

Degree awarding powers assessment report for TEC Partnership

Assessment for variation of
degree awarding powers

Provider legal name: TEC Partnership

Provider trading name: TEC Partnership

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Executive summary

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of assessment: | Quality and standards assessment for variation of degree awarding powers |
| For: | TEC Partnership |

1. This report represents the conclusions of an assessment for a variation of degree awarding powers (DAPs) for TEC Partnership. TEC Partnership is seeking indefinite Foundation and Bachelors' DAPs.
2. To carry out the assessment, the Office for Students (OfS) appointed an assessment team, which included three academic experts and one member of OfS staff. The assessment included an on-site visit to the provider. This report contains the advice and judgement of the team following its assessment.
3. The team concluded that TEC Partnership continues to meet the overarching and underpinning DAPs criteria. This report does not, however, represent any decision of the OfS to authorise these powers.

Table 1: summary of findings against the DAPs criteria

| Underpinning DAPs criteria | Summary |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Criterion A: Academic governance | Met |
| Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks | Met |
| Criterion B2: Academic standards | Met |
| Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience | Met |
| Criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff | Met |
| Criterion D: Environment for supporting students | Met |
| Criterion E: Evaluation of performance | Met |
| Overarching Full DAPs criterion | Summary |
| The provider is a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems | Met |

What is a variation of degree awarding powers?

The OfS may authorise a registered higher education provider to grant taught awards, or research awards, or both, under section 42 of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA).

A provider that already holds degree awarding powers may apply to the OfS to amend its powers through a variation to this authorisation. The OfS can decide to vary powers irrespective of how they were initially awarded (for example, by the OfS or the Privy Council).

Types of variation

There are a number of ways in which powers may be amended.

1. From New DAPs to full DAPS (assessed via a New DAPs End Assessment)

Providers that have been granted New DAPs are assessed for suitability for Full DAPs after three years.

2. From Full DAPs to indefinite DAPS

Full DAPs are initially granted on a time-limited basis. A provider that has held Full DAPs for three years or more is normally eligible to apply to have 'indefinite' DAPs, with no time limit.

3. To extend the scope of degree awarding powers

Degree awarding powers may be granted for a particular level of award, for example foundation degrees, or in specific subjects. In these cases, a provider that holds Full DAPs on a time-limited or indefinite basis can apply to extend its powers, for example to other taught awards or additional subjects.

Assessment and decision-making process

Before deciding whether to vary a provider's powers, the OfS will assess the provider. The assessment is designed to gather evidence to inform a judgement about whether the provider continues to meet the criteria for awarding degrees and has the ability to:

- provide and maintain higher education of an appropriate quality
- apply and maintain the application of appropriate standards to that higher education.

The full requirements of the criteria are detailed in Annex C of the OfS regulatory framework.¹

OfS officers first undertake an eligibility and suitability assessment of the provider. This initial assessment determines the scope and level of detail of the variation assessment, and an initial position on whether the variation assessment should be desk-based or include a visit to the provider.

¹ See [Annex C – Guidance on the criteria for the authorisation for DAPs - Office for Students](#).

Assessments for degree awarding powers are conducted by teams which include academic experts that the OfS has appointed. The outcome of the assessment is typically a report, produced by the assessment team, summarising its findings.

The report is then considered by the OfS's Quality Assessment Committee (QAC). The QAC is responsible for providing advice to the OfS under section 46 of HERA on the quality of and standards applied to the higher education being delivered by providers for which the OfS is considering granting, varying, or (in certain circumstances) revoking authorisation for DAPs.²

After considering the assessment report, the QAC provides advice to the OfS regarding quality and standards.

In making its decision about whether to vary a provider's powers, the OfS will have regard to any assessment report and the QAC's advice. The OfS will also consider its own risk assessment of the provider and will have regard to advice received from others where this has been sought. It will also take into account other relevant considerations, such as the OfS's general duties under section 2 of HERA.³

Further information

We have published further information about varying degree awarding powers in Regulatory advice 17.⁴

4. TEC Partnership (hereafter referred to as 'TEC Partnership' or 'the college') is a further education corporation that provides a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses, including in education, technology, health and social care, tourism, business management and performing arts.
5. TEC Partnership has held time-limited foundation DAPs since 1 August 2013, under sequential authorisations from both the Privy Council and the OfS. It has also held time-limited bachelors' DAPs, awarded by the OfS, since September 2021. Its current foundation and bachelors' DAPs authorisations are due to expire on 30 October 2026.
6. In accordance with the OfS's regulatory framework and Regulatory advice 17, TEC Partnership is eligible to be considered for indefinite foundation and bachelors' DAPs because it has held time-limited DAPs for a period of three years.⁵
7. The OfS appointed an external assessment team on 30 November 2023 to undertake a DAPs variation assessment, including an assessment visit to TEC Partnership. The OfS asked the assessment team to give its advice about the quality of and standards applied to higher education courses at the university and whether the university continues to meet the DAPs criteria.

² See [Higher Education and Research Act 2017, section 46](#).

³ See [Higher Education and Research Act 2017, section 2](#).

⁴ OfS, [Regulatory advice 17: Variation and revocation of degree awarding powers](#).

⁵ OfS, ['Regulatory advice 17: Variation and revocation of degree awarding powers'](#) (OfS 2019.48), last updated July 2023.

8. The assessment team considered a range of information submitted by TEC Partnership in support of its application to vary its DAPs authorisation.
9. This report does not represent any decision of the OfS in respect of whether the DAPs variation TEC Partnership is seeking should be authorised.
10. This report is provisionally scheduled for consideration by the OfS's Quality Assessment Committee (QAC) on 26 March 2025. QAC will formulate its advice to the OfS regarding quality and standards at TEC Partnership, having considered this report.
11. The OfS will have regard to this assessment report and QAC's advice when making a decision about whether to vary TEC Partnership's DAPs authorisation on the basis requested. The OfS will also consider its own risk assessment for TEC Partnership and will have regard to advice received from others where this has been sought. It will also take into account other relevant considerations, such as the OfS's general duties under section 2 of HERA.⁶

⁶ See Higher Education and Research Act 2017, section 2.

Introduction and background

12. This report represents the conclusions of a DAPs assessment for a provider seeking indefinite foundation and bachelors' DAPs. The assessment included a visit to the provider.
13. The OfS's Quality Assessment Committee (QAC) will consider the report and formulate its advice to the OfS regarding quality and standards at TEC Partnership. The OfS will have regard to the assessment report, and QAC's advice when making a decision about whether to vary TEC Partnership's DAPs authorisation on the basis requested.
14. The OfS will also consider its own risk assessment for TEC Partnership and will have regard to advice received from others where this has been sought, as well as other relevant considerations such as the OfS's general duties under section 2 of HERA.⁷

Context

15. TEC Partnership (formerly known as the Grimsby Institute Group) has offered higher education since 2002. During 2020, TEC Partnership completed a merger with East Riding College (ERC), a small general further education college with campuses in Beverley, Bridlington and Hull. TEC Partnership is based in Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire and East Yorkshire and operates from several campuses, including East Riding College, Grimsby Institute, Scarborough TEC, and Skegness TEC. It offers a range of undergraduate degree courses, including in education, technology, health and social care, tourism, business management and performing arts. It also offers postgraduate courses validated by the University of Hull.
16. Overall, based on the latest available OfS 'Size and shape of provision data dashboard', TEC Partnership had a student population in 2022-2023 of 1,250 students. This included 750 full-time undergraduate students and 340 part-time undergraduate students. It also included 40 full-time postgraduate students and 50 part-time postgraduate students. These student numbers are distributed across a range of subject areas, with the largest subject area being education and teaching.⁸
17. TEC Partnership advised that it currently employs 480 teaching staff, of which 73 are higher education teaching staff and 407 are further education and apprenticeship teaching staff. It also employs 873 non-teaching staff.
18. In August 2023, TEC Partnership requested to be considered for indefinite foundation and bachelors' DAPs, as it had held time-limited DAPs for three years.
19. In accordance with the OfS's regulatory framework⁹ and OfS Regulatory advice 17, the OfS undertook an initial eligibility and suitability assessment of the university.¹⁰ It decided that an assessment, which would include a visit to TEC Partnership, should be undertaken to gather

⁷ See [Higher Education and Research Act 2017, section 2](#).

⁸ Available at OfS, [Size and shape of provision data dashboard: Data dashboard](#).

⁹ See [Regulatory framework for higher education in England - Office for Students](#).

¹⁰ See OfS, ['Regulatory advice 17: Variation and revocation of degree awarding powers'](#) (OfS 2019.48), last updated July 2023.

and test evidence. This is to inform a judgement about whether TEC Partnership's DAPs have been exercised securely during the preceding years, and whether it continues to meet the DAPs criteria and has the ability to:

- provide, and maintain the provision of, higher education of an appropriate quality; and
- apply, and maintain the application of, appropriate standards to that higher education.

20. The OfS appointed an assessment team on 30 November 2023 which consisted of three academic expert assessors and a member of OfS staff in the following roles:

- a. Professor Helena Gillespie – committee chair and lead assessor.
- b. Professor Steven Rhoden – deputy committee chair and assessor.
- c. Gabe Manthorp – deputy committee chair and assessor.
- d. Maria Foster – committee member and assessment coordinator.

21. The OfS asked the team to give its advice and judgements about the quality of, and standards applied to, higher education courses at TEC Partnership and whether TEC Partnership continues to meet the DAPs criteria.

22. The assessment team considered a range of information submitted by TEC Partnership in support of its application to vary its DAPs authorisation.

Assessment process

Information gathering

23. In accordance with the operational guidance on the variation and revocation of degree awarding powers outlined in Annex B of OfS's Regulatory advice 17, TEC Partnership submitted a DAPs self-assessment document on 15 February 2024. The document set out how TEC Partnership considers it meets the DAPs criterion for the foundation and bachelors' DAPs authorisations it already held.
24. To support the statements made in the self-assessment document, TEC Partnership submitted a range of documentary evidence, including course documentation, information related to academic policies and processes, and governance information.
25. Following its review of TEC Partnership's initial evidence submission, the assessment team requested further evidence from TEC Partnership, which was submitted variously on 16 April 2024, 18 April 2024, 9 October 2024, 10 October 2024 and 25 November 2024.
26. The assessment team undertook its desk-based assessment of TEC Partnership's evidence submission between February 2024 and November 2024.
27. The assessment team also undertook a two-day, on-site visit to the TEC Partnership campus in Grimsby on 9 and 10 October 2024. During the visit, the assessment team toured key student facilities on the Grimsby Institute campus, including resources relating to students' academic, personal and professional development. The assessment team also met with various members of TEC Partnership's senior leadership and teaching staff as well as a selection of students and members of the governing body. The assessment visit agenda included discussions with staff and students on a range of areas related to TEC Partnership's delivery of higher education. These included academic governance, course validation and the recruitment and admissions process. During the visit, the assessment team also undertook a review of a sample of assessed student work.
28. A list of abbreviations used in this report is at Annex A.

Assessment of DAPs criterion A: Academic governance

Criterion A1: Academic governance

Advice to the OfS

29. The assessment team's view is that the provider meets Criterion A1: Academic Governance because it meets subcriteria A1.1, A1.2, and A1.3.
30. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows, in summary, that TEC Partnership has sound academic governance and management structures that deliver effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability. TEC Partnership engages students as partners in the academic governance of its higher education provision. Where TEC Partnership works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities it ensures that its governance and management of such opportunities is robust and effective, and that decisions to work with other organisations are the result of a strategic approach.
31. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Criterion A1.1

A1.1: An organisation granted degree awarding powers has effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.

Advice to the OfS

32. The assessment team's view is that the TEC Partnership meets criterion A1.1 because it has effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.
33. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the TEC partnership meets the evidence requirements for A1.1 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Background

34. To inform the assessment team's consideration of its academic governance arrangements, TEC partnership provided the below contextual information regarding its management and governance structures.
35. TEC Partnership is a corporation, and its governance is overseen by the corporation board on matters of audit, curriculum and quality oversight, finance and resources, governance, and remuneration. Membership of the Corporation Board includes the governors, the Chair of the Corporation, and the TEC Partnership CEO. Corporation Board members chair various senior

level committees, including the Curriculum and Quality Oversight Committee (CQOC), the Audit Committee and the Finance and Resources Committee.¹¹

36. TEC Partnership is led by the CEO, who is also the accountable officer. The CEO's authority is delegated from the Corporation Board and includes overall responsibility for the strategic, academic and financial performance of the group.
37. The governance structures of the college have undergone significant change since 2020. Following the merger with ERC, the college has moved away from having local boards for each delivery site, to a more centralised approach to academic governance, through the setting up of a new deliberative committee structure. This revised structure aims to enable more accountability, scrutiny and oversight of all aspects of TEC Partnership's higher education provision, across all delivery sites.
38. The corporation established CQOC to review monitor and advise on matters related to higher and further education provision. Its responsibilities include the consideration of the performance of higher education provision across TEC Partnership and receiving and challenging assurances that the curriculum, quality and standards continue to meet the criteria to be a Degree Awarding Body. Its membership consists of the Chair of the Corporation, TEC Partnership CEO, governors and student representatives as well as representatives from local higher education institutions. The principals from each higher education delivery site, the Group Vice Principal for Curriculum, Quality and Standards, and the Group Academic Registrar are all in attendance.
39. The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) is headed up by the CEO and includes Group Vice Principals for areas including Curriculum Quality and Standards; People and Culture; and Finance and Corporate Services. The ELT reports directly to the CQOC and has strategic responsibility for the assurance and monitoring of the effectiveness of the academic governance and the students' academic experience and standards. This includes strategic responsibility for the approval of all codes of practice associated with the governance of higher education. The ELT approves, or delegates approval to the appropriate committee, all policies and procedures that are in the public-facing TEC Partnership Quality and Standards Handbook.¹²
40. Included in the governance structure is a Grimsby Institute senior leadership team and a Northbank senior leadership team. The latter has responsibility for oversight of higher education delivery at TEC Partnership campuses in Scarborough, Bridlington and Hull. The senior leadership teams are led by the CEO.
41. The Higher Education Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee (HECQS) is TEC Partnership's senior academic authority with responsibility for the quality and standards of higher education. Its remit includes monitoring progress against targets set in the TEC Partnership Ambition 2030 strategic plan and oversight of the operational delivery areas for all aspects of higher education. It reports to the CQOC via the ELT.

¹¹ See [The TEC Partnership Governors | Board of Governors](#).

¹² See [Quality & Standards Handbook | TEC Partnership](#).

42. The Higher Education Quality Office oversees the day-to-day monitoring of the quality and standards of higher education provision at TEC Partnership. This office is led by the Group Academic Registrar who reports to the Group Vice Principal for Curriculum, Quality and Standards. The quality office leads on the operational delivery of the programme approval process as well as programme monitoring and the management of exam boards and associated committees.
43. The TEC Partnership DAPs self-assessment document states that its strategic plan (Ambition 2030) 'reflects its core priority which is to improve the economic and social prospects of its local area through the provision of higher education for those who may not be able to access this elsewhere.'
44. The Ambition 2030 document sets out the college's vision, mission and values across the following four key strategic priorities:
 - a. empower students to succeed
 - b. improve operational performance
 - c. contribute to economic development
 - d. achieve organisational growth.

