



# Quality Review Visit of Bournemouth and Poole College

March 2017

## Key findings

### QAA's rounded judgements about Bournemouth and Poole College

The QAA review team formed the following rounded judgements about the higher education provision at Bournemouth and Poole College.

- There can be confidence that academic standards are reliable, meet UK requirements, and are reasonably comparable
- There can be confidence that the quality of the student academic experience meets baseline regulatory requirements

### Areas for development

The review team identified the following **areas for development** that have the potential to enhance quality and/or further secure the reliability and/or comparability of academic standards. The review team advises Bournemouth and Poole College to:

- further clarify and identify to students the various policies which constitute the terms of conditions of their enrolment (Competition and Markets Authority guidance)
- ensure College policies on complaints and appeals include explicit reference to awarding body and organisation processes to improve student understanding (Office of the Independent Adjudicator)
- clearly articulate to prospective and current students the College processes for course change or closure (HEFCE's Statement of Good Practice on Higher Education Course Changes and Closures).

### Specified improvements

The review team did not identify any specified improvements.

## About this review

The review visit took place from 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Mike Ridout
- Mrs India-Chloe Woof.

The overall aim of Quality Review Visit is to:

- provide the relevant funding body with an expert judgement about the readiness of a provider to enter, or continue to operate within, the higher education sector.

Quality Review Visit is designed to:

- ensure that the student interest is protected
- provide expert advice to ensure that the reputation of the UK higher education system is protected, including the protection of degree standards
- identify development areas that will help a provider to progress through a developmental period and be considered 'established'.

Each review visit considers a provider's arrangements against relevant aspects of the baseline regulatory requirements, and in particular:

- the reliability of degree standards and their reasonable comparability with standards set and achieved by other providers
- the quality of the student academic experience, including student outcomes where the provider has a track record of delivery of higher education.

## About Bournemouth and Pool College

Bournemouth and Poole College (the College) has delivered higher education provision for over 20 years and currently delivers higher education provision across two out of its three campuses. At the time of the review visit the College had 577 higher education students, of which 306 were full-time and 271 part-time and programmes include 10 full-time and 10 part-time courses across 14 subject areas.

The College's higher education provision is delivered on behalf of the following awarding bodies and one awarding organisation; the Arts University Bournemouth, Bournemouth University, Southampton Solent University, University of Wolverhampton and Pearson. The provision includes full honours undergraduate degrees as well as levels 4 and 5 Higher National Certificates and Diplomas and Foundation Degrees. The College facilities available to higher education students includes a STEM centre opened in 2013, a contemporary 136-seat Performing Arts Theatre, purpose-built dance studios and performance venue, a Digital Media Centre and new laboratories for health and medical sciences. The College has also recently created other new facilities such as a Financial Services Centre, Marine Technology Centre, the Enterprise Academy and the North Light Art and Design Centre.

## Judgement area: Reliability and comparability of academic standards

### *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)*

1 The review team found that the College have in place arrangements that meet its awarding bodies and organisation requirements to ensure that the academic standards of the programmes offered meets or exceeds the UK threshold standard for the qualifications offered set out by the FHEQ. **[001, 012, 013, 014, 015, 016, 017, 072, M2, M3]**

2 Awarding bodies confirm that their course approval and validation processes and procedures are adhered to and College academic staff explained clearly their understanding and use of the FHEQ. External examiners' reports confirm that programmes are comparable with those of other UK higher education providers. **[008, 009, 010, 011, 017, 024, M2]**

### **The relevant code of governance (such as the Higher Education Code of Governance published by the Committee of University Chairs or the Association of Colleges' Code of Good Governance for English Colleges)**

3 The review team found that the College has in place robust governance arrangements, which includes a thorough and considered approach to risk management at all levels, and effective structures which enable clear oversight of academic governance. **[M3; Final meeting; 025, 004, 005, 064, 069, annual report]**

