Academic Regulations Higher Education 2022/23

Contents

Part A - Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards

A1 UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards

Academic standards relate to the achievements represented by higher education qualifications and how the standards are secured. These are set and maintained within UK higher education through the *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ).* Threshold academic standards are the minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award.

Academic standards are the measures that individual degree-awarding bodies set and maintain for the award of their academic credit or qualifications. These may exceed the threshold academic standards. The frameworks for higher education qualifications are supported and contextualised by subject benchmark statements. These national frameworks are maintained by *QAA* which is also responsible for quality assuring their use. Subject benchmark statements are utilised to set out the nature and characteristics of

higher- level qualifications and the outcomes graduates are expected to achieve in specific subject areas.

The Office for Students (OfS) is the independent regulator of higher education in England. Their purpose is to ensure that every student, irrespective of their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers. Their work covers all students whether undergraduate or postgraduate, national or international, young or mature, full-time or part-time, studying on a campus or by distance learning.

Higher education qualifications are awarded by degree- awarding institutions or awarding bodies. Walsall College is **not** a regulated degree-awarding institution, therefore where academic standards are set and maintained by a certified degree-awarding institution partnership; Walsall College will ensure that the delivery and maintenance of the academic standards of that particular institution is preserved, and will be accountable to the degree-awarding institution in terms of their own Quality Assurance (QA) processes. The College will also use its own *Academic Regulations* to support this process and cross-referencing against these standards will apply.

The specific role of the College as a delivery organisation in relation to academic standards is set out in the formal agreement with our partner degree awarding institutions.

In the main, Walsall College offers Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas accredited by awarding body *Pearson* (BTEC). These qualifications adhere to separate qualification frameworks in the form of the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), regulated by Ofqual. The RQF supports qualifications at higher levels which associate with the corresponding levels of the FHEQ.

Scope

These regulations will apply to the following *Pearson* qualifications that are delivered by the College and to the students enrolled and registered on courses of study leading to these awards (where not specified, all Pearson courses are classified as full-time study, with an option to study part-time):

- Pearson BTEC Level 4 HNC Diploma in Art and Design
- Pearson BTEC Level 5 HNC Diploma in Art and Design
- Pearson BTEC Level 4 HNC Diploma in Computing
- Pearson BTEC Level 5 HND Diploma in Computing (TOP-UP)
- Pearson BTEC Level 4 HNC Diploma in Construction and the Built Environment
- Pearson BTEC Level 4 HNC Diploma in Creative Media Production
- Pearson BTEC Level 5 HND Diploma in Creative Media Production (TOP-UP)
- Pearson BTEC Level 4 HNC Diploma in Fashion and Textiles
- Pearson BTEC Level 5 HND Diploma in Fashion and Textiles (TOP-UP)
- Pearson BTEC Level 4 HNC Diploma in Graphic Design
- Pearson BTEC Level 5 HND Diploma in Graphic Design (TOP-UP)
- Pearson BTEC Level 4 HNC Diploma in Hospitality Management
- Pearson BTEC Level 5 HND Diploma in Hospitality Management (TOP-UP)
- Pearson BTEC Level 4 in Performing Arts
- Pearson BTEC Level 4 HNC Diploma in Photography
- Pearson BTEC Level 5 HND Diploma in Photography (TOP-UP)
- Pearson BTEC Level 4 HNC Diploma in Public Services (Blue Light Services)
- Pearson BTEC Level 5 HND Diploma in Public Services (Blue Light Services) (TOP-UP)
- Pearson BTEC HNC Diploma in Sport

The following programmes currently offered by the College in conjunction with a validating degree awarding institution will be regulated by the *Academic Regulations* of that respective institution:

- Level 6 BSc. (Hons) Degree in Computer Science (TOP-UP) (Staffordshire University)
- Diploma in Education and Training (Birmingham City University)
- Post Graduate Certificate in Education (Birmingham City University)
- Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship (University of Worcester)

Approval of Academic Regulations

The College's *Senior Management Team (SMT)* is the body within the College with overall responsibility for the management of the academic standards and the quality of H.E programmes. The College's *Academic Regulations,* and any proposed amendments thereto, are approved by the College's *SMT*, as well as the Higher Education Development Manager and the *HE Academic Board.*

The College reserves the right to amend the *Academic Regulations* at any time as it considers appropriate.

Part B - Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality

B1 Programme Design, Development and Approval

The *Directors of Faculty* have responsibility to ensure all aspects of quality assurance processes are effective and fully embedded in the design, development and approval of all programmes. *Curriculum Delivery Managers (CDMs)* are responsible for academic and resource planning to ensure relevancy and currency.

Where the College delivers in partnership with a Degree Awarding Institution, programme design and development are determined by the institution's own management and leadership teams, who take ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities.

Where the College delivers *Pearson* BTEC Higher National qualifications, programme teams use the nationally devised and accredited specification for each BTEC qualification, as their first point of reference for all planning and assessment. These nationally devised and accredited structures and curriculum content reflect the local dimension of how the programmes are then delivered. The programme teams refer to *Pearson's* assessment and delivery guidance when developing and designing programme specifications. All BTEC units are assessed through internal assessment, which allows teams to deliver the programme in a way that suits their students and relates to local need. Curriculum teams consider student feedback, as well as external expertise, when determining unit context and designing assignment briefs.

