beginning of the working relationship. This process allows policies, processes and procedures to be correctly aligned to ensure consistency across the two organisations. This is in line with Navitas UK's regulations.

1.8   The responsibly for stages of each programme that are delivered within ICWS rest with the College Teaching and Learning Board. The Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) has a direct reporting line to the College Teaching and Learning Board. AAC's terms of reference are to ensure openness and transparency in all matters relating to the partnership between the University and ICWS and it has membership from both organisations.

1.9   Navitas UK ensures it has robust oversight through the Quality and Standards Office, Learning and Teaching Committee and Learning and Teaching Forum, as detailed in the corresponding report on Navitas UK Holdings Ltd.

1.10   ICWS follows the two-stage approach that is outlined in its assessment regulations, which is agreed by both Navitas UK and the University, as detailed in the corresponding report on Navitas UK Holdings Ltd. This ensures all assessment marks go through an initial Module Panel before culminating in a Progression Board.

1.11   ICWS has in place appropriate processes, procedures and policies that would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.12   The review team considered all appropriate and relevant evidence, including programme specifications, committee minutes and assessment regulations. The team discussed ICWS's process of assessing credit with staff members and confirmed with students their understanding of the assessment regulations.

1.13   The review team found that ICWS is following the assessment regulations appropriately and the operational aspect of the award of credit is fair. The assignment briefs are discussed with students, giving them a clear understanding of what is expected and how each assessment will contribute to their progression pathways onto the University.

1.14   Overall, ICWS has a transparent and comprehensive academic framework, set out by Navitas UK, which it follows. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met 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

1.15   ICWS use programme specifications as the definitive source of information for each approved programme and qualification. These documents contain information around the aims, intended learning outcomes, content, assessment strategies and indicative reading of the programme of study. Definitive module documents set out all relevant information pertaining to that respective module.

1.16   When programmes undergo minor or major modification, ICWS must follow Navitas UK's processes. The Programme Coordinator must fill out a standardised approval form that details the modification and why it is being sought. This is then signed off by all parties, including a relevant member of staff from ICWS, the University and Navitas UK. These documents are reviewed in the annual monitoring process, with the University having input to confirm that they are still fit for purpose.

1.17   ICWS has in place appropriate documentation and records of subsequent changes which would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.18   The review team examined all appropriate and relevant documentation, including the programme specifications and definitive module documents. The team then checked with students their understanding of these documents and confirmed with staff how they are used within the delivery and development of each programme.

1.19   The review team found that students were aware of the programme specifications and definitive module documents. Staff inform students at the beginning of each module what they need to do to pass and achieve specific grades. The team confirmed with students that these documents are available to download from the virtual learning environment (VLE) and that there is no issue in regards to their accessibility.

1.20   The review team concludes that ICWS has in place appropriate documentation that is in line with Navitas UK's regulations and agreed by the University. Therefore, the Expectation is met 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

1.21   Academic standards for all ICWS provision are set by Swansea University during formal programme approval. Approval requires that proposed provision meets UK threshold standards and that the requirements of the University's academic framework and regulations are met. Formal approval of amendments to existing courses confirms that these standards will continue to be met.

1.22   Approval of new programmes and amendments to existing courses involves ICWS, Navitas UK and Swansea University. The processes for approval and amendment are discussed in detail under Expectation B1 in this report.

1.23   The review team found that ICWS has policies and processes in place for programme approval which are designed to ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets UK threshold standards and are in accordance with relevant academic frameworks and regulations. These would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.24   In order to assess the effectiveness of ICWS's procedures for programme approval the review team examined policy documents, templates and manuals; documents created during programme approval; programme specifications; and documents created during programme amendment.

1.25   The review team found that ICWS's policies and procedures for programme approval and amendment are implemented effectively and demonstrate clearly the incorporation of UK threshold standards and the University academic regulations. During the course of design, programme and module specifications are created which detail levels, aims, intended learning outcomes and assessment strategies for the programme as a whole. Module specifications are also produced and approved. Reference to relevant Subject Benchmark Statements is also required.

1.26   The example of an approval panel report seen by the review team confirmed that the panel considered that learning outcomes and assessment strategies were appropriate for the level of the proposed programme, and that the proposed programme met the University's requirements in relation to academic frameworks and regulations for the award of credit. The approval panel, which was chaired by an external member, confirmed that the proposed ICWS programme would provide the necessary learning outcomes to support onward progression to the University.

1.27   Amendments to programmes require ICWS and the University to approve revised module specifications confirming that the learning outcomes of the revised module remain appropriate and that the programme still aligns with University regulations.

1.28   The review team concludes that ICWS, with the support of its parent organisation and its university partner, operates programme approval procedures that ensure that programmes meet UK threshold standards and are designed in accordance with relevant

academic frameworks and regulations. The Expectation is met and the associated 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

1.29   Within the programme approval and validation process, each programme develops a list of learning outcomes that are aligned with relevant descriptors of the FHEQs. These also take account of Subject Benchmark Statements. The agreed learning outcomes are then listed within each of the programme specifications and definitive module documents.