### **The Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part A**

4 The review team confirms that the College meets the baseline requirements for the Expectations of the Quality Code for academic standards. The College operates within the arrangements of the memoranda of agreement with its awarding bodies and requirements of its awarding organisation. Partner institutions monitor and review compliance by the College through the link staff arrangements and reporting structures. **[012, 013, 014, 015, 016, 030, 031, 032, 033, 040, 041, M2, M3]**

5 Academic standards are assured through external examiner arrangements and assessment and award boards. Reporting structures and processes are in place to review and monitor programme and student performance, including retention and achievement, and College staff demonstrated their understanding of these processes. **[003, 009, 018, 024, 025, 026, 034, 039, 067, 075, 077, 081 M2, M3]**

### **Rounded judgement**

6 The College through its governance structures, various internal processes and procedures, adherence to its awarding bodies' and awarding organisation's regulations and College staff demonstration of engagement to the FHEQ, has demonstrated its effectiveness in meeting the baseline regulatory requirements for academic standards. There are no areas for development or specified areas for improvement in this area.

The review team concludes that there can be confidence that academic standards are reliable, meet UK requirements, and are reasonably comparable.

## Judgement area: Quality of the student academic experience

### The Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Parts B and C

7 The review team confirm that the College meets the baseline requirements for the Expectations of the Quality Code for the student academic experience. The student academic experience is underpinned by close linkages with employers both in programme design and delivery together with high levels of academic and pastoral support from academic and professional staff. **[001, 002, 004, 005, 019, 021, 035, 044, 046, 068, 075, 076, M1, M2, M3]**

8 In addition, robust processes are in place to ensure the appropriateness of assessment and timely feedback of assignments. Processes are in place for students to feedback informally and formally on their experience and students cited examples of improvements that resulted from raising matters with the College. Students met by the review team confirmed the value of employer engagement, academic and pastoral support, and assessment within their studies. They also spoke positively of the opportunities for engaging with the College. **[002, 006, 023, 024, 025, 048, 049, 050, 056, 075, 076, M1, M2, M3]**

### The relevant code of governance (such as the Higher Education Code of Governance published by the Committee of University Chairs or the Association of Colleges' Code of Good Governance for English Colleges)

9 The review team found that the College actively engages with its students across various levels of governance, from student representatives on the Board of Governors to Governors inputting to the student-led conference, alongside strategic consideration of student feedback data. The College governance structures also ensure effective oversight of student complaints. **[046, 045, 025, M3, M1]**.

### Policies and procedures are in place to ensure consumer protection obligations are met (Competition and Markets Authority guidance)

10 The College has a clear approach to admissions, with a dedicated policy **[019]** and a range of detailed and informative literature which is provided to prospective students **[college website; M1]**. Students at the College spoke positively about the information and guidance they received when considering study at the College, and felt well-equipped to make an informed decision about their studies **[M1]**.

11 The review team examined information about terms and conditions which are provided to students by the College at application and admission stages. The College's terms and conditions are constituted by the various higher education policies which are made available to students via the College website **[M2, M3; final meeting; screenshots]**. These policy documents include the bursary policy; complaints policy; equality, diversity and inclusion policy; tuition fee payment policy amongst other documents. The policies are not held together in a single document, there are currently several downloadable documents in PDF format, including policies which are specific to certain awarding bodies and therefore do not apply to all students (e.g. Bournemouth University student complaints procedure) **[website; M2, M3, final meeting]**.

12 At admission stage, arrangements for informing students of the relevant terms and conditions are in place, however there exists potential for confusion to arise. Prospective part-time students are asked to signal in writing that they have understood the relevant terms and conditions at application stage **[070; final meeting]** but no link is then made to the relevant policies pages of the College website. The link to the policies webpage is also made

available to full time students via the UCAS dashboard **[final meeting]**, however no definitive list of which policies constitute the terms and conditions is provided.

13 At offer letter stage, information about the terms and conditions is provided to prospective students about the policies page of the College website **[060; final meeting]** and mention is made of awarding organisation regulations. At interview stage, staff verbally inform students of the terms and conditions **[final meeting]** however no training or explicit guidance is provided to staff about what should be covered within the interview regarding the explanation of terms and conditions of enrolment **[final meeting]**.