Reasoning

45. To determine whether TEC Partnership's higher education mission and strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, published, understood and applied consistently, the assessment team reviewed a range of evidence, including the Ambition 2030 strategic plan, the Ambition 2030 higher education targets, and the academic regulations, as well as associated higher education policies and procedures, which are focussed on the improvement of student education, experience and outcomes.
46. The assessment team found there is coherency between the college's higher education mission and strategic direction and associated policies and procedures. For example, one of TEC Partnership's key strategic ambitions is to empower students to succeed. The 'Ambition 2030 higher education targets' document sets clear targets to indicate how this strategic objective will be achieved. Targets include ensuring 50 per cent of all higher education courses have a work placement or sector relevant opportunities, and that TEC Partnership will have student continuation, completion and progression data that is 3 per cent above the OfS numerical benchmark by 2030.
47. The assessment team also found that the academic regulations and the underpinning policies and codes of practice align to the college's strategic aims and mission. For example, the academic regulations restate TEC Partnership's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and its responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010. In scrutinising the college's admissions policy, the assessment team found that it offers both standard and non-standard entry routes onto courses. The assessment team considered that this aligned with TEC Partnership's strategic objective of inclusivity and reducing barriers to learning. The assessment team also scrutinised the academic misconduct policy and noted that during the period of the DAPs assessment it had been updated to include the latest sector guidance on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in assessments and to embed academic integrity.

throughout the curriculum. Given the implications of the developments in AI in relation to academic integrity, this update is consistent with TEC Partnership's commitment to equipping students with the skills they need to succeed. The assessment team also saw evidence of the consistent application of these policies through discussions with the college's senior leaders, students and staff during the assessment visit and through a review of student work. Students that the assessment team met as part of the assessment visit, confirmed their awareness of the academic misconduct policy and that in line with this policy, their work is regularly screened for plagiarism.

48. The assessment team noted that the college's Ambition 2030 strategic plan details the consultation undertaken with staff, students and other stakeholders during development of the strategy. This included staff and student working groups to explore TEC Partnership's vision, mission and values. The Ambition 2030 HE targets document also states there was extensive consultation with staff on the development of the higher education targets and objectives. Furthermore, new staff are required to complete a higher education training package which includes content about TEC Partnership's teaching and learning methods, assessment and internal codes of practice. The assessment team also noted that the strategic plan,¹³ the academic regulations and associated policies¹⁴ are published on TEC Partnership's website.
49. The assessment team considered the evidence set out above in relation to the higher education mission and strategic direction and found that the strategies, plans and codes of practice are coherent, published, understood and applied consistently across the partnership.
50. The assessment team formed the view that TEC Partnership's academic policies support its higher education mission, aims and objectives. To determine this, the assessment team reviewed a wide range of policies, including the Assessment of Students policy, the Evaluation of Teaching and Learning and Assessment policy, the Fitness to Study policy and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy. The assessment team found that policies support TEC Partnership's mission, aims and objectives. For example, the Ambition 2030 targets set out the importance of placement learning to students and this objective is supported with a revised code of practice on the management of placement learning. This code of practice details the processes for the management of placement learning at TEC Partnership to ensure that threshold quality and standards processes are maintained. Similarly, the Evaluation of Teaching and Learning and Assessment policy states one of its purposes is 'to ensure exceptional practice in the development of graduate employability skills' and defines the evaluation activities that will be undertaken with staff to support effective implementation of the policy. The assessment team formed the view that the purpose and aims of this policy supported the strategic objective that all students will develop employability skills as part of their programme.
51. The assessment team saw a significant body of evidence in relation to the academic governance of TEC Partnership. It noted that an impact of the merger with East Riding College was that some policies and procedures were still in the process of being fully and consistently implemented across all higher education delivery sites. For example, in discussions with staff and students during the assessment visit, the assessment team heard that aspects of the new Student Engagement Framework were not fully operational on all

¹³ See TEC Partnership, [The TEC Partnership Strategic Plan](#).

¹⁴ See TEC Partnership, [Quality & Standards Handbook](#).

campuses. The assessment team was content, however, that the college is in the process of understanding and addressing the barriers to implementing the framework in a consistent way for diverse learners. There is further consideration of this issue under criterion A1.2 below.

52. TEC Partnership is also developing provision at its existing campuses, and this means that the policy landscape at the college is likely to evolve. During the visit, the assessment team looked closely at these developments and found that the college had a robust system to manage the changes underway through the work of HECQS, which oversees higher education governance at all delivery sites. The visit allowed the assessment team to meet the principals and teaching staff from the other campuses. Discussions in these meetings demonstrated to the assessment team there are sound systems and processes in place for enabling the governance of this multi-site provider. Having considered the available evidence, the assessment team concluded that TEC Partnership's academic policies support its higher education mission, aims and objectives.
53. The assessment team reviewed a range of evidence to determine whether there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in the organisation in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision. This included evidence of TEC Partnership's deliberative committee structure and a governance structure chart. In addition, the assessment team observed a recording of a HECQS committee meeting and had access to a full set of HECQS papers, including minutes, agenda, papers and committee terms of reference.
54. The assessment team noted that TEC Partnership's committee structure has evolved since 2020 and noted the rationale for the changes. In its DAPs self-assessment, the college set out that it had moved away from having local boards for each delivery site, to a more centralised approach to academic governance. This was to enable more accountability, scrutiny and oversight of higher education provision, across all delivery sites. A key change was the creation of HECQS, which unified two previous higher education academic governance committees.
55. The assessment team formed the view that the college's deliberative committee structure, codes of practice, together with governance structure charts and related terms of reference, clearly set out the function and responsibilities of the key academic governance committees and groups relating to managing higher education provision. This documentation also demonstrated to the assessment team the reporting responsibilities for each committee.
56. Through its review of HECQS committee papers and the observation of a recording of a HECQS meeting, the assessment team judged that HECQS is effective in relation to its responsibilities for oversight and management of higher education provision. The assessment team also formed the opinion that the committee operates in line with its terms of reference. This is because in the observed committee meeting, the assessment team saw that agenda items included discussion of issues emerging through monitoring and assessment feedback, and progress against the quality improvement plan. In addition, the assessment team noted that each paper submitted to the committee is required to indicate which aspects of the strategy are enabled because of proposals contained therein.
57. The deliberative committee structure code of practice also enabled the assessment team to understand how the work of HECQS is overseen at different levels, for example by the

CQOC, to which it reports on regulations and standards and by the senior leadership team, which has responsibility for quality.

58. During the visit to the college, the assessment team discussed TEC Partnership's approach to academic governance with members of the college's senior leadership team. The senior leadership team articulated the college's approach to oversight of quality and standards, its evaluation of the effectiveness of the student engagement framework and how it ensures new programme development aligns to its strategy. The assessment team found the discussion helped it further understand TEC Partnership's approach to ensuring clarity and differentiation of function of academic governance.
59. In relation to the use of its DAPs authorisation, the college has a plan to move away from validated provision to all programmes being awarded under its own DAPs authorisation. The assessment team also saw that TEC Partnership has developed a robust and multi-level quality assurance process that is in place across the group. This comprises Quality Enhancement Reports (QER) and Quality Improvement Plans (QIP) as well as Self Evaluation and Enhancement Documents (SEED). The assessment team found that these mechanisms are now applied in largely consistent and appropriate ways that amount to sound academic governance and management structures.
60. Information and guidance about academic governance is managed effectively by the college's higher education quality team, which has a systematic approach to quality and improvement. This is evidenced by the use of quality improvement planning at every level.
61. Having reviewed the above evidence, the assessment team concluded that there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in TEC Partnership in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision.
62. The assessment team considered the extent to which the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority at TEC Partnership is clearly articulated and consistently applied. The assessment team considered, the deliberative committee structure and the operation of committees, and as mentioned above, met senior academic leaders during the assessment visit. The assessment team noted that HECQS is the senior academic authority at TEC Partnership. It has responsibility for the quality and standards of higher education as well as oversight of the higher education strategy and the operational delivery of all aspects of higher education. The assessment team further observed that there is effective oversight of the quality structures and in the effective operation of HECQS. This committee is effectively chaired, and the assessment team saw evidence that the committee approached the scrutiny of academic matters clearly and consistently. This committee has appropriate terms of reference and minutes are recorded effectively. The assessment team saw evidence that in recent years the structure of academic governance has been revised to ensure consistency of academic governance across the newly expanded partnership. The assessment team concluded that the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is clearly articulated and consistently applied at TEC partnership.
63. To determine if there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership, the assessment team reviewed the executive leadership structure chart, a senior leader job description, the CVs of several of the college's senior leadership team and the wider TEC

Partnership staff structure chart. From the staff structure charts, the assessment team noted there was clarity in the details regarding team structures, areas of responsibility and reporting lines across all levels. The sample senior leader job description set out appropriate requirements regarding depth and strength of academic leadership and evidenced appropriately high expectations at senior level in regard to qualifications, training, specialist knowledge and experience. The sample job description also showed clear alignment between the key roles and responsibilities and TEC Partnership's strategic plan, with the post holder required to develop and deliver the strategic vision. The review of CVs demonstrated that senior leaders bring significant senior leadership experience both from within higher education and across other sectors. Senior leaders have appropriate qualifications, skills and expertise.

64. During the assessment visit, the assessment team met a range of senior staff, including campus principals, leaders of professional services areas such as admissions, and programme leaders with responsibility for providing academic leadership and quality assurance of higher education courses. Discussions with this group indicated to the assessment team that senior staff have a sound understanding of the approach to the academic governance of the college's higher education provision.
65. In 2023, TEC partnership moved from a four-level management structure to a three-level management structure in order to 'strengthen knowledge, accountability, and practice' across higher education areas. The assessment team judged that through this restructure, the leadership team has been enhanced, to ensure its effectiveness in carrying out its duties to lead this complex, multi-site provider. During the assessment visit, the assessment team saw evidence of effective leadership despite the college's geographical complexities. For example, the assessment team noted that during the process of the merger with ERC, senior leaders and middle managers from all sites were brought together to discuss and formulate the TEC strategic plan. The assessment team also met governors of the college as part of the assessment visit and judged that they had a wide and appropriate set of skills to carry out their function in relation to the higher education provision of TEC Partnership. The assessment team concluded that TEC Partnership has appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership.
66. To determine whether the college develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff and students and external stakeholders, the assessment team reviewed meeting minutes at a deliberative committee and at a staff and student course enhancement meeting. It also viewed a recording of a HECQS meeting. The assessment team noted that student representatives were present in the HECQS meeting, during which module reviews and the college's Quality Improvement Plan were discussed. The minutes of the staff and student course enhancement meeting show that feedback and actions from student engagement focus groups were discussed at the meeting as well as a report from student representatives on the quality of learning experiences. In addition, the college's approach to the validation of provision requires engagement with employers to assess the skills needed and the market demand for graduates. During the assessment visit, the assessment team heard in discussions with staff that many students are employed by, or gain placement work with, local businesses and services and that the connection with the community is a tangible element of TEC Partnership's provision.

67. TEC partnership has shown that it will manage successfully the responsibilities of indefinite degree awarding powers. At the time of the assessment, TEC Partnership also offered courses validated by the University of Hull. During the visit the assessment team heard that it is the intention of TEC Partnership to eventually validate all higher education courses using its own DAPs authorisation.
68. As set out above, during the assessment visit the assessment team saw evidence of the robustness of TEC Partnership's approach to academic leadership. Over the last four years, a period which includes the merger with ERC, changes to management and governance have been led in a measured and strategic way by the college's senior leadership team. The assessment team also noted that a restructure of governance of higher education was undertaken at the time of the merger. As a result, it is the view of the assessment team that TEC Partnership is responsive to the needs of providing higher education across this complex organisation and will manage successfully the responsibilities of indefinite degree awarding powers.
69. This reflective approach to the operation of management and governance demonstrates that TEC Partnership has exercised its degree awarding powers securely over the last three years. It is the view of the assessment team that the leadership team, the deliberative committee structure and the Higher Education Quality Office collectively are a robust governance structure and therefore that TEC Partnership would be able to continue to manage successfully its degree awarding powers responsibilities.
70. In conclusion, the assessment team formed the view that TEC Partnership has effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.

Criterion A1.2

A1.2: Academic governance, including all aspects of the control and oversight of its higher education provision, is conducted in partnership with its students.

Advice to the OfS

71. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership meets criterion A1.2 because all aspects of the control and oversight of its higher education provision, is conducted in partnership with its students.
72. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that TEC Partnership met the evidence requirements for A1.2 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

73. The assessment team reviewed the TEC Partnership Student Engagement Framework to assess whether students are engaged in the governance and management of the college and its higher education provision.

74. The assessment team considered that the framework effectively sets out appropriate aims for student engagement, including students being active as partners and co-creators of their learning experience. It describes in good detail how student engagement is enabled at every level, either individually or collectively by module, programme or cohort. It also sets out the approach to student representation, the training that student representatives can expect to receive and how students will be communicated with and about changes made in response to their feedback. The framework also describes the role of the TEC Partnership Student Senate as a mechanism for ensuring the student voice is represented in a variety of meetings and committees.
75. During the visit to the college, the assessment team spoke to students and student representatives and heard evidence of the ongoing implementation of the student engagement framework. Students confirmed that representatives had been elected from their cohorts and representatives confirmed they had received training for their roles. The assessment team saw evidence of student attendance at, and engagement in, several high-level committees, including meetings of the corporation, the higher education oversight committee and HECQS. The assessment team also saw evidence of the positive impact of student engagement. This included active and positive student involvement in curriculum design either as validation or periodic review panel members or consultants in new programme development.
76. The assessment team noted that the student engagement framework was approved in November 2023 and began to be implemented in January 2024. Therefore, at the time of the visit, the framework had not been in place for a full year, and implementation was incomplete. During the visit, the assessment team heard evidence that the Student Senate was beginning to run with small numbers of students but noted that not every course or delivery site was fully represented. The college explained to the assessment team, the barriers to student engagement for students with different commitments. The college also acknowledged that more work is needed to help students overcome these barriers and the assessment team agreed with this view. However, the assessment team did see evidence of the emerging impact of the Student Senate on the student experience, with 'you said we did' posters around the buildings. In addition, during the observation of the HECQS committee the assessment team noted that students did make comments and contributions to the discussion in the committee.
77. The assessment team concluded that overall, academic governance including the oversight of higher education, is conducted in partnership with students, notwithstanding that at the time of the assessment there has been insufficient time to fully implement the student engagement framework. However, the assessment team felt that sufficient progress has been made in the implementation of the framework and that students were sufficiently involved in academic governance to reassure the assessment team that the criterion would continue to be met.

Criterion A1.3

A1.3: Where an organisation granted degree awarding powers works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, it ensures that its governance and management of such opportunities is robust and effective and that decisions to work with other organisations are the result of a strategic approach rather than opportunism.