Prior to delivery, programme leaders agree an annual assessment plan. Once designed, all summative assignment briefs are internally verified and checked for coverage of programme specifications, prior to issue to students. Programme delivery includes formative

assessment tracking for students and summative unit grading. Internal verification and standardisation activities effectively ensure consistent and accurate assessment decisions are made.

Pearson allocates a subject-specific expert, External Examiner, to a programme sector to conduct sampling of assessed student work and provide judgements and feedback. The External Examiner works with and supports the delivery team in identifying good practice and areas for further development, giving guidance on how to improve delivery. Programme leaders work closely with their External Examiner to ensure that the College's implementation, delivery and assessment are consistent with national standards.

All BTEC Higher National qualifications delivered by the College are based on a teaching year comprising of an Autumn, Spring and Summer term of approximately 12 weeks each. All Pearson courses are classified as full-time study (12 hours minimum contact), with an option to study part-time (apart from where specified as part-time only).

All proposals for the development of higher education courses at Walsall College are subject to a process of approval by the College's internal validation panels, and external approval by the Awarding Body *(Pearson)* or validating university. The internal process has two stages: Course Approval (Stage 1) and Internal Validation by Curriculum Planning Group (Stage 2).

In summary, the first stage, *Course Approval*, is concerned with the proposal's academic fit with Walsall College's strategic ambitions. Therefore, ensuring that the appropriate resources available to run the programme are planned for (e.g. staff expertise and capacity, equipment and specialist spaces), and that the external markets for the programme (both in

terms of student recruitment and the employability of graduates) have been evaluated and weighed in the balance.

Proposals for development must be approved by the College's Course Approval panel prior to submission for internal validation at Curriculum Planning Group (Stage 2), in the H.E Academic Board.

External validation or Course Approval is sought according to the requirements of the Awarding Body *(Pearson)* or validating university. The College reserves the right to amend or withdraw any course of study at any time as it deems necessary. Normally, amendments to courses of study are enacted for the next cohort of students to join the course. Where an amendment to a course has an effect on students currently registered for it, those students will be formally notified of the amendment and provided with an opportunity to object to it (should they wish to do so).

Once approved, course withdrawals are not enacted until there are no students remaining registered on the course in question.

B2 Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education

Walsall College's *Strategic Ambitions and Mission Statement* position the College as an agent for social inclusion and social change and one that welcomes students from all backgrounds, including those not traditionally well represented in higher education.

The College will endeavour to facilitate the entry into higher education of a broad spectrum of participants who, by virtue of either their possession of a recognised qualification as specified by the entry requirements provided by the college for each course (or other record of achievement), or their maturity and experience are deemed likely to fulfil their specific learning objectives. Where students are not deemed ready to access higher education, the College will seek to provide (through our Careers, Information, Advice and Guidance team) courses which will support students in achieving readiness for

higher education.

The College will ensure that procedures in place for the recruitment and admission of students are readily accessible, fair, clear and implemented consistently.

Applications

The College will ensure the speedy conversion of appropriate applications into offers to suitable prospective students by having transparent academic and non-academic entry requirements, which lead to the enrolment of new entrants at appropriate levels in the College.

Applicants will be provided with timely information, and advice and guidance needed for them to make informed choices, both about courses best suited to their individual needs and circumstances. Advice will also be given that covers financial support and costs, together with the obligations placed upon them at the point at which an offer of a place is made, and for the start of the course.

The College will inform prospective students as soon as possible of any significant changes to a course which may occur from the time of the offer being made and enrolment, and will inform successful applicants of the arrangements for enrolment, registration and induction. The College will ensure that effective and appropriate arrangements are in place for providing feedback to applicants who have not been offered a place.

The College will ensure that procedures are in place for responding to applicants' complaints about the operation of the admissions process, and appeals about the outcome of a selection decision, and will ensure that all staff involved with admissions are familiar with the procedures.

Whilst recognising relevant statutory and professional requirements, this regulation and associated procedures are framed within the College's published *Student Support and Discipline Policy*, and operate to ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants to the

College, irrespective of protected characteristics.

College's Mission and Strategic Plan and objectives, which demonstrates a clear commitment to widening and increasing participation in Higher Education, regardless of any potential barriers associated with previous experience, background or any other factors. As with all previous College OFFA agreements, the approved Access and Participation Plan 2022/23-2026/27 is published on the College's website.

All applicants to the College will be required to complete the appropriate application form for the course.

The College will not admit or allow the continuation of study for any person found to have made a fraudulent application.

Students who have previously been excluded from any course in the College for reasons of discipline, academic misconduct or fitness to practice will not be permitted to study at the College again.

Entry requirements

The general entry requirements for admission to the College are approved by the *College's Senior Management Team* or its delegated authority. The admissions requirements for individual courses are set out in the prospectus and website information for that course, and approved by the College's *Senior Management Team*; the College may adjust these, without notice as it deems appropriate.

A candidate, before admission to a course of study leading to one of the higher education qualifications as set out in Part A above, shall be required to satisfy any conditions set out in the offer of a place.

The College requires each student to be issued with a student ID card that includes a photograph that shows their full head and face. Students are required to carry their student ID card at all times when on the premises, or when

The College's Access and Participation Plan 2022/23-2026/27 applies to prospective and current Higher Education. This plan outlines the
participating in College or Students' Union activities. The College reserves the right to exclude any student who is unable, on demand, to produce their current student ID card. Students are responsible for arranging a replacement ID card when theirs is lost or stolen.