14 Students who met with the review team, were unsure about what the Terms and Conditions of enrolment constituted or where they could be found **[M1]**, and whilst they did refer to the policy pages of the College website they were not certain which of the policies included there applied to them **[website, M1]**. Therefore, the review team found that there is potential for confusion on behalf of prospective and current students, in particular relating to which policies apply to which students.

15 The College is already undertaking work in this area and has produced guidance **[078]** includes reference to work which is ongoing within the institution to ensure that terms and conditions are 'fair, accessible and unambiguous'. Further work in this area to collate the various policies to avoid ambiguity may be helpful for ensuring student understanding and avoiding confusion. Therefore, the review team identifies an **area for development** and advises the College to clarify and identify to students the various policies which constitute the terms of conditions of their enrolment.

### **Student protection measures as expressed through the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's (OIA) Good Practice Framework, the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's (PHSO) Principles of Good Administration, and HEFCE's Statement of Good Practice on Higher Education Course Changes and Closures**

16 The College has only received four formal complaints from higher education students in the last three years **[M2, M3]**, and both students and staff spoke positively of the open door policy which staff have in place and the routes through which informal complaints can be resolved **[M1, M2]**. Students were confident that they could talk to staff across all levels of the institution about any issues which may arise, including the Principal who is available via direct text message **[M1, M3]**, however students were unaware of a formal complaints policy.

17 There is effective oversight of complaints when they do occur, through the college's Senior Leadership Team and governing body **[M3]**. This monitoring of complaints helps to ensure that the College uses the outcomes to improve the student experience **[M3]**.

18 The College has a single complaints policy **[058]** with a clear process and timescales for complaints handling. The relevant awarding organisation and awarding body's policies are clearly outlined for students within student handbooks **[034; final meeting; M1]**. Within the various responsibilities checklists, awarding bodies **[011, 013, 014]** all state that they are responsible for complaints. The only reference within College documentation to an awarding body process is the Bournemouth University complaints policy which is available on the policy webpage. The College policy makes no reference to awarding body or organisation arrangements, including Arts University Bournemouth, for which the College takes responsibility for student complaints **[010]**.

19 To date, the College has never experienced an academic appeal and does not have a dedicated appeals policy. Students spoke positively both of the work which the College undertakes to ensure assessment criteria are clearly articulated and explained to students, alongside the informal resolution which takes place of any concerns students may have

relating to an academic judgement. [M1, M2 M3] As the College does not have its own academic appeals policy, it endeavours to make its students aware of the processes they should follow by including detailed information within student handbooks about the relevant awarding body or awarding organisation policy and how the process should be followed [034, 075, 076; M1]. Students were aware of the location of the appeals guidance [M1], however the lack of a central College policy and the differing partner requirements may have the potential to cause confusion for students.

20 The review team found that the College's current processes do not hinder students in making formal complaints or academic appeals, however there is the potential for confusion amongst the student body. The approach to appeals, where there is no single policy in place and students are referred only to partner policies, differs greatly to the approach to complaints, for which the College has a dedicated policy which makes no reference within it to partner policies. This sets different expectations for students about how these matters are approached by the College and may hinder student understanding of the processes they should follow. The review team identifies an **area for development** and advises the College to ensure College policies on complaints and appeals include explicit reference to awarding body and organisation processes to improve student understanding.

21 The College has experience of closing higher education courses, and provided evidence to show that there is a robust institutional approach to this process which involves extensive consultation and liaison with students [M2; 063]. The College has a comprehensive HE Course Closure Flow Chart [073], which College staff confirmed [M2; M3] is put into practice when necessary, in liaison with the relevant awarding body or awarding organisation [M3]. This document includes reference to how students are consulted and kept informed as part of the closure process, and College staff and students [M1, M2, M3] clearly articulated their commitment to maintaining the high quality student experience and offering extensive support to students affected by closures. The flowchart document is made available internally to staff but not to prospective or current students. The College also made available the Bournemouth University programme approval, review and course closure policy [062] however the College does not have an equivalent policy of its own.