Advice to the OfS

78. The assessment team's view is that TEC partnership meets criterion A1.3 because where it works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, it ensures that its governance and management of such opportunities is robust and effective and that decisions to work with other organisations are the result of a strategic approach rather than opportunism.
79. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that TEC Partnership has met the evidence requirements for A1.3 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

80. As part of the consideration of TEC Partnership's strategic approach to working with other organisations in the delivery of learning opportunities, the assessment team considered a range of evidence, including the Collaborative Provision policy, the Management of Placement in HE policy, the Deliberative Committee Structure and Continuous Improvement of Quality policy (2024), the Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes policy and the CQOC term of reference. The assessment team also held discussions with staff during the assessment visit.
81. At the time of the assessment visit, TEC Partnership delivered courses that are validated by other awarding bodies. For example, the foundation degree in Public Sector Management run at ERC delivery sites is validated by the University of Hull. The college also offers a Higher National Diploma course that is awarded by Pearson. The awarding body for each programme currently delivered by TEC Partnership is clarified for prospective students on the TEC Partnership website.
82. The assessment team noted that the Deliberative Committee Structure and Continuous Improvement of Quality policy sets out TEC Partnership's commitment to continuous improvement of academic standards and quality. The policy states that while considering the regulations of partner universities, it makes clear the processes that must be followed in relation to TEC Partnership's higher education committees and quality enhancement reports.
83. Similarly, the Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes policy details how validation processes will differ according to the awarding body. Every programme seeking validation, must first undergo stage 1 of the validation process, which involves securing TEC Partnership strategic planning approval. Only then will developing programmes progress through the validation processes of the respective awarding bodies. The assessment team heard during the assessment visit that the validation of programmes by other awarding institutions is supported by the college's quality team to ensure consistency with TEC

Partnership programmes. Furthermore, the assessment team saw that the responsibilities of the CQOC include a responsibility to 'advise on the quality of education and services provided across the Partnership and any other collaborative partners'.

84. As mentioned previously, the assessment team was advised that TEC Partnership is moving towards using its DAPs authorisation for the award of all higher education courses that it offers. In the meantime, the assessment team heard from the TEC senior leadership team that programmes are only moved across from awarding bodies to TEC Partnership when it is best for the students and will not adversely affect the student experience. Review of these policies and approaches assured the assessment team that learning opportunities delivered with other organisations are subject to the same robust oversight and governance as the rest of the college's provision.
85. While TEC Partnership does not currently validate the provision of other learning organisations, its Collaborative Provision policy sets out the college's approach to the development of collaborative partnerships. It states that 'TEC Partnership will take a strategic, planned approach to developing all collaborative provision with a new provider.' The assessment team saw that the policy details the due diligence, risk assessment and quality assurance procedures to be followed in the assessment of potential partnerships. The policy aims to ensure that any future partnership arrangements will be based on a strategic approach, informed by the effective assessment of risk, including the carrying out of due diligence. Furthermore, the policy requires that partnership arrangements be defined in a written legal agreement and subject to the same robust oversight and governance as the rest of the organisation's provision.
86. Arrangements for validation will ensure the academic standards and the quality of courses delivered by partner organisations, in any future partnership arrangements. The assessment team found on the visit and in the college's DAPs self-assessment that while no partners have currently been identified for validation arrangements using TEC Partnership's own DAPs, the college will give careful consideration to future opportunities in line with its strategic mission.
87. The assessment team also noted on the assessment visit that TEC Partnership has strong links in local public services, businesses and industries. The assessment team heard that students carry out their professional placements in various local settings, including the settings that they are also employed in. In addition, the assessment team heard from TEC Partnership staff that employers are involved in the validation of new programmes and are invited as speakers at events. The assessment team saw that the policy related to the management of placement learning, outlines the rights and responsibilities of TEC Partnership in ensuring an effective placement learning experience for students studying on higher education programmes. The policy sets out the expectation for a written agreement that details the respective responsibilities of all parties to the placement. The placement team is also required to ensure each placement provider's commitment to discharging its responsibilities under workplace health and safety legislation and that students are appropriately supported before, during and after placement activity.
88. In conclusion, it is the view of the assessment team that where TEC Partnership works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, it ensures that its governance and

management of such opportunities is robust and effective and that decisions to work with other organisations are the result of a strategic approach rather than opportunism.

Conclusions

89. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership meets criterion A1 overall. It has held foundation degree awarding powers since 2013, and bachelors' DAPs since 2021. During this time, the TEC Partnership has undergone a merger with ERC, further extending its remit for providing higher education in the region. The merger and other changes resulting from the outcome of previous DAPs assessments have led the TEC Partnership to make some significant changes to its approach to academic governance since 2021. The assessment team considered this context in their assessment of this criterion and judged that although some aspects of the academic governance are still being implemented, the criterion is met.
90. The assessment team found that TEC Partnership has clear and appropriate lines of accountability. On the visit the assessment team met with governors, senior leaders, teaching staff and students all of whom were able to effectively articulate their roles and responsibilities in the academic governance of the college.
91. During the visit the assessment team met with the provider's senior leadership team and examined TEC Partnership's mission to provide higher education opportunities to students who may not be able to access higher education elsewhere. The team found that there is an appropriate strategy in place to manage this until 2030, and that this plan also involved the college awarding all its higher education provision under its own DAPs authorisation over time, contingent on the award of indefinite bachelors' level DAPs.
92. The assessment team concluded that TEC Partnership's effective academic governance structures with its clear and appropriate lines of accountability provide assurance that the college has been exercising its DAPs authorisation securely throughout the preceding three years and will continue to do so in respect of any ongoing DAPs authorisation.

Assessment of DAPs criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks

Advice to the OfS

93. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership meets criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks because it meets subcriteria B1.1 and B1.2.
94. The team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that TEC Partnership has transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications. TEC Partnership also maintains a definitive record of all programmes and qualifications that it approves (and of subsequent changes) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of each programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.
95. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Criterion B1.1

B1.1: An organisation granted degree awarding powers has in place transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications.

Advice to the OfS

96. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership meets criterion B1.1 because it has transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations that govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications.
97. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that TEC Partnership has met the evidence requirements for B1.1 and any other relevant requirements.

Reasoning

98. To determine whether the academic frameworks and regulations governing TEC Partnership's higher education provision are appropriate to its current status and are implemented fully and consistently, the assessment team reviewed the college's academic regulations alongside its associated higher education policies and assurance mechanisms. TEC Partnership's Higher Education Academic Regulations (the academic regulations) outline the principles and procedures to govern academic standards and the quality of its higher education qualifications. The assessment team noted that the current academic regulations commenced in August 2021 to cover TEC Partnership's authorisation for bachelors' DAPs. They were re-approved in September 2023, with a further review date of 2026. In considering the current academic regulations, the assessment team found that they provide a comprehensive, transparent and robust framework for its higher education provision.

99. The academic regulations are supplemented by a comprehensive suite of codes of practice that provide clear guidance on how the academic regulations are to be implemented fully and consistently. For example, the assessment team considered codes of practice relating to Admissions and Admissions Appeals, Assessment of Students, Academic Misconduct, Academic Integrity, Additional Considerations and Short Extensions, Fitness to Study and Fitness to Practice. The assessment team found that these codes of practice provide rigorous guidance on the operationalisation of the academic regulations, with appropriate cross-referencing to ensure the codes work cohesively to assure quality and standards.
100. To determine the effectiveness of the academic regulations and codes of practice and the consistency of their implementation, the assessment team reviewed a sample of the codes of practice that were submitted by TEC Partnership and explored during the assessment visit. For example, the assessment team:
- discussed with senior managers from TEC Partnership, the implementation of the admissions regulations and the related Admissions and Admission Appeals code of practice
 - heard evidence of the process by which students are admitted to TEC Partnership and how 'standard' (UCAS) and 'non-standard' (non-UCAS) applications are handled, including applications for accreditation of prior learning (APL)
 - heard how the college implements its commitment to widening participation and equality of opportunity. As part of its admissions process, TEC Partnership uses interviews and applications to ensure that the admissions process is standardised, and quality is assured
 - considered both the template versions of the interview questions and the application form, as well as contextualised versions relating to applications for the foundation degree Tourism Management programme
 - noted that admissions (including admissions with APL) and appeals are monitored through the TEC Partnership's HECQS committee. The team found that these assurance reports to HECQS showed rigorous oversight of the implementation of the Admissions and Admissions Appeal code of practice. Action plans were put in place, as appropriate, to ensure non-standard admissions and admissions via APL were handled appropriately to ensure student success and comply with their codes of practice.
101. The team concluded that the evidence showed that the regulations and code of practice relating to admissions are consistently and fully implemented, that suitable mechanisms are in place to continuously monitor implementation, and that regulations and codes of practice are amended as required in relation to monitoring.
102. In another example, the Academic Misconduct code of practice was considered alongside anonymised case studies of academic misconduct. The assessment team found that these cases had been handled in accordance with the code of practice and, that the outcomes of each case were appropriate. During the period of the DAPs assessment, TEC Partnership approved a major amendment to its Academic Misconduct code of practice. This amendment renamed the code of practice as Academic Integrity and was updated to include the latest sector guidance on the use of AI in assessments and to embed academic integrity throughout

the curriculum. The assessment team concluded from its review of the changes to the Academic Misconduct policy that not only does TEC Partnership fully and consistently implement its academic frameworks, but it also governs with agility to respond to changing external influences that have the potential to affect academic standards and quality.

103. The assessment team was satisfied that TEC Partnership has academic frameworks and regulations in place that are appropriate for granting its own higher education qualifications. Noting that TEC Partnership already holds time-limited bachelors' degree awarding powers, the assessment team reviewed the college's academic regulations and underpinning frameworks to inform its advice to the OfS regarding the approval of indefinite DAPs. TEC Partnership's academic regulations govern the approval, validation, monitoring and review of all programmes, including micro credentials (short, credited courses offering specialised, short-term skill-based education) and non-credited short courses. They set out the approach to the development and approval of new programmes and major amendments to existing programmes, including timescales for approval. The requirements for employability and generic key skills outcomes for each type of award are also detailed.
104. All programme proposals must also demonstrate clear alignment with TEC Partnership's 'Ambition 2030' strategic plan priorities:
- empower students to succeed
 - improve operational performance
 - contribute to economic development
 - achieve organisational growth.
105. The academic regulations also provide the framework for monitoring and review and the publication of programmes of study. On this basis, the assessment team had confidence that these frameworks and regulations assured that TEC Partnership has exercised its DAPs authorisation securely over the last three years.
106. In relation to the validation of programmes, the academic regulations are underpinned by the Validation and Amendment of Higher Education code of practice alongside validation and amendment templates, all of which were considered by the assessment team. The validation code of practice sets out the principles for the development and approval of all programmes and details the three-stage approval process. The college's Higher Education Quality Office provides operational support to programme development teams throughout the validation process. The assessment team found that the approach to the development and amendment of courses ensures that validation proposals have robust business cases, are aligned to external regulatory frameworks including the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), and incorporate the opinion of external experts, such as external examiners.
107. TEC Partnership also maintains a central record of ongoing programme validations, which allows the senior team to monitor progress against timescales. During the visit to TEC Partnership, the assessment team heard how HECQS maintains oversight of programme validations ensuring compliance with academic regulations and how it reviews minor and major modifications to programmes to ensure programme integrity is maintained. The

assessment team also saw that TEC Partnership holds a list of future programme validation plans linked clearly to its strategic ambition to be awarded indefinite DAPs.

108. To evaluate the effectiveness of the college's academic regulations and codes of practice in governing the validation of its higher education qualifications, the assessment team reviewed a sample of programme validation documentation for BA (Hons) Tourism and Business Management and BA (Hons) Professional and Creative Writing. In this sample, the validation process was found to be compliant with the academic regulations and code of practice. The assessment team was satisfied that the quality of the business cases, programme and curricular design, and the incorporation of external expertise was sound.
109. Internal and external independent expertise was sought from a variety of stakeholders, including students, academics, and industry experts. Stakeholder views were found to be extensive and informative, and there was clear evidence of dialogue between programme teams and the stakeholders. It was also evident that the advice received was implemented in the design and refinement of programme design. The assessment team concluded that TEC partnership has, and effectively operates, the academic frameworks and regulations which will be appropriate for the ongoing awarding of its own higher education qualifications. The team also found evidence that these have been in place and implemented appropriately during the period in which TEC Partnership has held time-limited DAPs, giving confidence that the college has implemented its regulations and frameworks, and thus exercised DAPs authorisation, securely over the last three years.
110. The assessment team concluded that TEC Partnership meets criterion B1.1 because the evidence demonstrates that it has in place transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications and that these are implemented fully and consistently.

Criterion B1.2

B1.2: A degree awarding organisation maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

Advice to the OfS

111. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership meets criterion B1.2. This is because the team was satisfied that there is sufficient evidence to show that TEC Partnership maintains a definitive record of each programme which constitute the reference point for delivery and assessment of programmes as well as their monitoring and review and provides records of study to students and alumni.
112. The team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the college has met the evidence requirements for B1.2 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

113. To test whether definitive and up-to-date records are being maintained of each qualification to be awarded and each programme being offered by TEC Partnership the assessment team considered the college's central record of programmes. This is a definitive list of all TEC Partnership programmes, which includes information about the delivery site and whether programmes are 'live', 'recruiting' or 'suspended'. During the visit, the assessment team heard that this list is regularly monitored and updated, and the assessment team found the list to be accurate. The team also reviewed TEC Partnership's plans for future programme validations, which provided confidence that TEC Partnership maintains strategic oversight of their portfolio and have mechanisms in place to manage the maintenance of its record of future programmes.
114. During the visit, the assessment team also heard that in addition to the central record of programmes, the college maintains definitive programme specifications for each programme. These form the basis for the delivery and assessment of each course and are available on TEC Partnership's website.¹⁵ The assessment team reviewed several programme specifications, including those for BA (Hons) Tourism and Business Management and BA (Hons) Professional and Creative Writing. It also reviewed module handbooks for Writing for Comics, Styles and Semiotics, Addiction, and Research Skills for Practice. The team found this documentation demonstrated clear specification of the relevant FHEQ level, assessment profiles and credits.
115. The team also reviewed major modification documentation for Early Childhood Studies, where changes are made to the validated programme. The assessment team found clear evidence that subsequent changes to validated programmes and modules are robustly managed to maintain compliance with FHEQ levels and coherence of assessment strategies. Discussions during the assessment visit confirmed to the assessment team that TEC Partnership's quality office acts as the definitive record holder of validated programmes and of any subsequent amendments. Therefore, the team was satisfied that TEC Partnership maintains a definitive and up-to-date record of each programme and qualification that it approves, and that these records constitute the reference point for the delivery, assessment, monitoring and review of programmes.
116. TEC Partnership's DAPs self-assessment document sets out that after each exam board, students are issued with a notification of progress report where study is continuing or a transcript of academic record where study has ended, and that initially, both are provided electronically. A printed copy of the transcript of academic record is produced for all students where they have achieved a minimum of award credits. In addition, a student who has achieved the final award is also provided with a printed copy of their diploma supplement. The assessment team reviewed a sample transcript and diploma supplement and were satisfied that these evidenced the appropriate provision of records of study to students and alumni.
117. The assessment team formed the view that TEC Partnership meets criterion B1.2 because it maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves, including any subsequent changes and that these records constitute the reference point for delivery

¹⁵ See [TEC Partnership | Training, Education and Careers](#).

and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

Conclusions

118. The assessment team considered various sources of documentary evidence alongside evidence from discussions held during the assessment visit to TEC Partnership. The assessment team formed the view that TEC Partnership has in place transparent and comprehensive frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications. There is significant evidence that these frameworks and regulations are regularly updated to align with TEC Partnership's strategic priorities, external regulatory frameworks and external expertise. TEC Partnership was found to maintain definitive records of each programme and qualification that it approves, and subsequent changes, which are a reference point for the delivery and assessment of the programme and its monitoring and review. This record also provided the reference for the provision of records of study to students and alumni. The assessment team concluded that there was clear evidence that TEC Partnership's regulations and frameworks have been implemented rigorously, and it has exercised its DAPs authorisation securely over the last three years.
119. Based on this evidence, the assessment team concluded that TEC Partnership meets the requirements of criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks.