The College reserves the right to charge an administrative fee for the replacement of ID card.

Modes of study

A student enrolled with the College and registered for a course of study undertakes the course in accordance with the specified mode of study. Students shall be able to study full-time, part-time, during the day and/or the evening, by distance learning or any other approved mode of delivery as stated in the relevant course specification. Change of mode of study is not normally permissible, except where the approved course of study allows it and the College's *Senior Management Team* or its delegated authority agrees it. This is formal request between the student; and the College.

Enrolment and Registration

Students must enrol with the College at the beginning of their studies and re-enrol at the beginning of each subsequent stage or academic year of their course in accordance with instructions issued by the College.

A student cannot be registered with the Awarding Body unless they are enrolled with the College. Normally, individuals who are not enrolled or registered at the College may not use College facilities.

The College reserves the right to charge a late enrolment and/or registration fee to any student who fails to enrol/ register by the published deadline(s). The name by which a student is enrolled is the name under which any letter, transcript, certificate or award is issued in

respect of that student. Any request to record a change of name must be made in writing, or by any other prescribed means, and supported by appropriate documentary evidence.

The College requires students to produce documentary evidence of identity upon initial enrolment; this may be required in advance. Any student who enrols or registers with the College under a name, identity, or with any other information that is subsequently found to be false will have his/her/their registration and enrolment terminated and will cease to be a student.

Students are required to notify the College, on enrolment, of their permanent and term-time address, and to inform the College in writing, or by any other prescribed means, of any subsequent changes of address.

Payment of Fees and Other Charges

All students shall pay fees and charges appropriate to their course of study and fee status, subject to any fee waivers or payment plans agreed by the College *Fees Policy 2022/2023*. No student shall continue on a course of study to which they have been admitted unless they have paid the fees and charges stated by the College for that course of study within the time prescribed by the College.

The College reserves the right to increase fees at any time without prior notice, for implementation during the next academic year. Students are required to pay promptly, upon demand, all charges, fees or debts incurred in the course of their registration and enrolment at the College.

Failure to settle outstanding debt during the course of the programme will result in instigation of the *Student Support and Discipline Policy* at the appropriate level. A student who then remains in debt to the College is not entitled to receive any confirmed results or notification of progression to the next level. Any individual in debt to the College from any previous registration will not be permitted to enrol as a new student at the College, until the debt is cleared.

In the event of default of tuition fees payment, student registration and enrolment may be terminated and they will cease to be a student of the College.

The College will normally give a student formal, written notification of the intention to de-register, and a specific deadline by which they can pay the relevant fee or charge, before de-registration will occur. If no payment has been received by this time and the student is still in debt to the College, then their registration and enrolment will be terminated, and they will cease to be a student of the College. As per the Terms and Conditions of enrolment, the student remains liable for any associated fees, irrespective to the duration of course participation and/or completion. The College reserves the right to refer any outstanding debts on to an external collection agent, whereby additional costs may be incurred.

Interruption of Enrolment and Changes to Registration

Interruption of study: A student may take an interruption in their programme of study. The period of interruption shall normally be up to one year. An interruption of study shall be approved following consultation between the student and the curriculum team, to ascertain the appropriate point at which to interrupt study and recommence the programme. Where a programme is to be discontinued, or significantly amended, it may not be possible to grant an interruption of study.

At the time a student interrupts their programme of study, the student's enrolment on the programme shall temporarily lapse. At the time a student recommences study after an interruption, the student shall re-enrol on the programme before they are permitted to continue on the programme. The College's *Fee Policy 2022/2023* sets out requirements for the payment of fees following interrupted registration.

Withdrawal of registration or de-registration by the College from a course of study leads to immediate termination of a student's registration and enrolment, and they will cease to be a student of the College. Any third-party fees including exam registration or professional membership fees are non-refundable.

In accordance with statutory obligations, the College will report to the relevant government and other external agencies when an individual ceases to be a student of the College. This includes, but is not limited to, Student Finance England, Local Education Authorities and any other sponsor. A student, who is persistently absent, fails to participate or continually fails to submit assessments by the relevant date, without extenuation or extension, may be de-registered from the relevant unit and/or the course of study. This may affect a student's ability to complete the full award requirements of their course.

B3 Learning and Teaching

The Office for Students has responsibility for the strategic oversight of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education Providers in England, and is currently designated for student support by the Secretary of State.
Walsall College is committed to continuously improving the high-quality vocational education and training it provides for a diverse range of students. The College has produced a Higher Education Teaching and Learning Strategy specifically for the delivery of Higher Education within the College and this is informed by The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ). Regardless of full-time or part-time mode of study, education on the course can embrace a wide variety of modes of both learning and teaching, which can be used in different combinations.

These include flexible and distributed learning, work-based or placement learning, and technology-enhanced learning. There is always a degree of learning expected to take place outside of the College contact hours and specific guidance regarding this is outlined during each unit/module of study. Where learning and teaching is delivered through partnership with another organisation, the responsibilities of each of the parties are defined in a written agreement.

The central themes of effective learning and teaching are:
- inclusive learning through promoting equality, diversity and equal opportunity
- the College and its staff (all those who facilitate learning), students and other stakeholders working in partnership
- learning facilitated by enthusiastic and qualified staff through teaching and other types of support for learning, whether formal or informal.