22 The College liaises with students regarding material changes to courses e.g. module changes, changes to teaching staff, and students [M1] spoke positively about how the College has liaised with them in instances where changes have occurred. Staff were also aware of the need to make students aware of such changes and were able to offer examples of how students are informed when changes to teaching staff and module choices do happen [M2].

23 The College makes explicit reference within the offer letter which it supplies to prospective students [060 P5] to their right to alter programmes and programme units, however no further detail is provided about how the College would approach this process or how students are involved. There is no specific reference made to what would happen in the eventuality of a course change or closure in the information provided to prospective students [final meeting; M3]. As such the review team found that prospective and current students are unable to access information about what would happen in the event of a course closure and are currently not provided with adequate information. The review team identifies an **area for development** and advises the College to clearly articulate to prospective and current students the College processes for course change or closure.

## **Rounded judgement**

24 The College has demonstrated through its various governance structures and internal policies and procedures that it effectively meets all the baseline regulatory requirements in this area. There are three areas for development in this area where either activity is underway or there are minor omissions or inconsistencies. There are no specified

improvements in this area.

The review team concludes that there can be confidence that the quality of the student academic experience meets baseline regulatory requirements.

## **Evidence List (will be removed from the final version)**

001-BPC-Provider-Submission-for-QAA-Review-2016-17.pdf  
002-BPC-Student-Submission-for-QAA-Review-2016-17.pdf  
003-Appendix-1-Current-HE-Course-Provision-and-3-Year-Trend-Data2013-2016.pdf  
004-Appendix-2-Teaching-Learning-and-Assessment-Strategy-2014-2017-Student-First.pdf  
005-Appendix-3-Higher-Education-Strategy-2014-2017.pdf  
006-Appendix-4-HE-Governance-Structure-December-2016.pdf  
007-Appendix-5-Board-Governance-Policies.pdf  
008-Appendix-6-Course-Briefing-Documents-Performing-Arts-AUB-March-2016.pdf  
009-Appendix-7-Programme-Specification-FdSc-and-BSc-3D-CGI-BU-2015.pdf  
010-Appendix-8-Validation-Report-of-FdA-and-BAHons-Performing-Arts-AUB.pdf  
011-Appendix-9-Confirmed-Validation-Outcomes-BSc-and-FdSc-CGI-Framework-BU.pdf  
012-Appendix-10-Responsibilities-Checklist-for-Providers-without-Degree-Awarding-Powers-AUB.pdf  
013-Appendix-11-Responsibilities-Checklist-for-Providers-without-Degree-Awarding-Powers-BU.pdf  
014-Appendix-12-Responsibilities-Checklist-for-Providers-without-Degree-Awarding-Powers-Pearson.pdf  
015-Appendix-13-Responsibilities-Checklist-for-Providers-without-Degree-Awarding-Powers-SSU.pdf  
016-Appendix-14-Responsibilities-Checklist-for-Providers-without-Degree-Awarding-Powers-UoW.pdf  
017-Appendix-15-Periodic-Review-of-Performing-Arts-AUB-April-2016new  
018-Appendix-16-Confirmed-Partner-Review-BPC-BU-October-2013.pdf  
019-Appendix-17-LRC-Quality-Charter.pdf  
020-Appendix-18-HE-Strategy-and-Planning-Meeting-Minutes.pdf  
021-Appendix-19-BPC-HE-Admissions-Policy-April-2016.pdf  
022-Appendix-20-Tuition-Fee-Payment-Policy-2016-17.pdf  
023-Appendix-21-BPC-Assessment-Charter-2016.pdf  
024-Appendix-22-Samples-of-External-Examiner-Reports.pdf  
025-Appendix-23-Samples-of-Assessment-Board-Minutes.pdf  
026-Appendix-24-BPC-Self-Evaluation-Documents-and-Live-Action-Plan.pdf  
027-Appendix-25-Selection-of-Board-of-Governors-Minutes.pdf  
028-Appendix-26-BPC-Governors-Quality-Assessment-Return-15-12-2016.pdf  
029-Appendix-27-Selection-of-Course-Reports-and-Action-Plans.pdf  
030-Appendix-28-Memorandum-of-Understanding-AUB.pdf  
031-Appendix-29-Franchise Agreement-Extensions-and-Updates-BU.pdf  
032-Appendix-30-Revised-Memorandum-of-Agreement-SSU.pdf  
033-Appendix-31-Partnership-Agreement-UoW.pdf  
034-Appendix-32-BPC-Quality-Management-Review-Report-Pearson.pdf  
035-Appendix-33-Quality-Assurance-Cycle-2016-17.pdf  
036-Appendix-34-Selection-of-Programme-Handbooks.pdf  
037-Appendix-35-College-Organisational-Chart-Teaching-and Learning.pdf  
038-Appendix-36-College-Organisational-Chart-Support.pdf  
039-Appendix-37-Selection-of-Programme-Team-Minutes.pdf  
040-Appendix-38-Selection-of-BPC-BU-Partnership-Board-Minutes.pdf  
041-Appendix-39-Minutes-from-the-Partnership-Management-Group-Meetings-SSU.pdf  
042-Appendix-40-Sample-of-Performance-Review-Register-of-Actions-HE-Unit.pdf  
043-Appendix-41-Confirmation-of-Staff-CVs-BU.pdf  
044-Appendix-42-Staff-Development-Policy.pdf