Criterion B2: Academic standards

Advice to the OfS

120. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership meets criterion B2: Academic standards and quality assurance, because it meets subcriteria B2.1 and B2.2.
121. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows in summary that TEC Partnership has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications. TEC Partnership has also demonstrated that it is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards set in the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and reliably maintain these standards over time, comparable to other UK degree-awarding bodies.
122. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion alongside any other relevant information.

Criterion B2.1

B2.1: An organisation granted degree awarding powers has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications.

Advice to the OfS

123. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership meets criterion B2.1 because it has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications.
124. The team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that TEC Partnership has met the evidence requirements for B2.1 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

125. To determine whether TEC Partnership's higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ, the assessment team considered a range of evidence, including the college's academic regulations, its Deliberative Committee Structure and Continuous Improvement of Quality code of practice, the HECQS terms of reference and the Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes code of practice.
126. The assessment team found that the academic regulations consistently and accurately reference the FHEQ in the setting of academic standards in relation to level descriptors (for example, foundation degree and bachelor's degree), the credit structure of programmes and the permitted credit value for students. The assessment team was also satisfied that the processes for the development and approval of all programmes ensure that qualifications are aligned to the FHEQ and fully meet the relevant level descriptors. The assessment team also reviewed fully validated programme and module specifications, module handbooks and assessment rubrics, and found that academic regulations and validation processes were being consistently followed in practice to ensure continued alignment of qualifications with the FHEQ. These frameworks, and their implementation, were found to provide transparent and rigorous processes and procedures for the development and quality assurance of TEC Partnership's higher education provision. In reviewing this evidence, the assessment team concluded that TEC Partnership's higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ.
127. To assess how the setting and maintenance of academic standards takes appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and external and independent points of expertise, including students, the assessment team looked at TEC Partnership's governance structure, which includes a Corporation Board comprising external governors and members of the college's senior leadership team. The assessment team met with members of the Corporation Board during the visit to TEC Partnership and heard how external board members contribute to the setting of TEC Partnership's strategy and the governance of quality and standards through the committee structure. For example, members of the Corporation Board either chair or are members of various TEC Partnership committees, such as CQOC and the Skills and Employment Advisory Groups. The latter are split into the

administrative areas pertaining to its campuses across Hull and East Yorkshire, Greater Lincolnshire and York and North Yorkshire, demonstrating how external advice is nuanced appropriately to the regional setting where delivery of provision occurs.

128. The assessment team considered terms of reference and minutes of CQOC and found clear evidence of the external expertise of governors being taken account of in the setting and maintenance of academic standards. For example, meeting minutes evidenced discussion and approval of amendments to the academic regulations, as well as discussion of a risk assessment relating to DAPs and the central record of validated programmes. The assessment team also saw evidence of students being appointed as panel members for the periodic review and validation of programmes and noted their engagement as members of HECQS, which has oversight of programmes going through the review and validation processes. The assessment team was content that this demonstrated that students' views are taken account in the setting and maintaining of academic standards. The team was satisfied with the rigour of TEC Partnership's processes in ensuring independent points of expertise are accounted for in the setting and maintaining of academic standards.
129. Academic standards are set out in TEC Partnership's academic regulations, its definitive document for academic standards. The regulations were found to comply appropriately with relevant external points of reference including FHEQ, OfS regulatory framework, UK Quality Code for Higher Education, QAA and relevant legislation, including the Equality Act 2010. The academic regulations are supported by a series of codes of practice relating to Admissions and Admissions Appeals, Assessment of Students, Academic Misconduct, Academic Integrity, Additional Considerations and Short Extensions, Fitness to Study and Fitness to Practice. The codes of practice were reviewed and found to give clear guidance on the implementation of the academic regulations to ensure that the prescribed academic standards are translated into practice.
130. To review implementation in practice, the team reviewed the validation documentation for the BA (Hons) Tourism and Business Management and BA (Hons) Professional and Creative Writing programmes. These cases provided evidence of compliance with external points of reference, such as the FHEQ, the OfS conditions of registration for quality and standards, relevant QAA subject benchmark statements and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements, where appropriate. There were also clear references to the OfS regulatory framework throughout the sample validation documentation.
131. The documentation also demonstrated consultation with external and independent points of expertise, and the incorporation of advice from industry experts and academic experts from other universities and colleges during the programme development stages. There was clear evidence of feedback from students which, while typically limited in scale, was integrated into the design of the programme and therefore the setting of standards. It was clear to the assessment team how these points of expertise had shaped curriculum development and ensured academic standards.
132. The assessment team did note that in the sample of programme handbooks reviewed, the FHEQ and the OfS regulatory framework were not consistently cited as an external reference point, However having been satisfied as to the robustness of the validation process, the assessment team considered that this was an omission in the handbooks to be corrected rather than an omission in the validation process.

133. Based on TEC Partnership's governance structures, academic regulations, codes of practice and evidence of their robust implementation, the assessment team was satisfied that TEC Partnership has clearly and consistently applied mechanisms for setting academic standards that take appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and external and independent points of expertise, including students.
134. Standards are maintained through a process of continuous improvement, monitoring and quality improvement planning. This process is outlined in its Deliberative Committee Structure and Continuous Improvement of Quality code of practice. At institutional level, TEC Partnership produces an annual Quality Enhancement Report (QER) which reports on the quality and standards of higher education delivered across all sites within TEC Partnership. The QER is structured to address the expectations of the FHEQ, the OfS conditions of registration and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. The assessment team reviewed the 2022-23 QER and found that it provides robust and transparent longitudinal analysis of compliance and performance across at least three years in relation to student outcomes and satisfaction for programmes validated under its own DAPs authorisation and those validated by partners. It also found evidence of honest and transparent self-evaluation in relation to student feedback, teaching quality, staff qualifications, training and research and scholarly activity. In the case of the latter, good practice was found in relation to the re-establishment in 2022 of TEC Partnership's Community and Practice, a weekly one-hour session available to academic staff to develop its higher education academic community.
135. Student support and admissions and participation were also evaluated. The team found that the QER resulted in an institutional Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) that provides SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound) objectives for improvement, with clear identification of responsible parties and evidence of progress monitoring. The team noted that actions demonstrably aim to enhance academic standards, for example in relation to student continuation and completion rates, performance differences across different sites in the TEC Partnership and student groups, and the effectiveness of engaging external and independent points of expertise (notably external examiners). In some instances, actions were found to relate to TEC Partnership as a whole. In other cases, it related to particular delivery sites or programmes, where actions covered the revalidation of programmes due for periodic review. The assessment team was satisfied that the QIP demonstrates that TEC Partnership has robust mechanisms in place at institutional level for setting and maintaining academic standards.
136. At school and subject area level, the assessment team considered TEC Partnership's Self Evaluation and Enhancement Document and the associated processes. The team found that schools and subject areas undertake self-evaluation of their performance in relation to OfS conditions of registration, incorporating data on student outcomes, satisfaction, retention and attendance, staffing, scholarship and research, facilities. This self-evaluation is contextualised against external benchmarks of the OfS conditions of registration, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and internal key performance indicators and culminates in a QIP. A sample case for the Arts and Media subject area was considered by the assessment team. It found evidence of monitoring of student outcomes, including:
- continuation, completion and progression data
 - student feedback through Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) and the NSS

- admissions, attendance and retention data.
137. The resultant actions in the QIP were found to respond appropriately to the data and self-evaluation. For example, there was evidence of redesigning full subject groups' programmes to better align with the needs of the labour market. The comprehensiveness of this process satisfied the assessment team that the process of self-evaluation at school and subject area level is transparent, robust and reflective, allowing TEC Partnership to make improvements to continuously enhance its provision and maintain the academic standards of its higher education qualifications.
138. At programme level, TEC Partnership operates Annual Monitoring and Reflection of Programmes, and an exemplar case for its provision for the BSc (Hons) Digital and Technology Solutions suite of top-up programmes was considered. The assessment team found this to provide an honest, transparent and reflective review of quality and standards, integrating performance data relating to student outcomes and experience, attendance, continued alignment with external points of reference (e.g. FHEQ and PSRBs), and the student voice through the Staff/Student Course Enhancement Meeting and MEQs. This reflection resulted in the development of a QIP with evidence of ongoing monitoring of progress.
139. Based on this evidence, the assessment team concluded that the setting and maintaining of academic standards at TEC Partnership takes appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and external and independent points of expertise, including students. This judgement applies at institutional, school and subject area and programme levels, and, in doing so, the team concluded that TEC Partnership complied with its own code of practice for the continuous improvement of quality. TEC Partnership was found to be compliant with criterion B2.1 at the time of the assessment. However, the assessment team advises that TEC Partnership should ensure there is consistent reference to the OfS regulatory framework, as well as the extant external and independent points of reference, in all programme documentation including programme handbooks.

Criterion B2.2

B2.2: Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that they are able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).

Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that the standards that they set and maintain above the threshold are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

Advice to the OfS

140. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership meets criterion B2.2 because it designs and delivers courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ. Furthermore, it has demonstrated that the standards it sets and

maintains above the threshold are reliable over time and reasonably comparable with those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

141. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the TEC Partnership has met the evidence requirements for B2.2 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

142. The assessment team reviewed TEC Partnership's programme approval arrangements to evaluate whether they are robust, applied consistently, and ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets UK threshold standards and are in accordance with TEC Partnership's own academic frameworks and regulations. TEC Partnership's academic frameworks and regulations for programme approval are set out in its academic regulations and the code of practice for Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes. These frameworks outline the three-stage programme approval process, overseen by HECQS:
- a. Stage one is strategic planning approval, including a business case for the proposed programme and CEO approval to proceed.
 - b. Stage two is programme proposal approval.
 - c. Stage three is full programme approval, requiring final CEO sign-off.
143. All programmes seeking approval must comply appropriately with relevant requirements of the Validation and Amendment of Higher Education code of practice. This includes alignment to the outlined programme structure to enable clear progression through the levels, and evidence of internal and external stakeholder engagement, such as employers and students. Programmes being submitted for approval must also comply with external points of reference, including the FHEQ, the OfS conditions of registration, and relevant subject Benchmark Statements and PSRB requirements, where appropriate.
144. To test the robustness of these frameworks, the assessment team considered the validation documentation for the BA (Hons) Tourism and Business Management and BA (Hons) Professional and Creative Writing programmes. The team found evidence of appropriate alignment with UK threshold standards in the clear, consistent and accurate implementation of threshold levels. There was also clear evidence of compliance with the three-stage approval process, with fully completed paperwork and the required sign-off by the CEO. Programme and module learning outcomes, and the teaching, learning and assessment strategies were also determined to be appropriate for the award and level of study. The assessment team concluded that TEC Partnership's programme approval arrangements are robust, applied consistently, and ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.
145. To ensure that credit and qualifications at TEC Partnership are awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment, and both the UK threshold standards and the academic standards of the relevant degree awarding body have been satisfied, the assessment team considered minutes of meetings of

examination boards and examination board transcripts as well as a range of documentation relating to assessed student work. Programme board minutes relating to a programme board for the Faculty of Health, Wellbeing and Society, resit boards for the FdA Tourism Management programme and progression and award boards for the TEC Partnership evidenced that credits and qualifications were awarded in relation to the assessments that had been passed, and that appropriate board outcomes had been reached where this was not the case. The team concluded that the operation of examination boards was compliant with the frameworks presented in TEC Partnership's Higher Education Academic Regulations and UK standards thresholds, and that programme credits and qualifications are awarded appropriately.

146. To determine whether credit and qualifications are awarded appropriately in relation to the achievement of relevant learning outcomes demonstrated through assessment, the assessment team reviewed a sample of assessed student work. This sample included assessed student work on a selection of modules on the BA (Hons) Tourism and Business Management programme, across Levels 4, 5 and 6. A range of assessment documentation was also considered to frame the assessment team's review of the assessed student work. This included:
- a. the original validation documentation, including module specifications
 - b. module handbooks for the Marketing and Customer Relations, Global Tourism, Management of the Tourism Environment and dissertation modules
 - c. the respective module assessment task proforma, which documents the internal and external moderation of tasks and students' marks
 - d. the second marker's assessment of dissertations
 - e. a sample of assessed student work.
147. The assessment team found evidence of consistent alignment of programme and module learning outcomes throughout the quality assurance trail, from validation documentation, through module handbooks, to assessment tasks and the assessment criteria on which students' marks are based. There was transparent and consistent reference to UK threshold standards, including the FHEQ, OfS conditions of registration and the OfS regulatory framework, as well as relevant subject Benchmark Statements. The assessment team's independent determination of marks, while varying in some instances from the agreed mark awarded by TEC Partnership, were typically within the same grade band (e.g., 40.0 to 49.9 per cent, 50.0 to 59.9 per cent). The assessment team also agreed that students achieving fail marks (less than 40 per cent), or first-class marks (70 per cent) were appropriately awarded. Based on the review of assessed students' work, the assessment team concluded that TEC Partnership awards credits and qualifications where the achievement of module learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment. The assessment team concluded, on the basis of this evidence, that the academic standards set out in TEC Partnership's academic regulations are satisfied in the awarding of credits and qualifications.
148. As set out under criterion B2.2, the assessment team reviewed a range of evidence related to TEC Partnership's programme approval arrangements and found them to be robust and consistently applied. The assessment team also found that programme approval

arrangements 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. The assessment team's review of validation documentation for the BA (Hons) Tourism and Business Management and BA (Hons) Professional and Creative Writing programmes found compliance with the Quality Assurance Agency's Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and relevant subject Benchmark Statements and PSRBs. They also demonstrate clear evidence that TEC Partnership's implementation of programme approval is compliant with its own regulations and codes of practice.