Underpinning the themes and approaches to effective learning and teaching is a clear and dedicated commitment to maintain physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use.

Learning at Walsall College is vocational, active, motivational and progressive. It is closely linked to assessment; allowing development of skills, knowledge and attributes that will enable H.E students to achieve. A large proportion of our H.E units are practical in nature giving students the opportunities to explore 'real-life' examples to apply their skills and knowledge to case studies or projects.

As well as vocational experience, we also link well with those currently working in the sector, providing an active role in assignment writing that is relevant to employment. The UK higher

education sector has endorsed the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (UKPSF), which is managed by Advance HE.

The College is a member of Advance HE and each academic year, a proportion of College H.E staff submit applications to secure Advance H.E Fellowship at various levels.

From the start, delivery teams will devise the most effective way of delivering and assessing a unit or assignment, to ensure that every student is provided with an equal and effective opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

College strategies for learning may include:
- project work carried out as an individual or as part of a group;
- work-based learning;
- lectures and seminars;
- facilitated activities;
- visits to companies with a facilitator to structure the experience;
- visiting speakers from the vocational sector.
- external enrichment activities,

The Higher Education Teaching and Learning Strategy continues to reflect the College's mission, strategic ambitions and values and is closely linked to objectives outlined by the Office for Students. This serves to promote a shared understanding of good practice amongst staff, students and other stakeholders.

We aim to provide quality learning, teaching and assessment which is core to Walsall College's commitment to provide individuals with a personalised learning experience that will enhance confidence, aspirations and optimise their learning outcomes and progression.

In pursuit of this aim, the College will improve the quality of learning for all students by:
- Applying a 'right student, right course' philosophy which is designed to ensure recruitment integrity onto a programme of

study that fits the individual concerned
- Providing focused development to empower staff to deliver first class education and training
- Managing elements of provision that impact on the ability of the student to participate, succeed and progress. These key variables include; a curriculum offer at appropriate levels, enhancement to improve the quality of learning opportunities, careers information, advice and guidance, entry requirements and initial assessment and e-Learning.

The College commitment to enable students to be *skilled, professional and enterprising* is fundamental to the Strategy. The College seeks to provide students with the best possible learning and teaching experiences in an environment that enables them to have access to resources, which will help them:
- interact and collaborate with staff and other students;
- develop self-awareness, independent skills and become more autonomous;
- reach their potential in their chosen areas of study.

As students begin Higher Education at Walsall College, delivery and assessment methods help them to move from dependency to independency and self-directedness. Every student is provided with clear and current information that specifies the learning opportunities and support available to them.

Students will typically take increased control of their personal learning programme, and demonstrate a readiness to learn associated with their personal development and independent performance.

Walsall College Graduate

An emphasis will be placed on active learning, drawing on materials gained from the working environment or industry wherever possible. This will help H.E students to develop the transferable skills necessary in a changing and dynamic working environment, as well as achieving our *Walsall College Graduate* (WCG) outcomes. This is a commitment which

promotes and reflects, (additional to subject-specific content), a wide range of themes that cross subject boundaries. These themes and topics, which often have a broad relevance to the purposes of higher education and its wider context in society. Themes are embedded within the curriculum and form an integral part of a programme of study. They are often promoted across the College as a shared experience to generate a community approach to learning. These themes may include:

- academic and digital literacies appropriate to the academic level of the student;
- education for sustainability;
- citizenship;
- enterprise and entrepreneurship;
- ethical behaviour.

The effectiveness of the College's H.E provision and therefore the learning, teaching and assessment methodologies therein, are subject to regular review across a number of internal and external quality assurance measures. The College systematically analyses appropriate information to ensure the continued effectiveness of the strategic approach to, and the enhancement of, learning opportunities and teaching practices.

B4 Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Walsall College works effectively with staff, students and other stakeholders, to articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices. This purposely enables every student to develop as an independent individual. From initial advice and guidance through to induction activities and the delivery of study skills, students can access their chosen subject(s) with an expectation of working at an increasingly higher level of autonomy, producing in-depth evidence, which enhances their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.

As a truly inclusive College, we will develop talent from all sectors of society, fully develop the talent of all our staff and students and build

collaboration and a sense of community. The College is able to take steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the quality assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. We are able to monitor and evaluate support arrangements and resources, which enables students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Every student is enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development through the provision of regular opportunities to reflect on feedback and engage in dialogue with staff.

Each student has an independent learning plan (Walsall College Graduate) which formally captures progress and records and monitors targets. The College student tracking system Gradebook keeps formal records of summative assessment/attainment per unit/module.

B5 Student Engagement

Student Engagement considers how we engage with students through our quality systems.

Walsall College is passionate about delivering the very best services to its students and to its community. We know that the way to do this is to involve students in as many different ways as possible to shape developments in the learning environment, to act on feedback we receive, and to communicate outcomes to students promptly.

Walsall College Student Voice Strategy

Objectives

Our objectives within the dedicated strategy to Student Voice recognises and appreciates that active engagement in democratic processes does make a difference. Active citizenship is a way for Walsall College Graduates and students to increase in confidence and benefit long-term from the skills learnt through participation.