1.30   Assessment methods are agreed upon with the University in line with the assessment regulations set out by Navitas UK. This enables a range of assessments to take place through formative and summative means. Students are then assessed in accordance with these agreed methods and informed about them at the beginning of their programme and module.

1.31   The College Learning and Teaching Board ensures that a Module Panel is convened once a semester. Within this panel meeting all provisional and raw marks are agreed upon. The panel has clear terms of reference and outlined membership within the assessment regulations. The College Learning and Teaching Board will ensure that the Progression Board is convened once a semester. Within this board meeting ICWS will determine whether each student has met the criteria for progression from one stage to the next. The board has clear terms of reference and outlined membership within the assessment regulations.

1.32   ICWS has in place appropriate processes, procedures and policies which would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.33   The review team examined all appropriate and relevant information, including the assessment regulations, programme specification and definitive module documents. The team then met students to explore their understanding of the assessment procedures and met staff to confirm whether these procedures are followed correctly.

1.34   The review team found that these procedures are being followed by all staff and that students have an appropriate level of understanding around the procedures that ICWS uses.

1.35   The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met 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

1.36   Responsibility for the standards of programmes offered by ICWS is vested in the University Senate which, through its committees and the Academic Advisory Committee, exercise oversight over ICWS provision. ICWS monitors its programmes to check that UK threshold standards are being met through regular reporting on academic key performance indicators (KPIs), annual monitoring and periodic review. Monitoring and review involves ICWS, Navitas UK and the University. External moderators' reports on standards feed into annual reports. Details of the processes in place for monitoring and review of provision are described under Expectation B8 in this report.

1.37   The review team found that the policies and processes in place for programme monitoring and review are designed to check whether UK threshold standards are achieved and the academic standards of the awarding body are being maintained. This would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.38   In order to assess the effectiveness of ICWS's procedures for programme monitoring and review, the review team examined policy documents, templates and manuals; committee terms of reference and minutes; moderators' reports; annual monitoring reports; and a periodic review report.

1.39   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 the University are maintained. ICWS reports regularly to Navitas UK on its achievement of academic KPIs which include pass rates, retention, completion, and progression data. Data includes progress once students have entered the University. Reports on student achievement are considered by the Academic Advisory Committee, which is responsible for ensuring that 'academic standards are maintained in accordance with agreed benchmarks' and that, 'reviews of the College's academic outcomes/student performance by the University are conducted in a consultative and inclusive manner'.

1.40   Statistical data on student performance is analysed through the annual monitoring reports prepared at module, programme and ICWS level. These reports also include commentary on the currency of curriculum, aims, objectives and learning outcomes, and a comparison of the programme with ICWS and sector benchmarks. Moderators confirm the level of assessments and grading. ICWS's Annual Assessment Report makes detailed comparison of its students' performance with the achievements of direct entrants to the University.

1.41   Link tutors appointed by the University are responsible for maintaining a close watch on the delivery of programmes to make sure that they are in accordance with agreed curricula and processes, and for raising issues impacting standards with ICWS. Additional external benchmarking is provided through ICWS's participation in the biannual i-graduate (Student Barometer) survey.

1.42   The periodic review of ICWS provision, conducted using the University processes, considers the currency and appropriateness of provision and student achievements. The periodic review panel, which has an external chair, is able to make recommendations for improvement.

1.43   The review team concludes that ICWS, with the support of its parent organisation and the University, operates effective monitoring and review processes that demonstrate whether UK threshold standards are achieved and the academic standards of the awarding body are maintained. The Expectation is met and the associated 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

1.44   ICWS uses University-approved external subject specialists within validation events and periodic review. Navitas UK maintains oversight through the programme approval, annual monitoring processes and relevant committees to which ICWS reports. ICWS follows the University regulations and appoints externals recommended and approved by the University. External examiner reports are submitted and discussed in various committees, such as the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC), Collaborative Partnership Board and Programme Approval Committee.

1.45   The link tutors play critical roles in providing externality to each programme, their responsibilities including, but not limited to, attending progression boards and moderation, or arranging moderation by University specialist colleagues. Their role is formally outlined in the ICWS Operations Manual. AAC has overall responsibility for appointing, and potentially removing, link tutors, whose term is normally four years.

1.46   ICWS has in place appropriate processes, procedures and policies that would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.47   The review team examined all appropriate and relevant documentation, including ICWS's Operations Manual, assessment regulations and external examiner reports. The team questioned staff members in order to confirm that these processes and procedures are being followed appropriately to allow the Expectation to be met in operation.

1.48   External examiners are used to add an additional level of external scrutiny within ICWS, which is in line with the University's regulations. The review team confirmed with staff how these reports are discussed within the governance structure and their significance for checking the academic standards and quality of learning within ICWS. More detail is provided under Expectation B7 in this report. The review team confirmed that ICWS uses link tutors extensively and in line with the agreed description. However, the review team learned that a link tutor had been in position for more than the four year period and with no immediate intention of stepping down. Although this did not appear to pose a significant issue, since academic staff confirmed the critical and independent stance taken by link tutors, this approach does limit the range of external opinion available in the development of a programme.