149. The assessment team reviewed further evidence to establish whether the monitoring and review arrangements for programmes are robust, applied consistently and 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. This included TEC Partnership's Deliberative Committee Structure and Continuous Improvement of Quality code of practice. The assessment team found these demonstrated that governance structures are sufficiently robust, offering clear indication of roles and responsibilities of staff at TEC Partnership. The academic regulations outline that programmes should be revalidated every six years to ensure they remain current. It also notes that programme review and monitoring is an ongoing process and that a full programme review should be carried out annually.
150. Therefore, the assessment team reviewed evidence of the annual monitoring and review of programmes in relation to UK threshold standards. It considered TEC Partnership's self-evaluations and quality improvement plans at institutional, school and subject area, and programme levels. It found that, at all levels and for all campuses, there is consistent, thorough and reflective self-review of outcomes for students, standards and awards of TEC Partnership validated programmes, student engagement, teaching and learning, scholarship and staff training, student support and access and participation. This self-evaluation was clearly and appropriately linked to internal and external benchmarks and led to detailed quality improvement plans, with clear signs of ongoing monitoring.
151. The assessment team found that self-evaluation and quality improvement plans may lead to changes to programmes, through minor and major amendments, to maintain programme currency. It considered the processes for amendments, which are detailed in the academic regulations and the associated code of practice, and an example of a major amendment for foundation degree Early Childhood Studies. The assessment team was satisfied that self-evaluations and quality improvement plans inform programme amendments and that changes to programmes are conducted in accordance with regulations and the code of practice. The team also found that in modifying programmes, there was evidence of continued alignment with FHEQ, benchmarks and relevant graduate practitioner competencies.
152. The team also reviewed assessment task proforma. These demonstrate clear evidence of review and consideration of academic standards in relation to approved programme learning outcomes and the relevant FHEQ level descriptors. This evidence supported the team's view that TEC Partnerships programme approval, monitoring and review arrangements are robust, applied consistently and 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.

153. To determine whether, in establishing, and then maintaining, threshold academic standards and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications, TEC Partnership makes use of appropriate external and independent expertise, the assessment team reviewed a range of evidence. Evidence of the use of external and independent expertise was found in programme validations, module assessment task proforma, and external examiners' reports. The assessment team found that internal and external expertise was used to inform programme, module and assessment design, the assurance of standards in relation to the achievement of programme and module learning outcomes, and the ongoing maintenance of programme currency and adherence to FHEQ and subject benchmark statements.
154. The consistency of the use of external expertise is monitored by TEC Partnership through HECQS. The assessment team considered TEC Partnership's review of moderation conducted in November 2023, which showed that its 2022 review identified issues regarding compliance with its own academic regulations in the consistent use of external expertise, specifically in relation to the sharing of assessment proforma with external examiners. An action plan was put in place and compliance improved by 31 percentage points between 2022 and 2023.
155. During the assessment visit, the team requested an updated compliance report (mindful that, at the time of the visit, a full year had not passed since the November 2023 report). TEC Partnership shared an interim compliance report dated April 2024, which demonstrated full compliance in the use of external examiners as a source of expertise to maintain academic standards. This gave the assessment team confidence that, not only is external expertise incorporated into TEC Partnership's monitoring and review processes, but that the college closely monitors compliance with its own processes and takes proactive measures when issues arise. The team was satisfied that the evidence shows that interventions are effective and have led to full compliance with processes for ensuring the appropriate use external and independent expertise in establishing and maintaining academic standards.
156. In conjunction with its independent assessment of students' marks, the assessment team concluded that, using external and independent expertise, TEC Partnership establishes and maintains threshold academic standards that are comparable with standards of other providers of equivalent level qualifications.

Conclusions

157. The assessment team concluded that TEC Partnership has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications. This is evidenced through a range of documentation spanning over at least three years, with evidence of continuous improvement during this period as is to be expected of a self-critical provider with commitment to the assurance of standards and effective quality systems.
158. The assessment team also concluded that TEC Partnership demonstrates that it can design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). This conclusion was found to be the case currently and the team also found that it was the case over the preceding three years, demonstrating that TEC Partnership sets and maintains standards above the threshold

reliably over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience

Advice to the OfS

160. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership meets criterion B3: Academic Standards and Quality Assurance, because it meets subcriteria B3.1.
161. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that TEC Partnership designs and delivers curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment and feedback and associated resources which provide a high quality academic experience for all students. It also demonstrates a strategic and robust approach to learning and teaching, including valid and reliable assessment processes which are consistently and robustly quality assured.
162. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Criterion B3.1

B3.1: Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that they are able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students from all backgrounds, irrespective of their location, mode of study, academic subject, protected characteristics, previous educational background or nationality. Learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured.

Advice to the OfS

163. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership meets criterion B3.1, because it is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students from all backgrounds. This is irrespective of the student's location, their mode of study, academic subject, protected characteristics, previous educational background or nationality. Learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured by TEC Partnership.
164. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence that shows the TEC Partnership has met the evidence requirements for B3.1 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

Design and approval of programmes

165. To determine whether TEC Partnership operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes, the assessment team considered TEC Partnership's Higher Education Academic Regulations, its code of practice for Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes, standard validation and amendment templates and exemplar validation documentation. The assessment team's findings in relation to the college's arrangements for programme approval are discussed fully under criterion B2.

166. In summary the assessment team found evidence in the approval process, of TEC Partnership's planning for learning resources, staffing and student support to ensure a quality academic experience for all students from all backgrounds, irrespective of their location, mode of study, academic subject, protected characteristics, previous educational background or nationality. The assessment team also found evidence of consistent, transparent and effective implementation of the academic regulations and codes of practice. A central record of validated programmes was found to be held by TEC Partnership, plus a record of programme validations in progress and a strategic plan for future validations. Both the processes and institutional oversight gave the assessment team confidence that TEC Partnership operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.
167. TEC Partnership's code of practice for Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes provides relevant staff with information, guidance and support on their roles and responsibilities in relation to the design, development and approval of programmes. Discussions with staff during the assessment visit confirmed to the assessment team that programme leaders and programme teams work closely with the academic regulations and code of practice. Staff explained how they work to the college's code of practice for programme design, which ensures programme teams understand how to translate academic regulations into a validated programme. Examples included determining student contact hours, assessment strategies and associated resource requirements. During the assessment visit discussions, the importance of rigorous course approval events was also highlighted to the assessment team.
168. Typically, programme design is expected to follow the code of practice and approval panels monitor compliance as well as programme design and market appeal. The assessment team heard that in some cases, departures from the standard approach to course design are supported when this is an intentional part of curriculum design with robust pedagogic intent, and that this has to be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the approval panels. An example of the FdEd Early Childhood Studies programme was cited, where arrangements were made to split the placement to address previously encountered issues highlighted in student feedback. Staff are also supported in securing external examiner appointments at other higher education colleges and universities, which provides further support in their development in relation to the design and approval of programmes. Based on the documentary evidence and discussions, the assessment team concluded that relevant staff are informed of, and provided with, guidance and support on, these procedures and their roles and responsibilities in relation to them.
169. The assessment team explored whether there is clear assignment of responsibility for approving new programme proposals, including the involvement of external expertise, where appropriate, and that subsequent action is carefully monitored. At institutional level, there is clear responsibility for approvals as final programme approval lies with TEC Partnership's CEO. TEC Partnership's HECQS committee has oversight responsibility for the approval and amendments of all programmes. The academic regulations, code of practice for Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes and standard validation templates outline three stages of the validation process as described in paragraph 142. However, programmes may enter the validation process at different stages depending on whether new programme approval or programme re-approval is being sought. The programme validation process

requires the involvement of external expertise, both from professional stakeholders such as employers, as well as external independent academics.

170. In considering validation cases for BA (Hons) Tourism and Business Management and BA (Hons) Professional and Creative Writing, the assessment team found clear evidence of input and actioning of feedback from external expertise. For example, in the approval for Tourism and Business Management programme, views were obtained from local government, private and public sector experts, as well as the external examiner. The team found evidence that advice provided was considered and, particularly in relation to employability skills, was incorporated into programme design. The assessment team was able to track these changes through the various stages of TEC Partnership's programme approval procedure and were satisfied that external expertise is effectively used and monitored throughout the process. As noted earlier, responsibility for final programme approval, following the three stages of approval, lies with TEC Partnership's CEO. The team concluded that responsibility for approving new programme proposals is clearly assigned, including the involvement of external expertise, where appropriate, and subsequent actions are carefully monitored.
171. To determine if the coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained the assessment team considered the annual monitoring report for the BSc (Hons) Digital and Technology Solutions top-up programmes. This programme has pathways in software, networking, and data analytics. The team concluded that it offered a candid, transparent, and reflective evaluation of quality and standards. This review incorporated performance data on student outcomes and experiences, attendance, and ongoing alignment with external benchmarks such as the FHEQ and PSRBs frameworks. Additionally, it included feedback from students gathered through the Staff/Student Course Enhancement Meeting and MEQs.
172. There is clear evidence of consideration of student outcomes informing future programme amendment. On the data analytics pathway, the programme team determined that there were student knowledge gaps in the Database Systems Fundamental module because there was no data analytics module on the Foundation Degree from which learners progressed onto the top-up degree. The monitoring report noted that further investigation of this knowledge gap was required with potential changes to be made to the foundation degree. Student satisfaction is also considered, and a major modification was submitted to respond to student feedback. The course quality improvement plan shows clear evidence of actions taken in response to outcomes of the annual monitoring report and tracking of progress through regular monitoring. On this basis, the team concluded that TEC Partnerships complies with securing and maintaining the coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways.
173. To review whether TEC Partnership manages close links between learning support services and its programme planning and approval arrangements, the assessment team considered a range of evidence. The assessment team found that in planning for future validations, the college undertook evaluation of the impact on learning support services in the achievement of the college's strategic goals. The assessment team also found evidence of risk mitigation strategies for unintended consequences. In the approval of new, or the amendment of existing, programmes, TEC Partnership's code of practice requires programme development teams to clearly articulate the impact for learning support and other resources (staffing and facilities). The assessment team considered exemplar validation documentation and found

clear and rigorous articulation of the learning support services required as part of the approval process, which is approved by the CEO alongside the programme design and curriculum.

174. Discussions with learning support staff during the assessment visit revealed that they play an integral role in programme approval, working in partnership with academic staff. During a tour of the Grimsby campus, undertaken as part of the assessment visit, the assessment team also saw evidence of the provision of learning support throughout the campus. In the consideration of this evidence, the assessment team concluded that close links are maintained between learning support services and the programme planning and approval arrangements at TEC Partnership.
175. Having reviewed the evidence, the assessment team formed the view that TEC Partnership's approach to the design, approval and delivery of courses contributes to the provision of a high quality academic experience for students, irrespective of their location, mode of study, academic subject or background.

Learning and teaching

176. To consider TEC Partnership's approach to learning and teaching, including whether it articulates and implements a strategic approach to learning and teaching, which is consistent with its stated academic objectives, the assessment team looked at the following documentation:
- a. Ambition 2030 HE Targets
 - b. Evaluation of HE Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy
 - c. Evidence of Learning Walks, peer observations, and long observations
 - d. Evidence of Recognised Teacher Status process
 - e. The Deliberative Committee Structure and Continuous Improvement of Quality policy
 - f. Example SEED and QIP
 - g. Example AMR and QIP
 - h. HE on a Page.
177. The team also discussed academic objectives and the implementation of the learning and teaching strategy with TEC Partnership's leadership team and teaching staff during the assessment visit.
178. The assessment team found that TEC Partnership has clearly stated strategic objectives and targets relating to its learning and teaching strategy. For example, the Ambition 2030 HE Targets document sets out key targets for the achievement of its objective to 'Empower students to succeed', These targets include that:
- a. TEC Partnership will hold Teaching Excellence Framework Silver status and work towards Gold status in 2027.

- b. Fifty per cent of all higher education courses will have work placement or sector-relevant opportunities.
 - c. TEC Partnership will have a National Student Survey positivity score within two per cent of the national benchmark for 'Teaching on my course' and 'Assessment and Feedback'.
 - d. TEC Partnership will have student continuation, completion and progression data that is two per cent above the OfS Benchmark (three per cent by 2030).
179. The assessment team also found that TEC Partnership articulates a strategic approach to learning and teaching in the Evaluation of HE Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy. This policy sets out its key aims and purpose which includes 'to improve [higher education] Teaching, Learning and Assessment throughout the TEC Partnership in order to provide a consistently exceptional learning experience for students.' The purpose of this policy directly aligns with the TEC Partnership's mission: 'to enrich the lives of all by providing high quality education and training'. The policy articulates four key evaluation activities that enable TEC Partnership to evaluate the quality of its learning teaching and assessment. These include:
- a. learning walks – a series of individual 10 to 15 minute observation visits to multiple learning and student environments
 - b. peer observations
 - c. long observations with professional discussion – longer observations of teaching staff
 - d. periodic reviews.
180. For each evaluation activity, the policy details the process, timelines, accountabilities, and feedback mechanisms. The assessment team saw evidence of the implementation of this strategic approach to learning and teaching through completed evaluation activity documentation, including schedules of observational activities with related key findings and feedback to staff. Every member of staff undergoes at least one long observation with professional discussion per year. These are recorded on a standard template which sets out judgements about elements of learning and teaching practice, including the extent to which learning and teaching embeds key skills, knowledge and behaviours for the effective delivery of higher education.
181. During the assessment visit, the TEC Partnership leadership team advised that, despite the recommendations in the Evaluation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy, peer observations had not seen the desired uptake. Nonetheless, the assessment team saw evidence of peer observations having taken place with 18 peer observation reports produced in 2023. Teaching staff that met with the assessment team on the visit, talked about the college having a transparent, collaborative culture of developmental support and sharing of good practice.
182. The assessment team formed the opinion that this evidence demonstrates TEC Partnership's articulation and implementation of a strategic approach to learning and teaching, which is consistent with its stated academic objectives. The approach to the evaluation of teaching and learning supports TEC Partnership's ability to deliver a high quality academic experience, with rigorous and consistent quality assurance of learning opportunities.