Our College becomes increasingly dynamic and effective as it develops and innovates in response to student feedback. The Student

Voice not only helps our College develop, but supports students in becoming Walsall College Graduates - skilled, professional and enterprising.

Through active engagement, students are able to recognise and contribute to the Positive Communities and British Values of:
- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect and tolerance

Student engagement with Quality Assurance and Enhancement of Learning Opportunities is well embedded.

All students are made aware of range of processes of to feedback and influence provision. Higher education students take part in regular College surveys which refer to the *National Student Survey (NSS)* for benchmark performance.

Surveys allow higher education students to feed back on their experience of induction, the quality of learning, teaching and assessment, and College support services and facilities. Higher education students also feedback on unit assignments through the online *Gradebook End of Unit Evaluation*. Further formal feedback is gained from students via their Course Representative and *Student Voice Executives* through student focus groups, Course Representative Meetings, and at the Course Consultative Committee meetings. These are held termly, attended by students, SMT and the Higher Education Development Manager; and Head of Quality. Students are represented at senior committees such as the *HE Academic Board, Learning and Quality Committee, and Student Voice Committee.*

Actions to bring about improvement are tracked through the Student Voice Action Plan, and within *Course Reviews*. Actions taken to improve provision are fed back regularly to the student body. *Periodic Review* complements the continued process of termly course review of higher education programmes, but provides a greater focus to strategic developments and programme viability.

Students are required to comply with the College's *Ready, Respectful and Safe Agreement*. The College takes deliberate steps to assist every student to understand their responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided and to shape their learning experience. The College's *Ready, Respectful and Safe Agreement* applies to all students at all times including when on work placements, educational visits or trips or other external College activities.

The College's *Ready, Respectful and Safe Agreement* also applies to College students taking programmes through educational or training providers or community centres that the College has contracted to provide services on its behalf. Students shall be informed about the *Ready, Respectful and Safe Agreement* as part of their induction. Any breach of the agreement will be considered in accordance with the College's disciplinary procedures. Students are also required to comply with all College Health and Safety policies and procedures, at all times.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance refers to the College's expectations with regard to the way in which students engage with the learning, teaching and assessment requirements for their course of study. Attendance may or may not require physical attendance, since some elements of course delivery involve blended learning, synchronous and asynchronous learning that students can engage in remotely.

The College specifies and publishes term dates. The College delivers learning, teaching and assessment activities during such dates. Students are expected to be available to participate in learning, teaching and assessment activities during all term dates.

The College expects students to ensure that a particular course of study or unit is acceptable, prior to enrolment, and they are able to meet the attendance, learning and assessment requirements for that course and/or unit. The College is not able to change the programme specifications and requirements, or scheduling

of courses or units to meet an individual student's specific needs.

Students are expected to regularly attend all forms of learning activities associated with their course of study and to participate in their course of study as required by the College. Students are required to complete all assessment for the units they are registered for, as prescribed by the relevant unit specifications.

Where the reason for absence or failure to complete assessment is due to illness, or other such cause which is unplanned and outside of the student's control, students are expected to submit a request for Extenuating Circumstances/Extension form and to provide appropriate documentary evidence.

Learning, teaching and assessment approaches are implemented to enable students to develop as independent, autonomous students with provision of opportunities for independent learning that places emphasis on developing students with high levels of critical thinking skills.
Where possible, programmes benefit from external links with those working in the vocational sector. These links are provided in a variety of ways, for example:

- Tutors will regularly review the vocational relevance of assignments;
- Tutors will provide 'live' case study material that is company or organisation based;
- Tutors will arrange visits to companies and other vocational settings when appropriate;
- Tutors will secure professional input from companies and vocational practitioners, especially where vocational expertise is clearly identified in the delivery section of the units;
- Work placement that is specifically related to the qualification;
- Tutor placements are arranged to enhance their vocational expertise.

B6 Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning

Any student registered on a course of study leading to an award by the College who has pursued appropriate studies in the College or another institution, or who possesses appropriate qualifications or experience, has the right to be considered for the *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)*, as defined in the College's *Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.* This means that they may be exempt from some of the course of study. The assessment of RPL claims is a distinct process from the admissions process, even where the claims are considered at the same time as the admissions process.
Decisions regarding the recognition of prior learning must be made from a basis of equivalence. The learning derived from experience and/or prior certificated study must be judged equivalent to that of the learning that might otherwise have been achieved by following parts of the accredited course of study, or unit. Decisions must therefore be informed by reference to explicit assessment criteria contained within course and module specifications. Decisions will also be subject to any other processes specified by the Awarding Body.

The award of *RPL* is subject to the following:

- the procedures set for *RPL* follow College guidance;
- the course team has assessed the claim in terms of acceptability, sufficiency, authenticity, currency and level and can demonstrate that the student's previously assessed or experiential learning meets all the learning outcomes stated in the unit specification for the unit(s) for which they are to be awarded credit;
- a written record of the process for each student is kept by the Course Team;
- appeals against *RPL* decisions will be addressed according to the Student Appeal procedure set out in these regulations.

Assessment of Students

These regulations are standard assessment regulations for programmes of study leading to the award of *Pearson BTEC* Higher National qualifications. Course teams delivering these programmes adhere to the guidance and requirements within the Pearson BTEC Higher Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment (Level 4 to 7). Where indicated, students should refer to the appropriate Student Course Handbook for further details of the assessment requirements for their programme of study.