1.49   The review team found that ICWS has sufficient external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards, particularly through the ongoing checking of academic standards in the annual monitoring process and governance structure. Although the vast bulk of externality rests with the University link tutors, overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of Risk: Low

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

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

1.51   Processes are in place to ensure that qualifications are positioned at the appropriate level of the FHEQ and learning outcomes align with the qualification descriptors and take account of Subject Benchmark Statements. There are appropriate and transparent frameworks and regulations in place and these are adhered to in practice. Definitive programme records are maintained following approval and any subsequent changes are agreed in accordance with due processes. Design and approval processes involving Navitas UK and the awarding body are robust. Credit is achieved only when learning outcomes are met by students, as attested by moderators and external examiners, and programme reviews also confirm this alignment. External and independent expertise is employed at key stages to ensure the appropriate setting and maintenance of academic standards.

1.52   All seven Expectations are met with low risk. There are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice in this area. ICWS is meeting its obligations in relation to the requirements of Navitas UK and the University to safeguard standards. The review team therefore concludes that the maintenance of academic standards at ICWS **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   ICWS works with Swansea University within an overall framework provided by Navitas UK. Navitas UK's policies and pro forma are customised by ICWS to reflect local structures. The processes and procedures involved are identified in the ICWS Operations Manual which is available to all staff. University processes are set down in the University's Code of Practice - Quality Assurance to which staff have access. Proposals to develop new programmes are signed off by Navitas UK before they are presented for initial approval by the University. ICWS and the University work together to develop new provision. Final approval and validation follow University processes and include an approval event involving ICWS and University staff, an external chair, and student representatives from ICWS.

2.2   The processes used to make changes to existing programmes are determined using a risk-based approach. Minor amendments can be signed off by the College Learning and Teaching Board (CLTB). Major changes require ICWS to submit proposals to the University's Programme Approval Committee (PAC) for approval.

2.3   The review team found that ICWS has appropriate policies and processes in place for the design, approval and amendment of programmes which would meet the Expectation.

2.4   In order to test the effectiveness of ICWS's procedures the review team examined policy documents, templates and manuals; committee terms of reference; and committee minutes. The review team read documents relating to the approval of new pathways and to the amendment of existing programmes. The review team met those responsible for, and involved in, programme design and approval.

2.5   The documents seen by the review team confirmed that ICWS implements Navitas UK's and its partner University's policies and procedures for the design, approval and amendment of programmes effectively. Ideas for new programmes are discussed at the Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board and Academic Advisory Committee. Proposals to change and amend programmes generally emerge from discussion at CLTB and the annual monitoring process Proposed changes are recorded on a college action plan monitored by CLTB.

2.6   The examples of documentation for new programmes examined by the review team included the presentation of a business case for initial approval signed by ICWS and Navitas UK. The documentation prepared during the development phase included a self-evaluation report demonstrated the ability of ICWS to deliver the proposed provision and draft programme and module specifications. The final approval panel gave consideration to matters of standards and quality and made recommendations regarding the monitoring and management of the approved programmes. The example of a programme modification seen by the review team confirmed that the processes involved are thorough and implemented effectively. This included the presentation to PAC of a detailed case for change and

information about how the proposed change would be implemented. Following consideration by PAC, ICWS provided a written response to the committee's recommendations.

2.7   The review team concludes that ICWS, in conjunction with Navitas UK and the University, operates effective processes for the design, approval and amendment of programmes that allow the Expectation to be met, and the 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

2.8   ICWS works with the University and Navitas UK in the recruitment of students. All agents used by ICWS must be on Navitas UK's approved agent list. ICWS reports through the Marketing and Promotions Advisory Committee to the University in regards to marketing activity. All marketing material must be approved by the University's Marketing Department prior to publication.

2.9   ICWS operates under the localised recruitment and admission policy, set out by Navitas UK and agreed by all parties, including the University. This policy lists the approved academic entry criteria and admission requirements. The University issues the Confirmation of Acceptance for Study to students, in accordance with the Single Visa Partnership Agreement. Since 2015, ICWS has been listed as an Embedded Integrated College within the University.

2.10   Admissions staff are trained in recognising fraudulent qualifications and determine the validity of results using an online verification process. Non-standard applicants are presented to the Admissions Board for a decision to be made in line with the relevant regulations.

2.11   ICWS has in place appropriate processes, procedures and policies that would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.12   The review team examined documents which set out ICWS's procedures and policies for the admissions of students, including relevant strategies, committee minutes and staff guidance. The team looked at examples of promotional and recruitment material and ICWS's website. The team talked to students about their experience of the admissions process and also heard from staff involved in recruitment and admissions.

2.13   The review team heard from students that they fully understood the admissions process and were fully supported throughout. The majority of students were recruited through agents both inside and outside of the UK, although a number of students applied through other routes. There were no significant surprises for any of the students upon arrival at ICWS and the course was as they expected it to be.