045-Appendix-43-Selection-of-Academic-Group-Meeting-Notes.pdf  
046-Appendix-44-Statement-of-support-of-Scholarship-Group.pdf  
047-Appendix-45-NSS-Executive-Summary-2015-16.pdf  
048-Appendix-46-SUE-Survey-Summary-Selection-2013-to-2016.pdf  
049-Appendix-47-HE-Student-Forum-Meeting-Records.pdf  
050-Appendix-48-Student-Feedback-Conference-Reports-and-Action-Plans.pdf  
051-Appendix-49-BPC-Bursary-Policy-2016-17.pdf  
052-Appendix-50-HE-Policy-Review-Schedule.pdf  
053-Appendix-51-BPC-HE-Fraudulent-Applications-Policy-April-2016.pdf  
054-Appendix-52-BPC-HE-Invigilation-Policy-November-2015.pdf  
055-Appendix-53-BPC-Student-Disciplinary-Policy.pdf  
056-Appendix-54-HE-Student-Engagement-Policy-June-2016.pdf  
057-Appendix-55-BU-Complaints-Policy-and-Procedure.pdf  
058-Appendix-56-BPC-AUB-Joint-Disciplinary-Procedure.pdf  
059-Appendix-57-BPC-AUB-Joint-Mitigation-Policy.pdf  
060-Appendix-58-BPC-Complaints-Policy-and-Procedure.pdf  
061-Appendix-59-BPC-Equality-Diversity-and-Inclusion-Policy.pdf  
062-Appendix-60-Offer-Letters-and-Information-for-Prospective-Students.pdf  
063-Appendix-61-Evidence-of-External-Information-Audit-BU.pdf  
064-Appendix-62-BU-Programme-Approval-Review-and-Closure-Policy-and-Procedure.pdf  
065-Appendix-63-Evidence-of-Course-Closure-Process.pdf  
066-Appendix-64-Risk-Management-Policy.pdf  
067-QRVdata-return-templatenew  
068 Completed Pre-visit questions document  
072-Course Validation Flow Chart  
073-Course Closure Flow Chart  
074-Governors-ED-Annual-Report-2016-17  
075-Business-and-Management-2016-17  
076-Instruments and Articles 2015  
077-Contemporary-Theatre-Performance-course-handbook  
078-CMA Internal Guidance for BPC 16/17  
079-Sample Enrolment Form  
080-Updated Offer Letter Draft  
081-Unconfirmed minutes of Partnership Board Wednesday 15 February  
082-Screenshot of policies from webpages  
083-Board 17 Dec 2015 Part A Final  
084-Annual Report 2015-16  
M1 – Meeting with students  
M2 – Meeting with academic and professional staff  
M3 – Meeting with senior staff  
Final meeting – with staff and the LSR



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