The College's priority for assessment is to deliver valid, reliable, fair, and manageable assessment. Assessment programmes are designed so that skills and knowledge can be developed in line with the assessment criteria. A range of assessment methods are utilised, such as:
- presentations, written reports, accounts, surveys;
- log books, production diaries;
- role play;
- observations of practical tasks or performance;
- articles for journals, press releases;
- production of visual or audio materials, artefacts, products and specimens;
- peer and self-assessment;
- group projects.

Course teams make maximum use of work-related practical experience and reflecting typical practice in the sector concerned. In many cases, the use of industry partners and clients help to design the actual assignment briefs and projects.

A holistic view of the programme is taken to ensure there is an appropriate spread of assessment activities within, and across the units. The units making up the programme collectively allow students opportunities to develop, and be assessed in, higher level skills, such as analysis, literature searching, teamwork, management responsibilities, effective communication etc.

The final assessment clearly states which outcome(s), assessment criteria and grade descriptors have been achieved. Where applicable any necessary remedial action is also listed. No overall grade of pass, merit or distinction can be given for evidence that covers only part of a unit.

Authenticity and Authentication

The College will only accept evidence for assessment that is authentic, i.e. that is the student's own and that can be judged fully to see whether it meets the assessment criteria. All material submitted for assessment, including assessment that does not count towards the unit grade, shall be the student's own work (except where group work specifically forms part of the assignment). Quotations from the published or unpublished work of other persons must always be attributed, both at the appropriate point in the text and in the bibliography at the end.

Evidence for assessment, where appropriate, must be submitted via the College's on-line assessment tool *(Grade Book)* where the submission date is formally recorded. Students are required to authenticate their assessment evidence as their own work. Where assessment evidence is not electronic (e.g. art portfolios) students are required to submit to Grade Book a declaration of practical assignment submission, authenticating evidence as their own work.

Assessors assess only student evidence that is authentic.
If they find through the assessment process that there is evidence of assessment malpractice, they take appropriate action, including invoking the College's *Academic Misconduct Policy* as required. All students and staff are aware of:
- what is considered assessment malpractice;
- the related processes for investigating malpractice;
- the possible outcomes that may be reached and the consequences.

Malpractice shall be minimised by ensuring students and staff are aware of the issues: plagiarism, collusion, fabrication of results, falsifying grades, fraudulent certification claims; referencing skills; and a zero tolerance approach.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment involves both the Assessor and the student in a conversation about their progress and takes place prior to summative assessment. The main function of formative assessment is to provide feedback to enable the student to make improvements to consolidate a Pass mark, or attain a higher grade. Feedback is given promptly to ensure it has meaning, and context for the student and time is given following the feedback for actions to be completed. Students are provided with formative feedback during the process of assessment and are empowered to act to improve their performance. Feedback on formative assessment is constructive and provides clear guidance and actions for improvement. Following formative assessment and feedback, students are able to:

- revisit work to add to the original evidence produced to consolidate a Pass grade or to enhance their work to achieve higher grade
- submit evidence for summative assessment and final unit grade.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment is a final assessment decision on an assignment task in relation to the assessment criteria of each unit. It is the definitive assessment and recording of the student's achievement.

Grading Higher National Units

The grading of BTEC Higher National qualifications is at the unit and the qualification level. Each successfully completed unit will be graded as a pass, merit or distinction:

- A pass is awarded for the achievement of

all outcomes against the specified assessment criteria.
- Merit and distinction grades are awarded for higher-level achievement.

The merit and distinction grade descriptors are for grading the total evidence produced for each unit and describe the student's performance over and above that for a pass grade. They can be achieved in a flexible way, for example: in a sequential or holistic mode, to reflect the nature of the sector.

Meeting Deadlines

Deadlines for assessment are clearly communicated to students from the start and throughout their programme, and students are made aware of the consequences of failing to meet deadlines.

Students are required to adhere to any published dates and deadlines for assessment. Any student who, due to a medical or another reason outside of their control, is unable to complete assessment evidence by or on a set date should submit a request for extenuating circumstances or an extension.

Where a request for extenuating circumstances or extension has not been submitted and approved, the grade awarded will not be any higher than a pass. If an extension is granted, the new deadline must be recorded and adhered to.

The procedures for the submission and consideration of personal mitigating circumstances are set out in the *Request for Extension and Extenuating Circumstances Procedures.*
Students are made aware of these procedures at the start of their programme, and are able to access and complete the request forms via the College's Grade Book system.

Internal Verification of Assessment Decisions

Internal Verifiers will sample assessed work from every assignment to check the accuracy of

assessment decisions. Internal Verification is undertaken before work is returned to the students.

Communication of Results

All grades for completed units are recorded within *Gradebook* (the college online grading system) enabling students to access their grades at all times, to track their progression and performance through the qualification. Final grades for the award of qualification are communicated to students by their course tutors.

Certificates are either collected in person by the students, or posted out to the students by the Examinations team.

B7 External Examining

The External Examiner appointed by *Pearson* BTEC will visit the delivery team, meeting staff and students and sampling a range of assessment and verification decisions against national standards. An External Examiner's report is produced as a result of this visit which is shared with the appropriate staff and students, and is also presented at the College's Annual Assessment Board.