2.14   ICWS and the University adopt a 'One Swansea' approach in the admissions process. The University currently has plans to considerably increase its student numbers, which has led to the creation of a Joint Marketing and Recruitment Strategy. This ensures that ICWS and the University work to the same strategy in the development of the admissions process and increase in student numbers. Furthermore, there are several lines of effective communication, most notably the Marketing and Promotions Advisory Committee and the Academic Advisory Committee to ensure that the operation of this Strategy is monitored. Therefore, the strong working relationship in planning and implementing the ambitious growth strategy is **good practice**.

2.15   Overall, ICWS has effective procedures, processes and policies and works with the University appropriately regarding the recruitment and admission of students. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of 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

2.16   ICWS's approach to learning and teaching, set out in its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy is shaped by Navitas UK's overall policy frameworks and plans. It reflects ICWS's mission, vision and aims, which are set out in its overall strategy plan The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy is taken forward through the ICWS Learning and Teaching Action Plan which is monitored by the College Learning and Teaching Board (CLTB) which reports to the Academic Advisory Committee and Navitas UK. The Director of Academic and Support Services is responsible for the management of all aspects of learning and teaching, including staffing, curriculum, and learning resources. Operational implementation of the Strategy involves ICWS staff working closely with the University, in particular through the link tutors.

2.17   The respective responsibilities of ICWS and the partner in relation to learning resources, staffing, programme delivery and assessment are set out in ICWS's Recognition and Articulation Agreement and communicated to staff through the ICWS Operations Manual.

2.18   The review team found that ICWS has appropriate policies and processes in place in relation to learning and teaching which would meet the Expectation.

2.19   In order to test the effectiveness of ICWS's policies and procedures, the review team examined policy documents, manuals and action plans; reports, templates, staff communications and committee minutes; and information for students. The review team met staff and students to discuss learning and teaching matters.

2.20   Teaching staff are appointed by ICWS. There is a mandatory induction for new academic staff and termly academic staff development workshops. Systems of management and peer observation of teaching are in place. Teaching observation leads both to the identification of opportunities for improvement and training needs, as well as good practice that can be shared with other staff. In addition, staff have access to development opportunities at the University and Navitas UK. There are regular staff meetings.

2.21   Students who met the review team spoke positively about the teaching they received and the staff that taught them. Students receive timely and helpful feedback on their work and are able to review their progress with academic staff. Additional sessions and drop-in workshops have been provided in maths to help students who find the subject difficult. Additional English language sessions have also been developed.

2.22   Students have access to learning resources at both ICWS and the University. These resources include the library, computing and VLE. Students who met the review team confirmed that they found the learning resources available to them accessible and appropriate to their needs. Students receive a handbook, and all teaching materials and necessary information about their programme, ICWS and the University are available online. ICWS's VLE is used widely in teaching. Students also have access to the University's VLE.

2.23   ICWS has a student charter in place which defines mutual obligations and expectations of ICWS and its students. ICWS's approach to learning and teaching is informed by Navitas UK's Independent Learning Charter.

2.24   ICWS and University staff work closely together to ensure that programmes meet the needs of international students and to prepare students effectively for the next stage of their studies. The University's Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) attends the ICWS College Enhancement Committee (CEC). ICWS staff are copied into University staff communications. ICWS staff teaching on integrated programmes work closely with their University counterparts to ensure equivalence between modules taught at ICWS and those taught at the University. The review team heard of many examples of dialogue and joint working between ICWS and the University, including the provision of integrated immigration and advice services, which improves the experience of ICWS students and the understanding of international students in the University as a whole.

2.25   ICWS collects feedback on teaching through questionnaires and surveys and through matters raised by students and their representatives at Student Council. End-of-module evaluations and surveys are conducted using the University's systems. Staff are able to comment on the feedback. Good teaching and areas for improvement are identified in a summary prepared for senior management.

2.26   The review team concludes that ICWS, in conjunction with Navitas UK and the University, works effectively with its staff, students and other stakeholders, to articulate, review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities that enable independent learning, depth of study and critical thinking. The Expectation is met and the associated 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   ICWS works within the framework for supporting students set out by Navitas UK. Enabling student development and achievement is central to ICWS's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The ICWS Operations Manual sets out roles and responsibilities and monitoring requirements. Support services are provided by ICWS's professional and support staff under the leadership of the Director of Academic and Support Services. Students have access to specialist support services at the University. ICWS adopts a holistic approach which aims to provide a range of support services that meet the needs of individual students at different points in their student journey.

2.28   The review team found that ICWS has appropriate policies and processes in place to monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources that enable students to develop their potential. This would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.29   In order to test the effectiveness of ICWS's processes, the review team looked at policies and procedures, handbooks and internal communications. The review team discussed the availability of support services and the development of skills for higher education with both staff and students.

2.30   The review team concluded that ICWS provides a range of effective activities and support services which enable students to develop their academic and personal potential and to make a smooth transition to university studies. Programmes are structured to provide an intensive and supportive study environment with teaching in small groups and a high level of contact hours. Staff are expected to work with the culturally diverse student body in order to facilitate individual learning and achievement.