183. To determine whether TEC Partnership maintains physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use, the assessment team reviewed the evidence set out in paragraph 179. The assessment team also discussed the college's virtual learning environments (VLE) and learning support with TEC Partnership's senior leadership team, higher education teaching staff, support staff, and students during the assessment visit, and saw a demonstration of the VLE.
184. Through the discussions with the college's staff and students and the VLE demonstration, the assessment team saw that VLE sites for each course and student group are created, managed, and standardised centrally by data staff, with restricted access and permissions allocated for staff and students as appropriate. For example, upon completion of the formal validation process for a new course, validation materials are shared with centralised data staff, who input and lock assessment dates and structures into the VLE and student progress monitoring systems. The VLE acts as a repository for programme and module information, teaching materials, and learning resources, and provides an automated accessibility checking and approval service. Similarly, digital learning resources available through learning resource centres are checked for accessibility, including access to a library of braille books.
185. The assessment team had an extensive guided tour of physical and social learning environments at TEC Partnership's University Centre Grimsby and Grimsby Institute campuses during the assessment visit and found that learning environments are safe, accessible, and reliable for every student. For example, special effects and prosthetics labs fully adhere to health and safety requirements and are equipped with appropriate protective equipment. The implementation of Learning Walks and 'long observations' ensures that physical learning environments are continuously open to observation and evaluation from leadership and learning evaluation teams.
186. Social learning environments, such as the Learning Resource Centre at University Centre Grimsby, display positive messaging throughout the campus in relation to mental and physical wellbeing; accessibility; and equality, and diversity, and inclusivity. This positive messaging promotes dignity, courtesy, and respect in the use of physical, virtual and social learning environments. The Grimsby Institute Learning Resource Centre has a dedicated mindfulness space, further supporting the safety and accessibility of this environment. Social learning environments also display student artwork, including in open study spaces, leadership offices, and a dedicated exhibition space. Students and staff spoke positively about the use of QR codes in social spaces, such as the cafe, to provide immediate feedback on learning environments, which are then managed by quality and facilities staff.
187. The assessment team concluded through its review of the evidence, that TEC Partnership's maintains physical, social, and virtual learning environments that are safe, accessible, and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy, and respect in their use.
188. It is the view of the assessment team that, to the extent that they are relevant to TEC Partnership's courses, robust arrangements exist for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to those of its student that may be studying at a distance from the organisation are effective.

189. None of TEC Partnership's courses formally offer a distance learning option. However, the assessment team was advised that due to individual circumstances, it may occasionally be necessary for TEC Partnership students to study at a distance. For example, higher apprentices whose job roles require them to spend sustained periods of time working at sea may be unable to attend some taught delivery for their 'off the job' training in person. As a result of this, teaching environments for these courses are equipped with high specification video and audio recording equipment, to ensure effective provision of distance learning opportunities for apprentices as and when they are unable to attend in person. Module information, teaching materials, and learning resources are also routinely uploaded to the VLE to ensure their accessibility to every student. Moreover, where appropriate, and on a case-by-case basis, teachers may arrange live online versions of taught delivery.
190. To determine whether every student is enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development, the assessment team looked at the TEC Partnership Graduate Attributes document, Success Coach Evidence, Academic Achievement Service, Sample Transcript and Diploma Supplement, and case studies from student progress monitoring systems. During the assessment visit, the team also discussed student progress monitoring and learning support with TEC Partnership's leadership team, higher education teaching staff, support staff, and students and received a demonstration of electronic student progress monitoring systems and the VLE.
191. Through its review of this evidence, the assessment team found that centralised data staff systematically input assessment dates and structures into student progress monitoring systems, then populate assessments within the VLE accordingly. In turn, students upload assessment submissions to the VLE, which are assessed by teaching staff, with feedback provided. Concurrently, awarded grades are approved through assessment boards, then input into student progress monitoring systems by data staff, triggering the production and distribution of transcripts to students. Students spoke positively about this process, agreeing that their primary digital point of engagement with feedback would be through the VLE, while they would use student progress monitoring systems to periodically collect formal transcripts.
192. Staff and students confirmed that this process is supported by regular group and individual academic tutorials with teaching staff. Teaching staff also use the student progress monitoring system to record instances of academic misconduct, mitigating circumstances, set 'SMART' targets for students, and refer students to relevant support staff as appropriate.
193. A substantial network of support staff enables students to further their academic development. For example, success coaches are 'champions of student wellbeing' whose role is to 'navigate the complexities of retention and pastoral care.' This includes, drawing on student-related data to help develop learner support plans and undertaking regular progress meetings with the course tutors, tracking attendance, and supporting students from admissions to completion. Meanwhile, academic achievement coaches offer support to students with academic writing and research skills including through regular academic achievement support workshops, and referral of students who require support in developing higher level academic skills. Indicative engagement tracking suggests approximately 100 students are engaging with academic achievement support services in a three-month period, with students and staff speaking positively about these services.

194. The assessment team concluded that TEC Partnership has established and implements a strategic approach to learning and teaching which is consistent with its stated academic objectives. TEC Partnership also has in place appropriate mechanisms to enable students to monitor their progress and further their academic development. These include a network of support staff and services. The assessment team recommends that TEC Partnership continues its focus on achieving consistent take-up of peer observations.

Assessment

195. The assessment team considered whether TEC Partnership operates 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. As discussed under criterion B2, a sample of student work was scrutinised together with module handbooks, from across a range of courses and delivery sites. The assessment team also saw assessment task briefs and evidence of assessment moderation. This documentation gave the assessment team a holistic view of the college's assessment processes, including the award of marks and arrangements for the quality assurance of marking and assessment. The assessment team noted that although moderation did not often lead to changes in the marks agreed, that the marks were in line with expected standards.
196. TEC Partnership has a policy for the recognition of prior learning, which enables students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought and to therefore join courses at the college. This policy contains the appropriate level of operational detail on mechanisms for the recognition of prior learning, including credit levels and the calculation of awards. This enables TEC Partnership to effectively govern the accreditation of prior learning. During the assessment visit the assessment team heard from students who had transferred from other higher education institutions and who expressed satisfaction with their enrolment experience at TEC Partnership and the support they received in transferring from other higher education institutions. The assessment team concluded that, on the basis of the evidence seen, TEC Partnership operates 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.
197. The assessment team considered a range of evidence to determine whether staff and students engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made, including the student engagement framework, minutes of staff and student meetings and a sample of module handbooks. The assessment team also discussed this with students during the assessment visit. In line with the student engagement framework the assessment team found there are opportunities for students to engage with staff about their modules, for example in Student Engagement and Course Enhancement Meetings. Furthermore, module evaluation questionnaires are incorporated into the planning of modules to close the feedback loop by enabling student feedback to enhance module delivery.
198. During the assessment visit, students confirmed to the assessment team that they were aware of the basis on which academic judgements about their work were made. Students advised the assessment team that every module handbook has a marking rubric or criteria to

help students understand what's expected from them in terms of assessment tasks.

Assessment expectations are also discussed with students during orientation sessions where teaching staff complete an exercise with students to clarify the marking criteria for particular assessments. Students confirmed that they could see the link between the assessment task, the marking grid, their actual mark and assessment feedback.

199. Furthermore, students told the assessment team that summative feedback and academic skills development was provided as part of their course, and that this included action points in feedback to help students understand how to improve their work. The students told the assessment team that a bridging unit for top-up programmes helped students new to TEC Partnership understand assessment criteria. In the opinion of the assessment team, this evidence demonstrates that staff and students engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made.
200. The assessment team found that students at TEC Partnership are provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice. Course validation documents set out the content of the curriculum, outlining skills and opportunity to develop good academic practice and this is supported by module handbooks seen by the assessment team. The assessment team also saw a case study of an example of academic misconduct. This example demonstrated that the student had been given appropriate formative advice to enable them to avoid a formal academic misconduct case, and that the process set out by the college had been followed. In addition, on the visit, the assessment team raised the issue of acceptable academic practice with students that it met and was satisfied that the students had a sound understanding of what constitutes good or poor academic practice. As a result of this evidence, the assessment team concluded that TEC Partnership students are provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice.
201. TEC Partnership operates processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice. The assessment team found that the college has an academic integrity policy which sets out a definition of academic integrity and good practice for assessments. In addition, the policy has recently been updated to include comprehensive guidance on the use of artificial intelligence as a learning and assessment tool. The information contained in the policy is up-to-date and in line with the sector approach to academic integrity in general and the use of artificial intelligence in particular. Students on courses that are validated by other higher education awarding bodies at TEC Partnership are governed by the academic integrity regulations of the validating institution. The risks of inequity of student treatment as a result of these arrangements will be reduced as TEC Partnership uses its own DAPs for more courses. As a result, the assessment team concluded that TEC Partnership operates processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice.
202. The assessment team considered the extent to which TEC Partnership's processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process. The assessment team reviewed a code of practice relating to the assessment of students. This document provides the framework for TEC Partnership's approach to assessment of students, including second marking and moderation of marks. This code of practice clarifies the approach to moderation which is that where work is moderated the sample should include all firsts, fails and borderline

marks as well as 10 scripts or 10 per cent of scripts (whichever is the largest). Staff responsible for marking should also maintain a record of all marks and evidence of marking and moderation discussions.

203. The assessment team saw evidence of the operation of this policy; evidence of an internal moderation review, an assessment sample form and two case studies of the approach to moderation. The assessment team reviewed this evidence and concluded that it demonstrated compliance with the code of practice in relation to the assessment of students. The sample assessment form for the FdEd Early Childhood Studies detailed the double marking of 12 scripts as well and included commentary from both markers, in line with the code of practice. The two case studies focussed on the Tourism and Tourism and Management courses, both at Level 4. Each had a total of nine pieces of work, including a presentation and a Tourism and Management example case study. Neither example showed any disagreement on marks between the first and second marker, and as such there was no dialogue between the first and second marker to show how any differences were resolved in line with the policy.
204. The assessment team also reviewed an internal moderation review document which captured the outcomes and required actions from a review of the process for moderation of assessments. The review indicated that not all programmes were ensuring that the full suite of programme documentation was made available to external examiners as required by the code of practice on the assessment of students. However, the internal review demonstrated to the assessment team, TEC Partnership's oversight and management of the assessment process and its commitment to improvement of quality and compliance in this area. The assessment team considered this evidence, and the evidence reviewed during the visit of spot checks and sampling of marking. The assessment team concluded that there is evidence that the process for marking assessments and for moderating marks is clearly articulated by the code of practice for assessing students. The assessment team also concluded that there is some evidence that this is consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process, and where improvements to this process are needed, there is management oversight.

External examining

205. The assessment team formed the opinion that, TEC Partnership makes scrupulous use of external examiners including in the moderation of assessment tasks and assessed student work. The college's approach to the use of external expertise is set out in the Board of Examiners and External Examiners code of practice. This code provides guidance on the purpose and function of external examiners as well as the process for reviewing and responding to external examiner reports. The assessment team noted that the current version of the code of practice reflects the fact that TEC Partnership is currently delivering a range of courses validated by other higher education awarding bodies alongside courses awarded under its own DAPs authorisation. The code of practice states that 'whilst [it exists] in its own right, it aligns itself with institutional and other relevant codes and regulations including those belonging to partner awarding bodies.' The assessment team noted that at the point at which all TEC Partnership awards all the courses it delivers, this code of practice will require review.
206. The assessment team scrutinised external examiner reports and course leader responses to external examiners in relation to several courses delivered across the various campuses. This

included external examiner documentation relating to the FdA Photography course delivered at the Grimsby Institute site. The documentation clearly demonstrated the course leader's responses to the external examiners' comments and feedback on assessments, including planned or completed changes made to the assessment as a result of the external examiner comments. The assessment team concluded that the code of practice and the examples seen showed that TEC Partnership makes scrupulous use of external examiners, including in the moderation of assessment tasks and students' assessed work.

207. The assessment team considered evidence that TEC Partnership gives full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examiners' reports and provides external examiners with a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations. The assessment team saw evidence that external examiner reports were presented to and analysed by HECQS in the academic year 2022-23. The HECQS External Examiner Institutional Analysis reports set out key themes identified from a review of external examiner reports for all higher education programmes delivered across TEC Partnership. The reports capture a sample of external examiner feedback, recommendations for improvement and commendations, and directs programme leaders to actively engage with external examiners throughout the academic year. They also give a detailed overview of issues raised and commendations made by external examiners and the responses from course leaders. For example, external examiner comment on the digital technologies' programmes recommended that feedback to students should indicate how they can enhance their grades rather than just indicating areas of incompleteness. The course leader indicated how this would be ensured going forward.
208. The reports also praise areas of good practice including the practice of meeting external examiners face-to-face before their first exam board. The assessment team found that these reports contained useful analysis of the external examiner feedback process, which is in line with the developmental needs of the courses and their relationships with external examiners. The assessment team noted that the reports did not include specific reference to the college's external examiner code of practice which the assessment team considered would be a useful approach. However, it was apparent to the assessment team the college does follow the code of practice in relation to external examiner processes. It is the assessment team's view that there is evidence that TEC Partnership does give full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examiners' reports and provides external examiners with a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations.

Academic appeals and student complaints

209. The assessment team saw evidence that demonstrated TEC Partnership has effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of the academic experience and that these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement. The assessment team scrutinised the Stakeholder Feedback and Complaints Resolution and Service Improvement policy and the Academic Appeals and Student Case Requests code of practice.
210. The stakeholder complaints policy relates to more general complaints and feedback from all college stakeholders, including students. The academic appeals code of practice sets out the process in relation to academic appeals, including definitions of the criteria for academic

appeals and mechanisms for students to request the review of an appeals decision. The code of practice also states that it takes account of the OfS regulatory framework and the good practice guides issued by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. In terms of ensuring equity and fairness, the policy sets out requirements for the impartiality of decision makers, and the timeliness and management of the process. It also sets out the need to ensure privacy, confidentiality and data protection in the handling of appellant information.

211. HECQS has oversight of student appeals and complaints and delegates its responsibility for this to Academic Appeals and Student Case Committee. The assessment team saw evidence that TEC Partnership considers student appeals and complaints as part of the quality assurance process. The college maintains logs of all appeals and complaints and these contain detailed information, including, for complaints, the nature of the complaint, the staff member responsible for investigation and the outcomes which are reported to HECQS and CQOC. In its DAPs self-assessment document, the college advises that in reporting complaints and appeals to HECQS and CQOC, lessons learned are discussed, and improvements and enhancements are decided, communicated and monitored.
212. The assessment team found that curriculum or relevant service managers are enabled to deal with concerns raised by students at a local level. After raising concerns, students have the right to escalate a concern to a formal complaint. The evidence of the number of formal complaints received in 2021-22 suggests that TEC Partnership deals with local concerns well. TEC Partnership received two formal higher education complaints in 2021-22; neither of which were upheld after investigation at stage 1.
213. On the assessment visit, students confirmed to the assessment team that they knew how to access the appeals and complaints policies and procedures as information is contained in programme handbooks. The students also discussed with the assessment team, examples of complaints raised in relation to their learning experience and how these had been resolved. Most students appeared satisfied with the college's handling of complaints. The assessment team concluded that TEC Partnership has effective procedures for the handling of academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of the academic experience and found that these procedures are fair, accessible and timely.
214. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership takes the appropriate arrangements for dealing effectively with appeals or complaints. The assessment team reviewed a list of academic appeals and complaints for the academic year 2022-23. These were mainly focussed on the requirement for students to repeat modules or years of study, and the majority of these cases were approved in favour of the student. As noted earlier, during the visit, the assessment team established that students are aware of how to make a complaint or launch an appeal. Students discussed how some issues had been resolved as a result of this process, and the majority seemed satisfied.

Conclusions

215. In conclusion the assessment team found that TEC partnership meets criterion B3 because it demonstrated that it can design and deliver courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students from all backgrounds, irrespective of their location, mode of study, academic subject, protected characteristics, previous educational background or nationality. TEC Partnership has made progress since the last DAPs

assessment to meet this criterion, although there are some elements which are new and may not have been fully implemented, for example, the approach to peer observation, as noted above.