Annual and Virtual Assessment Boards

The College holds an annual Assessment Board for all of its BTEC Higher National programmes. It also holds Virtual Assessment Boards to gauge student progression throughout the academic year. The main purpose of both the Virtual Assessment Board and the Annual Assessment Board is to make recommendations on:

- the grades achieved by students on the individual units;
- extenuating circumstances;
- cases of cheating and plagiarism;
- progression of students onto the next stage of the programme (where appropriate);

- the awards to be made to students;
- referrals and deferrals.

The membership of the Assessment Board is:
- Assistant Principal - Quality and Higher Education;
- Higher Education Development Manager (Chair);
- Director of Faculty/Head of Employer Responsive in which the course is based, or his/her nominated representative;
- Curriculum Delivery Manager/Apprentice Sector Manager;
- Tutors/Assessors for the programme(s) being considered.

Attendance at the Assessment Board is compulsory for all members, unless their absence is approved by the Chair. The minimum attendance shall be three members, including the External Panel Member, whose attendance is normally required. Exceptionally, where an External Panel Member is unable to attend, the meeting may go ahead in their absence, provided that their comments are sought prior to the meeting and reported to the meeting, and that all recommendations and decisions are endorsed by them. Decisions on grades, referrals, deferrals, progressions and recommendations for awards are the responsibility of the Assessment Board. Grades will remain provisional until they have been confirmed by the Assessment Board. Assessment Board outcomes and External Panel Member recommendations are recorded formally by the College's Quality Team and shared with the appropriate curriculum staff. Any actions and progress are monitored through to completion.

Final decisions on the award of grades are communicated to the College's Examinations Team, who then process certification through the Awarding Body *(Pearson)* in order to claim student certification.

B8 Programme Monitoring and Review

The College's *Quality Improvement Strategy* embraces quality assurance processes for both Further and Higher Education Provision. Within the *HE Enhancement Cycle* there are clear processes to assure the quality of learning, teaching and assessment, and success in outcomes, through Learning Walks, Area Evaluations, Quality Summits, Course Reviews, Periodic Reviews, internal verification, student, stakeholder and employer voice activity, and self- assessment and *Quality Improvement Planning*. For each process there is a higher education specific approach and filter. Higher education specific course performance, student progress and student satisfaction are scrutinised and monitored to the same robust degree as Further Education provision.

Programme monitoring and review draws upon a range of qualitative and quantitative information. This includes data on student progression and achievement, information made publicly available or reported to external bodies including professional, regulatory and statutory bodies, reports from external examiners, subject benchmark statements, and other comparative data. Where possible, data is disaggregated by protected characteristic in order to identify any differential impact on particular groups of students.

The three-year cycle of *Periodic Review* includes all higher education programmes delivered at Walsall College.
The quality of the learning opportunities which students experience and the standard of the awards that they take away are central to the *Periodic Review* process. The College uses the findings and action plans from Periodic Review to inform curriculum planning and review. The College also uses the on-going course review process to manage course improvements outside of *Periodic Review* so that curriculum teams are able to respond quickly to internal feedback and external drivers.

B9 Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

A student may appeal against an assessment decision. The College's procedures for the submission and consideration of appeals are set out in the *Assessment Appeals Procedure*, which forms part of the College *Assessment and Quality Assurance Policy.*

All students and staff are made aware of the process that exists to enable students to make an appeal with the College, or directly with Pearson, relating to the external or internally awarded assessment outcomes.

The investigation of appeals and complaints provides an important source of feedback for the College, which contributes to the enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities and of processes for maintaining academic standards. College complaints and appeals policies and forms are accessible online on the College's SharePoint and the HE Student area within *GOAL* (Virtual Learning Environment), with accessible versions also available. These policies are also included within all H.E Course Handbooks. Staff and students are made aware of the relevant policies and procedures at induction.

The College's Complaints Policy and Procedure is managed by the Quality Team. The *Assessment Appeals Procedure* is distinctive and separate from the Complaints Policy, and is managed by curriculum teams. Both policies clearly define stages and indicative timescales. At the point where internal procedures have been completed, the College ensures that the student or complainant is provided with a clear written statement, confirming that its internal procedures have reached completion, stating the outcome that has been reached, and advising the student or complainant of any relevant external procedures to which they have recourse if they remain dissatisfied.

Both policies apply to current students, including those on placement or engaged in work-based learning, or on an approved leave of absence; and recent students, giving those

who have recently left their programme the opportunity to raise issues of appeal or complaint in a reasonable period after the end of their studies. The College has in place a tracking system to monitor learning points from cases irrespective of the outcome of the individual case. The *Assessment Appeals Procedure* sits within the *Assessment and IQA Policy.*

Where the College is delivering higher education qualifications in collaboration with other higher education institutions, the partner institution will provide College staff and students with clear information about their procedures for complaints and appeals, which includes making it explicit to which body an appeal or complaint must be directed, and the extent to which the partner institution would be involved in considering such an appeal or complaint. Students studying on higher education programmes at Walsall College, which are delivered in collaboration with a partner higher education institution, have the ultimate right of appeal to that awarding institution where procedures at the College have been exhausted.

If the complaint relates to a Higher Education (HE) course and the College Appeals process has been exhausted, students can contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Students can check if their complaint is eligible by visiting their 'Can you complain to us?' page: [Link to webpage to the OIA](#)

You can complain using their online system: [How to access the online IOA system](#) or download a Complaint Form: [Link to the pdf complaints form from the IOA](#)

The OIA should send an acknowledgement that they have received the complaint within ten days.