2.31   All students undertake an academic and professional skills module during each year of their programme. This module, which includes English language tuition, is central to ICWS's commitment to preparing students for successful transition to higher education and University programme. Additional academic support is provided in key subjects such as maths and English language.

2.32   The approach to equipping students to move successfully to higher levels of study is known as 'One Swansea', with the aim of making the students' overall experience a seamless one. Transition to the University is facilitated by visits to students' future departments, opportunities to meet University teaching staff, and a University library induction. The location of ICWS on the main campus and its hub at the Bay campus, together with the use of University teaching rooms and resources, membership of the University's student union, and co-teaching, all assist students to feel part of the University from the commencement of their course. Students who met the review team stated that although they were studying at ICWS, they thought of themselves as Swansea students. The 'One Swansea' philosophy of integration, which underpins a smooth transition from ICWS to the University, is **good practice**.

2.33   ICWS monitors attendance and student achievement closely. A Student in Jeopardy Programme is in place to support students who encounter difficulties or need additional support. Students who are placed in this programme include those whose attendance is unsatisfactory, those who have failed modules, and students under 18 years of age.

Students in the programme receive additional targeted support. All students receive tutorial support designed to meet their needs at particular points. All students have access to academic and personal support services through ICWS and the University throughout their studies. Encouragement is provided to high performing students in the form of merit awards. Students who met the review team confirmed that they had ready access to support services should the need for them arise and spoke very positively about the way in which ICWS enabled them to develop and achieve. Information about student services is provided in student handbooks and is available on the College website. ICWS organises and encourages a broad range of social and cultural activities.

2.34   The adequacy and efficacy of services that enable student development and achievement is monitored through measurement and reporting on academic KPIs, such as retention rates, and during annual monitoring and periodic review, and discussed at ICWS's committees. ICWS uses tracer data provided by the University to monitor the success of students once they have progressed to the University.

2.35   The review team concludes that ICWS, in conjunction with Navitas UK and the University, operates effectively to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The Expectation is met and the associated 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

2.36   ICWS works within the framework for student engagement set out by Navitas UK, and detailed in ICWS's Operations Manual. There is a system of elected student representatives. All students are eligible to attend the ICWS Student Forum which identifies issues that are passed to the College Learning and Teaching Board (CLTB). Student representatives sit on the ICWS College Enhancement Committee (CEC) and are invited to participate in discussions at the CLTB and Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) as appropriate. ICWS student representatives also participate in University events such as programme approval. ICWS students are members of the University's Students' Union.

2.37   Students complete module evaluations and surveys, both internal and external, at key points during their studies, which feed into annual monitoring and periodic review of ICWS provision.

2.38   The review team found that ICWS has appropriate policies and processes in place for student engagement which would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.39   In order to test the effectiveness of ICWS's policies and procedures the review team looked at policies and manuals, committee terms of reference and minutes, training materials, and ICWS communications. The review team discussed student engagement with staff and students.

2.40   ICWS provides a range of opportunities for student engagement that are effective in allowing the student voice to be heard at all levels. The review team also concluded that ICWS responds effectively to student views and endeavours to ensure that students are aware of the impact of the contribution they make.

2.41   Training for student representatives is undertaken by the University's Students' Union, which also provides continuing support to elected representatives. Many ICWS student representatives go on to be active in the University's Students' Union and societies after they progress. ICWS is working with the University to record student representation roles and activities on students' Higher Education Achievement Records.

2.42   Students that met the review team stated that they were able to contribute to discussions and to enhancement through the Student Forum and through their representatives. They said that ICWS listened to their views and took appropriate action in response. Students also stated that ICWS responded to issues raised in module feedback and student surveys, and also explained why some demands could not be met. 'You Said, We Did' posters are produced. The Interactive Learning Skills and Communication module (ILSC) is also used as a place to inform students about ICWS's response to previous student demands.

2.43   ICWS recognises that not all students feel comfortable raising issues through the representative system or with those directly responsible for their studies. The ICWS Principal holds regular open hours. Students who met the review team stated that this was a welcome and effective additional opportunity for them to raise individual concerns.

2.44   Staff and students who met the review team cited examples of changes that had resulted from student inputs. The review team noted numerous examples in ICWS

committee minutes of issues raised by students being discussed and action taken as a result. For example, some groups of students requested more time in the IT labs which was then arranged.

2.45   The effective processes for student engagement at all levels, which ensure the student voice is heard and responded to, is **good practice**.

2.46   The review team concludes that ICWS takes deliberate steps in conjunction with its student body to promote a range of opportunities for students to engage in quality assurance and enhancement. The Expectation is met and the associated 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

2.47   ICWS operates under Navitas UK's Quality Manual, which sets out in detail the governance framework for establishing and managing the partnership between ICWS and the University in relation to assessment. ICWS has localised assessment regulations that are derived from Navitas UK's assessment regulations and agreed upon by the University. All relevant processes, procedures and policies are contained in ICWS's Operational Manual, which is updated on an annual basis.