216. In concluding this section, the assessment team is mindful that TEC Partnership has plans to develop new programmes and new delivery sites. The assessment team recommends that as new programmes are validated under TEC Partnership's degree awarding powers, that the robust approach to the design, development and approval of programmes found by the assessment team is maintained, along with the external input to ensure good outcomes for students.
217. In addition, the assessment team noted during the assessment visit to the Grimsby Institute that TEC Partnership maintains physical, social, and virtual learning environments that are safe, accessible, and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use. The assessment team recommends that the development of new learning environments be undertaken in line with the good practice seen at the Learning Resources Centre of the Grimsby Institute campus.
218. Finally, the assessment team recommends that TEC Partnership continues to ensure that policies relating to teaching and learning are kept up-to-date. The assessment team noted that the college operates processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice and that these processes were under active development. The assessment team recommends that the college keeps them under review, so they stay relevant in this fast-changing field.
219. It is the assessment team's view that learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured. However, given the complexity of TEC Partnership's higher education portfolio, spread across several delivery sites and with provision still under the auspices of different validators, the assessment team recommends that as more courses are validated using TEC Partnership's own degree awarding powers, that there is stringent monitoring of the quality assurance of all programmes. The assessment team was mindful of this throughout their work and found that TEC Partnership had made significant changes to the oversight of higher education through the creation of a new committee structure and the introduction of a new approach to strategic oversight of the quality of teaching and learning. The assessment team was satisfied that these changes showed that this criterion has been met.

Assessment of DAPs criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff

Criterion C1: The role of academic and professional staff

Advice to the OfS

220. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership meets criterion C1: the role of academic and professional staff because it meets subcriteria C1.1.
221. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the evidence which shows, in summary, that TEC Partnership assures itself that it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students, and that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning and in the assessment of student work is appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the level(s) and subject(s) of the qualification being awarded.
222. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Criterion C1.1

C1.1: An organisation granted powers to award degrees assures itself that it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students. Everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, is appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the level(s) and subject(s) of the qualifications being awarded.

Advice to the OfS

223. The assessment team was satisfied that TEC Partnership meets criterion C1.1 because it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students and everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning and in the assessment of student work is appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the levels and subjects of the qualifications being awarded.
224. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that TEC Partnership has met the evidence requirements for C1.1 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

225. To assess whether TEC Partnership staff have relevant teaching and assessment practices, which are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject specific and educational scholarship, the assessment team considered the following evidence:
- Validation and Amendment of HE Programmes code of practice
 - validation forms
 - exemplar validation and modification evidence packs

- Assessment of Students code of practice
- Assessment Task Proforma (ATP) samples and evidence of moderation
- Evaluation of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment policy
- Learning Walk reports
- Peer Observations reports
- Scholarship and Research Framework's
- Scholarship Log for 2023-24
- Scholarship Publications
- evidence of staff engagement with pedagogic development

226. The assessment team also held discussions with TEC Partnership's senior leadership team, teaching staff and students during the assessment visit.

227. The assessment team noted that the purpose of the Evaluation of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment policy includes: improving teaching and assessment; fostering a community culture which enriches teaching and scholarship; and providing a base for evaluating quality. Through the implementation of this policy, TEC Partnership ensures its staff have relevant learning and teaching practices. For example, Learning Walks, which are a series of short individual teaching and learning observations, take place throughout the year.

228. The outcomes of these observations are collated through summary feedback reports and shared with relevant management staff. These reports set out areas of good practice as well as areas for improvement, together with an indicative quality judgement as to whether observed sessions meet or exceed expectations, or neither. In the latest dataset provided to the team (2022-23), 30 reports (based on 100 sessions visited) met or exceeded expectations, whereas only two reports (based on seven sessions) neither met nor exceeded expectations. Similarly, peer observations are used as a developmental tool to inform teaching practices and facilitate the sharing of best practice between teaching staff. Peer observation reports indicate 18 of these were conducted in 2023, providing individualised feedback to teaching staff on areas of good practice and areas for development. Rapport, communication, support and engagement of students are repeatedly recognised as positives, while innovative digital strategies are encouraged as areas for development.

229. Moreover, as discussed further on in this report, the teaching and assessment practices of TEC Partnership staff are informed by reflection and evaluation of professional practice. For example, it is mandatory for staff to reflect on their practice through application for Advance HE Fellowship within two years of teaching on higher education programmes, and staff receive opportunities support to pursue this. In addition, in accordance with the Evaluation of Teaching and Learning Policy, every member of staff undergoes at least one long observation with professional discussion per academic year. This is a formal evaluative observation of teaching staff followed up with an individual feedback discussion. Long observations provide

teaching staff with opportunities for reflection and further development of their teaching and assessment practices.

230. As discussed more fully in the below paragraphs, the teaching and assessment practices of TEC Partnership staff are also informed by subject-specific and educational scholarship. For example, the Scholarship and Research Framework aims to ensure that, 'all staff engage in continued professional development in subject/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practice where appropriate'. It sets out definitions of scholarship together with an indicative list of activities which constitute scholarship, including Advance HE Fellowship, external examiner or reviewer roles and external publication of work or research. The college's scholarship logs, and related information about staff publications, and engagement with pedagogical developments provided substantial evidence to the assessment team that subject-specific and educational scholarship is taking place, and that it informs teaching practices. For example, several staff have presented at internal and external teaching and learning conferences on matters that inform teaching practices such as designing for diverse learners and incorporating co-creation into the curriculum.
231. The assessment team noted in TEC Partnership's DAPs self-assessment that the college runs a bi-weekly meeting, entitled Community and Practice, which is used to foster development of the academic community across the college's higher education programme teams. During the visit, the assessment team heard from learning and teaching staff that this is used as a forum for sharing best practice, outcomes from scholarly activity and feedback from conferences.
232. Through the review of evidence, the assessment team saw how reflection and evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship informs the teaching practices applicable to each course and module. For example, the validation portfolio for BA (Hons) Professional and Creative Writing sets out course-specific teaching and learning strategies related to lectures, seminars and research. These included student participation in creative exercises, analyses, discussion sessions, and tutor and peer feedback on assessment work in progress. At module level, learning and teaching strategies are further specified. For example, in the Final Major Creative Project module, 'there will be an emphasis on student-led project management and development, and feedback workshops including giving, receiving, evaluating and acting on feedback'.
233. Similarly, the validation process requires staff to detail assessment practices for each course and module. For example, in the previously mentioned Final Major Creative Project module, the assessment methods are a proposal document and manuscript. The subsequent rationale for assessment explains that "Manuscript" covers a wide range of writing types... allowing students to specialise in a medium of their choice', and that 'A proposal document is a requirement of some publishers and agents and includes information such as where the project sits within the existing market'. This evidenced to the assessment team that teaching practices are applied which are relevant to the subject and level of study.
234. In addition to validation materials, the Assessment of Students code of practice specifies that teaching staff must design assessment tasks that reflect those stated within validation documents through the submission and moderation of an ATP. The assessment team

considered ATP samples and evidence of moderation and found these evidenced a robust process, allowing regular review and monitoring of assessment tasks.

235. In discussion with students during the assessment visit, including those studying BA (Hons) Professional and Creative Writing, the assessment team found students spoke positively about teaching and assessment practices. For example, the quantity of opportunities to develop creative work, and share it through local industry publications, events, networks, and competitions.
236. Based on the evidence considered, the assessment team is satisfied that TEC Partnership staff have relevant teaching and assessment practices, that are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject- specific and educational scholarship.
237. To assess whether TEC Partnership staff have academic and (where applicable) professional expertise, the assessment team considered:
- a. Job Descriptions and Recruitment Policy HR Evidence Pack
 - b. Recognised Teacher Status (RTS) Code of Practice
 - c. RTS Evidence Sets
 - d. RTS Staffing Data for 2023-24.
238. The assessment team also held discussions with TEC partnership's senior leadership team, teaching and support staff as well as students during the assessment visit.
239. To assess TEC Partnership's approach to the recruitment of staff with the appropriate academic and professional expertise, the assessment team reviewed TEC Partnership's Recruitment Policy. The assessment team noted that this policy covered the entire process of recruitment, including, for example, the approach to equality and safeguarding and interviewing and appointments. The assessment team noted that the policy sets out a clear approach to person specifications, including identifying essential criteria. The assessment team found that this policy was comprehensive and reflected good practice and therefore was likely to support the recruitment of staff with the appropriate academic and professional expertise.
240. The assessment team reviewed job descriptions for programme leader roles in Special Effects Make-up Design and Prosthetics; and Animal Management and noted these set out the requirements in terms of qualifications and professional experience. Role holders are required to hold a minimum of an undergraduate degree in a related field, have extensive professional experience in the field, and have prior teaching or training experience, preferably at higher education level. The assessment team considered that these stipulations ensure the academic and professional expertise of appointed members of staff.
241. The assessment team also formed the opinion that the Recognised Teacher Status (RTS) process ensures the rigorous assessment of the academic and professional expertise of staff teaching on higher education programmes. The RTS document sets out that the purpose of the process is to 'detail the mechanism through which TEC Partnership can assure itself that those who are employed to teach higher education are appropriately qualified or experienced

for the role'. The document sets out the three routes via which teaching staff might be granted RTS: academic qualifications, academic experience or industrial experience. The document also sets out the process for the award and how evidence provided is reviewed. The outcomes for teaching staff can be that they gain RTS or that they gain RTS with conditions attached, indicating that they need to undertake more work to attain the appropriate level of experience. This approach supports the rigorous assessment of staff experience.

242. RTS staffing data (2023/24) reviewed by the assessment team indicates that 155 staff are approved for RTS on TEC Partnership courses at varying levels. Some successful RTS applicants have specific conditions applied in accordance with their academic and professional expertise at application.
243. The assessment team reviewed applications and related documentation from 38 RTS applicants considered by the RTS panel during meetings held throughout the 2023-24 academic year. RTS applications include the following applicant details:
- a. applicant employment history (educational and industrial)
 - b. applicant qualifications
 - c. applicant scholarship and research activity to date
 - d. details of consultancy and training conducted
 - e. professional body membership
 - f. details of the programme on which the applicant teaches
 - g. RTS application route (i.e. qualifications, academic or industrial route)
 - h. supporting statement from manager.
244. The assessment team found that minutes from RTS panel meetings evidence the panel's detailed scrutiny of each applicant's expertise as set out in their application. RTS meeting minutes also evidenced the continuous, developmental nature of the approval process. For example, new members of staff may be awarded RTS with conditions, such as a stipulation that all an applicant's assessment marking must be second-marked or that their teaching is restricted to specific subject areas. Applicants are encouraged to re-apply to have conditions lifted in the following academic year.
245. In discussion with senior leadership, teaching, and support staff during the assessment visit, RTS was reiterated as the core process through which TEC Partnership ensures and records the academic and professional expertise of its staff. Moreover, staff reiterated the continuous, developmental nature of the RTS process. For example, some teachers have reapplied multiple times over multiple academic years, broadening the range of levels and awards on which they can teach.
246. During the assessment visit, students spoke positively about the academic and professional expertise of staff. For example, the assessment team heard that staff on creative courses continue their professional practice alongside teaching; that criminology lecturers engage students in a culture of conversation around current affairs; and that Success Coaches,

Academic Achievement Coaches, and learning resource centre staff are accessible, helpful, and supportive across a wide range of academic and pastoral services.

247. Based on the evidence considered, the assessment team is satisfied that TEC Partnership staff have academic and (where applicable) professional expertise.
248. The assessment team reviewed a range of evidence to assess whether TEC Partnership staff are actively engaged with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge. The assessment team also reviewed this evidence to test whether TEC Partnership staff have an understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline, that such knowledge directly informs their teaching, and that they are actively engaged with research and/or advanced scholarship to a level commensurate with the level and subject of the qualifications being offered. The evidence considered by the assessment team included:
- a. The Scholarship and Research Framework.
 - b. The Scholarship Log for 2023-24.
 - c. Evidence of staff engagement with pedagogic development.
 - d. Scholarship publications document.
 - e. The assessment team also held discussions with leadership and teaching staff, and students during the assessment visit.
249. The assessment team noted that the Scholarship and Research Framework sets out three key objectives:
- a. To ensure that all staff engaged with the delivery of higher education and employed by TEC Partnership undertake appropriate, relevant, high quality research and scholarly activity.
 - b. To ensure that all staff engage in continued professional development in subject or disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practice where appropriate.
 - c. To provide an evidence-based, impact-assessed, log of research and scholarship to allow maintenance of degree awarding powers status.
250. As mentioned in paragraph 230, the framework provides an indicative list of scholarship activities including activities that evidence current research and advanced scholarship. For example, 'externally published narrative work and/or research', and 'working towards and attaining higher level qualifications'.
251. The Scholarship Log for 2023-24 lists 34 staff who are actively engaged in such pedagogic development of discipline knowledge; and/or current research and/or advanced scholarship, specifying the activities, outcomes, and time allocation. For example, staff are engaged in pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge through:
- a. updating professional knowledge and training or CPD in innovative software

- b. representing TEC Partnership at Awarding Body conferences
- c. sharing innovative pedagogical practices at TEC Partnership's conference.

252. Staff are engaged in current research and/or advanced scholarship through:

- a. studies, projects, and theses as part of doctoral degrees
- b. standalone research projects shared with colleagues at TEC Partnership's conference
- c. publishing work linked to TEC Partnership Award modules through international publishers.

253. Evidence packs for staff engagement with pedagogic development from each campus include a range of examples of staff sharing innovative pedagogical practices. For example:

- an externally published article on student reading, discussion, and co-creation
- a presentation on 'teaching teachers' for an external collaborative provision conference
- a series of presentations for TEC Partnership's internal conference.

254. Similarly, the evidence pack of Scholarship Publications includes examples of externally published research into the development of data analysts, and academic research into embedding Early Childhood Practitioner competencies in degree programmes.

255. In discussions with leadership and teaching staff during the assessment visit, staff further demonstrated active engagement with the pedagogical development of their discipline knowledge. For example, the assessment team heard about current staff involvement in writing for publication about pedagogy within further education colleges. Moreover, staff further demonstrated their understanding of current research and/or advanced scholarship through the completion of higher-level qualifications, with ten staff currently engaged in Level 7 or 8 study. During the assessment visit, staff described the links between their research and scholarship and their teaching practice. For example, the assessment team heard how the Community and Practice meetings are used to share outputs from scholarly activities and best practices to inform approaches to teaching and learning. Similarly, teaching staff draw on information from specialist speakers at staff conferences to enhance their teaching practice. Staff were able to articulate the way that they were supported by TEC Partnership to engage in research and scholarship, including higher degrees.

256. Students spoke positively about the quality and currency of staff pedagogy and knowledgeability. For example, students were aware of, and involved in, research being conducted by their teachers.