B10 Managing Higher Education Provision with Others

Collaborative provision is conceived, designed and delivered in response to local economic need or student demand. The approvals process for provision with others is thorough

and takes account of Walsall College's *Academic Regulations*, as well as the partner institutions'. The overarching policy which guides all partnership work, including partnership in higher education, is the College's *Higher Education Strategy.*

This strategy describes the purpose of partnership work, to maximise our contribution to the growing prosperity of Walsall. Through increased progression routes, wider integration of disengaged groups, a sharp focus on the skills agenda and maximising opportunities through international partnership working, we draw together relevant expertise and partners to benefit the core constituents of Walsall College and the wider borough.

The general guidelines for higher education with others encompasses the following stages: Initial consultation: Following ongoing consultation with students, employers and other stakeholders, the need for collaborative provision is articulated. This process encompasses initial research stages to identify the most appropriate partner organisation in terms of specialism, capability, reputation and quality. The partnership is then developed through strategic institution level efforts, to be followed by course level and curriculum specific development of provision.

External guidance and legislation: Any provision with others is subject to external guidance and legislation and due attention is paid, from the outset, to the *Quality Assurance Agency's Quality Code*, Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others.

The development of collaborative agreements: Where collaborative provision is developed with an awarding body, *an access agreement* is developed in order to lay out precisely the responsibilities and roles of the respective partner institutions. The *access agreement* is scrutinised by each institution and derived through a collaborative, iterative process. This ensures that the provision is guided by a joined ethos, and underpinned by the awarding bodies' own quality standards.

Any collaborative provision, at the point of

delivery, is subject to Walsall College quality assurance processes which are consistent of, and aligned to, the awarding bodies' standards.

Part C - Information about Provision

Public confidence in higher education relies on public understanding of the achievement represented by higher education qualifications. Walsall College is committed to producing appropriate information about our higher education learning opportunities, which is focused on our intended audiences and stakeholders. Part C is concerned not with the mechanisms used to produce information, nor the media chosen to communicate it, but with the quality of the information in terms of whether it is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

The College is committed to providing information that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The College assesses this through a cross reference tool created by the CMA – Competition & Markets Authority - UK higher education providers – which advises on consumer protection law. The College provides prospective students and other interested parties with information on programmes of study before any decision is made about starting a course. This is provided on the College's website, in the prospectus, and other promotional material of the College.

The Head of Sales and Marketing is responsible for the College's CMA Action Plan and Publication of Information Policy and Procedure, and therefore is responsible for ensuring that the above information is up-to-date and compliant, via the College website.

Curriculum teams maintain a set of current programme specifications and unit specifications alongside all other programme management documentation, verification and tracking systems.

Course teams provide all students registered on a programme with a HE *Course Handbook and Programme Specifications* at the

The provision is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure compliance and relevance.

Higher Education

The College provides all new students with joining instructions prior to their arrival at the College and, on arrival, the HE Course Handbook and Programme Specifications, containing information on College services and sources of help and advice. This guidance is also available during open days. The College advises all students with a disability, and individual or additional requirements that they should be assessed and advised by the Inclusive Support Team. As a consequence, they may receive additional arrangements in assessments and support to facilitate study within the resources available. The College provides all staff and students with access to the *Academic Regulations* and all documents referred to within them.

Information relating to the College's higher education provision is maintained using the College's on-line *SharePoint* in the designated area 'Higher Education'. Additionally, within the virtual learning environment *'GOAL'* students may access information relevant to their programme and higher education provision at Walsall College; for example:
- college and national survey results;
- enhancement of learning opportunities;
- external Examiner reports;
- minutes of meetings appertaining to higher education provision at Walsall College.

commencement of the programme. This contains, as a minimum, information on:

- aims and intended learning outcomes of the programme;
- programme structure, including details of core units, optional units, pre-requisite units, and pathways;
- learning, teaching and assessment methods;

- assessment requirements;
- assessment procedures;
- staff details/sources of help;
- communication with students;
- responsibilities of students;
- reference to other specified relevant information.

Course teams provide all students with unit information at the commencement of the unit, including:

- The assessment strategy, which should indicate how the learning outcomes will be assessed using assessment methods appropriate to their achievement;
- Submission dates/deadlines;
- Any other assessment requirements
- The dates by which assessment feedback
- The type of assessment feedback to be provided will be provided to students

The location of the online reading list, and other learning materials and resources.

Course teams remind students that it is each student's own responsibility: (a) to read and understand the information given to them on assessment requirements; (b) to make staff aware of any circumstances affecting their ability to comply with these requirements.

All students are made aware of policies and procedures relating to assessment malpractice, appeals and complaints through a comprehensive student induction programme and clear information within the student handbook.

"Walsall College is uniquely and proudly vocational, delivering technical, professional and community education. Our greatest passion is unleashing the potential of individuals, communities and businesses; our greatest legacy is the talent of our students: *skilled, professional and enterprising*."

Walsall College

QAA
UK Quality Assured

2020
RoSPA
Gold Medal
Award

matrix
quality standard for information
advice and guidance services
approved by the matrix Accreditation Body

disability
confident
EMPLOYER