2.48   All assessment events, formative and summative, are described in the relevant programme specifications and definitive module documents. Students have access to all appropriate documentation relating to their assessments through the virtual learning environment and student portal.

2.49   ICWS requires all students to submit appropriate formal summative assignments through the appropriate plagiarism-detection software.

2.50   ICWS has in place appropriate processes, procedures and policies that would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.51   The review team examined all relevant and appropriate documentation, including policies, minutes from assessment boards and guidance material for staff. The team met students to discuss their experience and confirmed with relevant staff their input into the assessment procedures.

2.52   The review team found that ICWS follows its formal two-stage assessment process in which credit is agreed upon and awarded to each student. This is in line with Navitas UK's regulations, as localised and agreed upon by the University. The ICWS Module Panel meets each semester to oversee the assessment of modules and confirm grades. The ICWS Progression Board meets once a semester to determine whether each student has met the criteria for progression from one stage to the next. Both of these boards have full terms of reference and membership within ICWS assessment regulations.

2.53   The review team found that the students had appropriate knowledge and understanding of the use and importance of plagiarism-detection software. This software is used for the submission of credit-bearing assignments. Staff has received appropriate training and were unified in their understanding of how and when this software should be used.

2.54   The review team found that students receive feedback in a timely manner, in accordance with Navitas UK's 10 working days policy. Feedback is provided to students through a number of different methods, including written, verbal and electronic. Students were satisfied with the quality of feedback in relation to their academic and professional development.

2.55   The review team confirmed ICWSs approach to the moderation of assessments. At level 3, a 20 per cent sample is internally assessed by an ICWS subject specialist. At level 4, a 30 per cent sample is moderated by a subject specialist from the University. At level 6, a 30 per cent sample is moderated by an external examiner approved by the University, with the exception of one module which is moderated by the University's Link Tutor. All moderation information is fed back into the appropriate Module Panel and Progression Board for discussion. All statistical data is summarised in the Annual Assessment Report and submitted for review to the Academic Advisory Committee. ICWS undertakes second marking by exception and when deemed necessary by the College Senior Management Team or College Learning and Teaching Board.

2.56   ICWS works within its agreed assessment procedures set out by Navitas UK and agreed with the University. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met with low risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of Risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.57   ICWS sees the University as its key link in regards to academic externality. It uses a range of assessment moderation along with the University's approved external examiners for its level 6 provision. ICWS follows the University procedures for nominating external examiners and only appoints those recommended and approved by the University. All external examiner reports are made available on the virtual learning environment and student portal. These reports are submitted to various committees, including the Academic Advisory Committee, Programme Approval Committee (PAC) and Collaborative Partnership Board (CPB). ICWS produces an exam script moderation form which the appropriate ICWS staff member and external examiner must complete. An external examiner form is provided for general feedback, including the verification of general standards. These reports appear to be robust and contain relevant information on student achievement.

2.58   The ILSC module is moderated by Navitas UK through its assessment regulations, as detailed in the corresponding report on Navitas UK Holdings Ltd.

2.59   ICWS has in place appropriate processes, procedures and policies that would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.60   The review team looked at all appropriate and relevant documentation, including external examiner reports and minutes of subsequent meetings in which they are discussed. The team talked to students about their knowledge of these reports and confirmed with relevant staff how they contribute to this process and how they use these reports for enhancement purposes.

2.61   The review team found that ICWS follows all appropriate regulations that govern how they use external examiners within their provision. The team confirmed with relevant staff members their understanding of the use of external examiners and, in specific cases, additional external moderation, which is provided by the University.

2.62   The team heard from students that they had a mixed awareness of external examiner and moderation reports, although it was confirmed that these reports are made available through the virtual learning environment and student portal.

2.63   ICWS clearly operates within Navitas UK's and the University's assessment regulations. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

2.64   ICWS works with the University within an overall framework provided by Navitas UK. The processes involved in annual monitoring and periodic review are set out in the ICWS Operations Manual Annual monitoring follows a University process which requires the preparation of Annual Monitoring of Modules and Programme (AMMP) reports, based on feedback and evaluations by staff, students, link tutors and moderators. The reports are agreed, together with action plans, at meetings held in the summer involving senior management, academic staff and link tutors. ICWS also prepares an Annual Assessment Report which covers all pathways and is sent to both Navitas UK and the University. This report includes analysis of statistical data for the performance of current students and those that have progressed to the University. An action plan is included. Both AMMP and Annual Assessment reports are discussed at AAC and action plans are monitored on behalf of AAC by the College Learning and Teaching Board (CLTB) and the College Senior Management team (CSMT).

2.65   Periodic review of ICWS provision is conducted using University procedures, including a panel event that involves ICWS and University staff and students. These reviews are conducted every five or six years on the basis of academic discipline areas. The Academic Advisory Committee is responsible for ensuring that all reviews are conducted appropriately and for ensuring that tracer data is understood and used.

2.66   These processes ensure that the Expectation would be met.

2.67   In order to test the effectiveness of ICWS's procedures the review team examined policy documents and manuals, read monitoring and periodic review reports and action plans, looked at committee terms of reference and minutes, and met those responsible for and involved in annual monitoring and periodic review.

2.68   The evidence seen by the review team confirmed that ICWS implements both Navitas UK's and the University's policies and procedures for the monitoring and periodic review of programmes effectively. Examples of AMMP templates completed by module leaders report on actions taken following the previous year's report; statistical data on student performance and comparisons with other college modules; reviews of learning, teaching and assessment; student engagement; facilities and resources; and ideas for development. Commentary is also required on a current enhancement theme and an action plan to address any issues is included. Forms are endorsed by those contributing to the module and signed off by the ICWS Director of Academic and Support Services (DASS). Templates for programmes cover similar aspects and are signed off by the ICWS Principal. A combined action plan is produced from the separate reviews. All actions from last year's reviews were closed off within six months, the majority much sooner.

2.69   ICWS monitors its provision on an ongoing basis using data drawn from the module feedback system and the student record system. Module feedback reports include clear graphical presentation of quantitative feedback and all qualitative comments. Assessment reports provide a detailed statistical analysis of student marks by module with a three year comparison, and guidance on interpretation of the statistics. This data feeds into the quarterly reports on academic KPIs sent to Navitas UK.

2.70   ICWS's Annual Assessment Report (AAR) presents a broad range of material and commentary, including a detailed statistical analysis of student performance on all its programmes. Aspects of programmes analysed include enrolment, student international profile, attendance, completion, module grades and progression. Using data supplied by the University an analysis is presented by subject area of the comparative performance of former ICWS students and other University student groups in terms of module pass rates, progression and degree classification. These tracer statistics are used to highlight trends over time and areas where ICWS student performance needs improvement. The effective use of tracer data from the University in reviewing student performance and achievement is **good practice**. The AAR feeds into the ICWS enhancement plan.

2.71   The example of a periodic review report seen by the review team comprised a comprehensive review of a set of programmes and their constituent modules by a University panel with an independent external chair. The review was based on a broad range of documentation and meetings with ICWS staff and students: it culminated in re-approval of the programmes together with recommendations for further enhancement.

2.72   The review team concluded that ICWS, in conjunction with its partner university, operates effective processes for the monitoring and review of its provision that allow the Expectation to be met, and the associated 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

2.73   ICWS has a number of different policies relating to appeals and complaints, including the Unfair Practice, Student Complaints, Conduct and Appeals policies. These were agreed in consultation with Navitas UK and the University at the founding of ICWS and are outlined in the Recognition of Articulation Agreement.

2.74   Students have the right to complain directly to the University through their own complaints procedures but this is limited to issues that are directly linked with the responsibility set out by the University. Students may complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if they remain dissatisfied having exhausted both ICWS and the University's complaints procedure.

2.75   ICWS has in place appropriate processes, procedures and policies that would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.76   The review team looked at documentary evidence, including the policy documents and committee meetings. The team then met students to discuss these processes and their understanding of them and met relevant staff to discuss how they inform students.

2.77   The review team found that all academic appeals and complaints were logged centrally within ICWS. Within these documents, both informal and formal appeals and complaints are logged to enable ICWS to identify trends as they appeared.

2.78   The review team found that the majority of students would go to reception or speak to senior management if they had an issue that they needed resolved and were aware of the formal and informal mechanisms that ICWS would pursue based on the severity of their complaint or academic appeal.

2.79   Overall, the review team concludes that ICWS has fair, effective and timely procedures for handling student academic appeals and complaints. The current level of appeals and complaints are low but the process is in place to ensure that they are effectively resolved is robust. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.80   In reaching its 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.

2.81   Of the nine applicable expectations in this area, all are met, with low risks and no recommendations or affirmations. There are four features of good practice across four different Expectations relating to the area.

2.82   There is also evidence of ICWS's commitment to the continuous enhancement of student learning opportunities, together with a clear focus on managing student needs and a widespread engagement of students which is supported.

2.83   The review team therefore concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at ICWS 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 ICWS has in place a formal procedure for the approval of marketing and recruitment information. The Director of Marketing and Admissions submits the material for review to the College Senior Management Team. These documents are then set to the Marketing Department within the University for review. Following formal sign off by the University, the material may be used for marketing and recruitment.

3.2 Course-related material is reviewed through a number of mechanisms. The Director of Academic and Support Services is responsible for documents such as the Student and Academic Handbook. Programme specifications are reviewed as part of the ICWS quality assurance process. The ICWS Principal/Director maintains control over the alteration of these documents, with approval needed by Navitas UK and the University. The Principal is ultimately responsible for the set of ICWS Policies and Procedures that are derived from Navitas UK, which are closely aligned to the Quality Code. These documents can be amended if necessary through the Academic Advisory Committee. Any changes are noted in the ICWS Operational Manual.

3.3 Students have access to their official marks through ICWS's student portal and these are followed up with letters by exception, communicating how failure is to be redeemed or any other academic issues relevant to the particular student. ICWS does not make awards at any exit point in the education continuum. The University may issue a Confirmation of Attainment to a student who has met the progression requirements but decides not to progress to complete an award.

3.4 ICWS has in place appropriate processes, procedures and policies that would allow this Expectation to be met.

3.5 The review team examined all appropriate and relevant documentation. The team then asked students about all information received before and after applying to ICWS and confirmed with relevant staff that this information is made accessible to all parties.

3.6 The review team found that the information students received was fit for purpose and appropriate. Students confirmed that they had appropriate information prior to entry and while studying at ICWS. The Student Academic Handbook contains information on subjects such as absences, progression, appeals and complaints. Course-related information is in the course handbooks. The review team confirmed that these were comprehensive and relevant. Students access both ICWS's and the University's virtual learning environments, and reported no confusion in dealing with two separate systems.

3.7 The University uses a Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) to capture all relevant information from students and ICWS is currently working with the University to recognise student engagement within the process, especially since many students progressing from ICWS are active student representatives and continue to be actively engaged at the University.

3.8　　　The review team confirmed with staff members that ICWS uses tracer data provided by the University for quality assurance purposes. ICWS uses this data to make informed decision regarding the development and modification of modules and programmes. The team heard specifically that ICWS had removed a module relating to accountancy at level 3 due to the information provided by tracer data. The ICWS's approach is proactive, ensuring that modifications made to programmes are timely and rooted in reliable data. The review team identified the use of University tracer data for quality assurance purposes as good practice, as stated under Expectation B8 (paragraph 2.71).

3.9　　　ICWS, in conjunction with Navitas UK and the University, has effective quality assurance policies in place to ensure the accuracy of information about its higher education provision. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation:　Met
Level of risk:　Low

The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

3.11   The Expectation is met with low risk and there are no recommendations or affirmations. Additionally, one of the identified feature of good practice in section 2 has application to this area. The information provided by ICWS for all its intended audiences, including prospective students, current students and alumni and for quality assurance purposes is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.12   The review team therefore concludes that the quality of information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

4   Commentary: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

4.1   ICWS has developed its approach to enhancement within the framework set out by Navitas UK. It subscribes to Navitas UK's strategic aims and commitment to continuous improvement and enhancement. It has also implemented the required structural framework for enhancement, including the establishment of the ICWS College Enhancement Committee (CEC) and a Student Forum which feed into the wider governance structure.

4.2   ICWS publishes an annual Enhancement Plan designed to meet a set of KPIs assessed by module evaluations and a range of satisfaction surveys targeting staff, students and graduates. The Plan is being used to give greater focus to the work of the CEC. The Enhancement Plan is one of a range of action plans in place to develop and enhance ICWS's provision, including the actions arising from annual monitoring and the College Learning and Teaching Quality Action Plan. These various plans are given coherence by the Strategic Plan and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

4.3   The Annual Monitoring of modules and programmes templates contain a section on an enhancement theme: in 2014-15 the theme was inclusive teaching and assessment. The reports also identify innovative and good practice and opportunities for development.

4.4   ICWS subscribes to an evidence-based approach which was commended by the panel that undertook a recent periodic review. An example of this approach is the use of tracer data to examine in detail the comparative performance of former ICWS and direct entry students on the same programmes at the University. The data is used to provide a check on the quality and standards of ICWS provision and to identify areas for enhancement. The use of tracer data for quality assurance purposes, which leads to the enhancement of student learning opportunities, is described in greater detail under Expectation C and Expectation B8 of this report where it is recognised by the review team as good practice.

4.5   ICWS aims to develop an open culture that supports a 'You Said, We Did' approach to enhancement, complementing the evidence-based approach. There are multiple formal and informal channels through which staff and students can raise issues and propose improvements. The minutes of the ICWS Student Forum, the ICWS College Enhancement Committee and the College Learning and Teaching Board demonstrate the frequent discussion of enhancement suggestions and opportunities and reasoned responses to suggestions for change. All stakeholders are encouraged to employ continuous improvement in their activities. There are many opportunities for good practice to be shared through peer observation, and staff training and development.

4.6   There are numerous examples of actions taken to enhance all aspects of the quality of learning opportunities, many of which involve joint working with the University.

5   Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacies

Findings

5.1   ICWS operates under Navitas UK's newly developed Virtual Learning Environment Strategy. This Strategy has several targeted aims, including ensuring that all students have access and interaction with appropriate learning materials and that staff and students are provided with appropriate information and training to support their use of the virtual learning environment.

5.2   ICWS actively promotes the use of the student portal by providing students with access to their personal profile, timetable, attendance record, results and payment records. This provides students with a front-facing news feed which relays current information based around key events, policies and procedures that may affect them. Students are required to regularly access this information so they can improve their wider digital literacy skills.

5.3   Additionally, all students undertake the Interactive Learning Skills and Communication module. This expands on the ICT module and gives students experience around relevant software packages.

5.4   Overall, students are prepared effectively for their respective progression pathways within the University regarding their digital literacy skills. The review team found no obvious failing by ICWS in this preparation. However, the corresponding report on Navitas UK Holdings Ltd identifies that there may be opportunities for development within the group.

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.