257. Based on the evidence considered, the assessment team is satisfied that TEC Partnership staff are actively engaged with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge and have an understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline. The assessment team was also satisfied that such knowledge directly informs and enhances teaching practices, and that staff are actively engaged with research and/or advanced scholarship to a level commensurate with the level and subject of the qualifications being offered, and that they use this in their approach to teaching.

258. To assess whether TEC Partnership staff have opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice, the assessment team considered the following evidence:
- a. The Scholarship and Research Framework
 - b. Evidence of higher education staff engaged in training activities.
 - c. The Scholarship Log for 2023-24.
 - d. The Evaluation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy.
 - e. Long Observations evidence pack.
 - f. Evidence of staff engagement with pedagogic development.
 - g. The Deliberative Committee Structure and Continuous Improvement of Quality policy.
 - h. Exemplar Annual Monitoring Report, Self-Evaluation and Enhancement Document, Quality Enhancement Review, and Quality Improvement Plans.
259. The assessment team also held discussions with governors, leadership, and teaching staff during the assessment visit.
260. As mentioned previously, the Scholarship and Research Framework specifies that application for Advance HE recognition is mandatory within two years of starting higher education teaching at TEC Partnership, and that development sessions, resources, and funding are available to support teaching staff with this training. The assessment team reviewed documentation detailing a range of teaching and learner support staff engaged in training activities. This showed that there are continued opportunities available that enable staff to reflect on their teaching and learning practice and that significant numbers of staff had engaged in such training activities in recent years. Examples of training activities undertaken by staff include Advance HE Fellowship writing retreats and support sessions. The assessment team also noted that the Scholarship Log (2023-24) details a number of staff completing applications for Advance HE Fellowship through allocated scholarship hours.
261. As set out under criterion B3: Learning and teaching, the Evaluation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy sets out four key evaluation activities that enable TEC Partnership to evaluate and enhance the quality of its learning, teaching and assessment. Evaluation activities include 'Long Observations with Professional Discussion'. Every member of staff undergoes at least one such observation per academic year. The assessment team reviewed a sample of long observation reports from across several delivery sites and found evidence of reflection on the observed sessions and feedback to teaching staff which, encouraged evaluation of teaching, learning, and assessment practices. For example, in one observation report, staff reflected on how to ensure full student engagement with teaching sessions through fuller explanations of complex language and terminology. There were also feedback discussions about introducing variety to teaching practices to maximise student engagement and check student understanding of the subject matter. In another sample observation report staff reflected on the benefits of peer learning, with the member of staff being observed

subsequently sharing this good practice through the external publication of an article on student reading, discussion, and co-creation, with direct reference to peer learning.

262. The Deliberative Committee Structure and Continuous Improvement of Quality policy sets out a series of wider processes which provide regular opportunities for staff to reflect on and evaluate learning, teaching and assessment practice at different levels throughout the organisation. This includes college, faculty and programme QIPs, programme annual monitoring reports (AMRs), and departmental SEEDs. There are also institutional level QERs.
263. The assessment team saw in a sample AMR staff reflection on, and evaluation of, 'limited' employer engagement on one course, with outline actions to recruit employer support in specific subject areas. This reflection on employer engagement fed through to the institutional QER 2022-23, which set a target for employer endorsement of programmes. Subsequently, the QER provides an update on actions taken towards this target, including the submission of five programmes for Higher Technical Qualification approval; and building employer forums into curriculum review.
264. In discussion with governors and members of the senior leadership team during the assessment visit, governors declared their confidence in the evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment processes undertaken by the TEC Partnership leadership team. For example, the HECQS committee reports directly into a wider Curriculum and Quality Committee, including on teaching, learning and assessment. During the visit, teaching staff also talked about the college having a transparent, collaborative culture of reflection and evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment practices.
265. Based on the evidence considered, the assessment team was satisfied that TEC Partnership staff have opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice.
266. To assess whether TEC Partnership staff have development opportunities aimed at enabling them to enhance their practice and scholarship, the assessment team considered a range of evidence, including:
- a. the Scholarship and Research Framework
 - b. the Scholarship Log for 2023-24
 - c. TEC Partnership's self-assessment document for its DAPs application
 - d. New to HE Tutor Training
 - e. an evidence pack for professional development through Community and Practice engagement
 - f. an evidence pack for higher education staff engaged in training activities.
267. The assessment team also held discussions with leadership, teaching, and support staff during the assessment visit.
268. The Scholarship and Research Framework provides an indicative list of activities that may constitute scholarship, along with practical guidance for managing scholarship, including

possible funding and remission. TEC Partnership's self-assessment document and discussions with leadership and teaching staff during the assessment visit further clarified the remission arrangements in place to provide staff with opportunities to enhance their scholarship. For example, a full-time higher education teacher could be allocated up to 120 hours remission per year, reducing their teaching hours to 864 hours over 36 weeks (24 hours a week). The Scholarship Log for 2023-24 demonstrates this remission allocation in practice, listing the higher education teaching fractions for 34 members of staff, along with a proportional number of remission hours split between scholarship and higher education panel membership, and a description of the associated scholarship project(s). For example, the assessment team noted that a member of staff on a 0.5 full-time equivalent contract was allocated 60 hours remission, split between scholarship and higher education panel membership.

269. In addition, the Scholarship and Research Framework provides a summary of training opportunities and resources available to TEC Partnership staff, including mandatory New to HE Tutor Training, and regular Community and Practice training sessions. It also stipulates that records are maintained to monitor staff engagement with training activities commensurate with their role.
270. In turn, the evidence relating to professional development through community and practice engagement details the schedule of activity and staff attendance for the previous two years of community and practice sessions, ranging from scholarship updates and employer engagement to informative practical sessions and training on college systems.
271. The assessment team also reviewed evidence of training activities, which included schedules for TEC Partnership's 2023 Teaching and Learning Conference and a series of Staff Development Days. The assessment team formed the view that these sessions evidenced a range of development opportunities aimed at enabling TEC Partnership staff to enhance their practice and scholarship. For example, at the TEC Partnership Teaching and Learning Conference, staff present to colleagues on scholarship projects, research, and/or their engagement in higher-level study. Through Staff Development Days, staff have regular opportunities to develop the inclusivity of their practice, their management of behaviour and student wellbeing, and their use of innovative digital technologies.
272. In discussion with leadership and teaching staff during the assessment visit, staff expressed an organisational culture of continuous development among academic and non-academic staff. This includes remission arrangements, ringfenced time for individual CPD, industry update days, Community and Practice sessions, the Teaching and Learning Conference, and Staff Development Days. Human resources and staff development leaders confirmed that central records of CPD and training attendance are held within TEC Partnership's HR management, and discussed their mid-term vision for staff development, including the introduction of Departmental Development Plans, which will allow departments to self-evaluate and respond quickly to changing industry and student demands, shaping opportunities to enhance practice and scholarship within their specific contexts.
273. Based on the evidence considered, the assessment team is satisfied that TEC Partnership staff have development opportunities aimed at enabling them to enhance their practice and scholarship in a way which enables consistent standards in teaching and learning.

274. The assessment team considered a range of evidence to test whether TEC Partnership staff have opportunities to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design, and to engage with the activities of other higher education providers. The evidence considered by the assessment team included:
- a. The Scholarship and Research Frameworks.
 - b. The Scholarship Log for 2023-24.
 - c. The Validation and Amendment of HE Programmes code of practice.
 - d. Evidence of staff engagement with pedagogic development.
 - e. The assessment team also held discussions with leadership and teaching staff during the assessment visit.
275. The assessment team also considered the above evidence to determine whether TEC Partnership staff actively engage with these development opportunities.
276. As previously noted in paragraph 230, the Scholarship and Research Framework sets out an indicative list of scholarship activities. Staff are allocated remission hours to gain experience in and engage with these activities. The scholarship log (2023-24) records the allocation of staff hours to specific activities. For example, 10 of the 34 higher education teaching staff on the scholarship log have remission hours allocated to their membership on validation panels, while five of the 34 teaching staff have remission hours allocated to scholarship activities relating to the validation, re-validation and/or modification of TEC Partnership courses.
277. The Validation and Amendment of HE Programmes code of practice sets out the processes and accountabilities for the various stages of validation, re-validation, major and minor amendments, and course closure. The suite of accompanying validation documentation provides further evidence of the opportunities available for staff to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design through the validation process. For example, the documentation names all staff involved in developing and delivering programmes and includes their CVs. Learning resource centre staff also contribute through the production of a statement commenting on the availability of resources required by the proposed programme. Staff also give and receive feedback on programme development and the validation process provides staff with opportunities for formal report writing. The college's higher education quality training document also highlighted to the assessment team the range of opportunities available to staff to gain experience in programme validation, as well as wider curriculum development and assessment design activities. Such activities include reviewing programme and module handbooks, submitting and moderating assessment task proformas, and engaging with key themes of programme design, such as reducing assessment workload and employer engagement.
278. The Validation Tracker indicates 10 programmes in scope for validation in 2023-24, each with designated 'validators' – members of staff leading on the validation. The sample of programme validation and modification documentation demonstrated to the assessment team the college's compliance with requirements regarding staff involvement in the validation process and that staff have experience of curriculum development and assessment design.

279. Teaching staff who met with the assessment team during the assessment visit discussed their positions as external examiners at other higher education institutions and that they have opportunities to present at conferences hosted by other higher education institutions and awarding bodies. The assessment team noted that while TEC Partnership staff do have opportunities to engage with the activities of other higher education institutions (for example as external examiners, validation panel members, and external reviewers), a relatively small number do this compared with those engaged in other forms of scholarship and this should be actively encouraged across higher numbers of staff.
280. Based on the evidence considered, the assessment team is satisfied that TEC Partnership staff have opportunities to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design and to engage with the activities of other higher education providers. Moreover, the assessment team is satisfied that TEC Partnership staff have experience of curriculum development and assessment design; and that they engage with the activities of other higher education institutions.
281. To consider whether TEC Partnership staff have expertise in providing feedback on assessment which is timely, constructive and developmental, the assessment team considered:
- a. the Assessment of Students code of practice
 - b. HE Quality Training to Staff
 - c. RTS process
 - d. RTS evidence sets
 - e. RTS staffing data
 - f. examples of student work.
282. The assessment team also held discussions with leadership, teaching, and support staff, and students during the assessment visit.
283. The Assessment of Students code of practice sets out TEC Partnership's expectations and practical guidance for staff in providing feedback. For example, it stipulates that 'Formal Formative Feedback' must be developmental and allow students to improve their work and increase their grade and subject understanding but should not give a guaranteed grade. It also stipulates that written summative feedback must include an indication of whether learning outcomes have been achieved, referring to strengths and weaknesses of the submission, and actions for future improvement. In addition, the code of practice states that students should receive timely feedback, within four weeks of submission.
284. Through its review of the college's higher education quality training document the assessment team saw evidence of the development of staff expertise in providing feedback on assessment, including a slide dedicated to marking and assessment, which reiterates the four-week deadline for marking of work, and encourages 'feed forward, developmental feedback'.

285. The assessment team also noted in the RTS process, that TEC Partnership places specific restrictions on staff who are new to higher education teaching and may lack teaching experience. This includes ensuring they are supported to develop their teaching expertise through 100 per cent moderation of their assessments and restricting them from conducting any second marking or moderation of other assessments until they have developed sufficient expertise and re-applied to RTS. The RTS documentation and staffing data evidence these conditional approvals in practice, with numerous staff granted conditional RTS.
286. The assessment team scrutinised a range of examples of student work and additional materials related to assessment, feedback, and student work. The assessment team concluded that first and second marker feedback throughout these examples is consistently constructive and developmental.
287. In discussion with leadership, teaching, and support staff, and students during the assessment visit, the assessment team was advised that the VLE is the primary mechanism for teaching staff to provide, and students to receive, assessment feedback. The VLE is pre-populated with deadlines by data staff, which ensures a systematic approach to the provision of timely feedback.
288. During the assessment visit, students spoke positively to the assessment team about the feedback they receive. For example, students who had failed certain assessments still felt that assessment processes were fair, based on the quality of feedback they received, and the extent to which this allowed them to develop their submissions in the future. Students also talked about how they were able to use initial feedback to improve their work for the final or re-assessment submission. This indicated to the assessment team that feedback was provided in a timely manner.
289. Based on the evidence considered, the assessment team concluded that TEC Partnership staff have expertise in providing feedback on assessments which is timely, constructive and developmental.
290. To consider whether TEC Partnership has made a rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach all students and has the appropriate staff-to-student ratios, the assessment team considered the following evidence:
- a. The Curriculum Planning Processes.
 - b. The Size and Shape of Student Number document.
 - c. HE on a Page document.
 - d. RTS process.
 - e. RTS Evidence Sets.
 - f. RTS Staffing Data for 2023-24.
 - g. The assessment team also held discussions with leadership, teaching, and support staff during the assessment visit.

291. The assessment team's review of the evidence found that TEC Partnership uses curriculum planning and management information systems, in part, to plan and report on staff-to-student ratios. This allows TEC Partnership to forecast staff delivery hours, relative to planned and actual student numbers, quantifying staffing gaps as a full-time equivalent figure, and triggering any necessary staff recruitment. Reporting on all the above is readily available for monitoring as evidenced in the Evidence of Curriculum Planning Processes documentation, Size and Shape of Student Numbers data, the college's HE on a Page document, and through discussions and demonstrations with the TEC Partnership leadership team and support staff during the assessment visit. As a result, the assessment team was satisfied that monitoring of staff-to-student ratios is an ongoing, systematic process with appropriate staff recruitment taking place as and when required. Furthermore, students speak positively about staff-to-student ratios on their courses, including specific reference to staff-to-student ratios as a factor in their choice to study at TEC Partnership.
292. Moreover, and as previously discussed, the RTS process ensures rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise of staff teaching on higher education programmes. Minutes from the six RTS meetings throughout 2023-24 evidence the RTS panel's detailed scrutiny of each applicant's skills and expertise. RTS Staffing Data for 2023-24 lists 155 RTS entries and indicates more than 70 staff are approved for RTS on TEC Partnership awards, at specified levels and awards, and with specified conditions in accordance with their skills and expertise at the point of application.
293. Based on the evidence considered, the assessment team is satisfied that TEC Partnership makes rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach all students and has the appropriate staff-to-student ratios.
294. The HR evidence pack, which included the recruitment, probation and performance and development review policies evidenced to the assessment team that TEC Partnership has robust policy, procedures, and practices relating to the recruitment of staff, who are subsequently assessed for RTS before they can teach on a higher education course.
295. For example, the Recruitment Policy sets out clear guidelines on equality and safeguarding, before detailing each stage of the staff recruitment process, from the submission of 'Vacancy Approval' forms and development of appropriate job descriptions in response to staffing needs, to the requirements of interview panels, onboarding, staff inductions, and a probation process.
296. In line with policy, both exemplar job descriptions reviewed by the assessment team set out requirements for candidates to hold a minimum of an undergraduate degree in a related field, have extensive professional experience in the field, and have prior teaching or training experience, preferably at the higher education level.
297. Based on the evidence considered, the assessment team is satisfied that TEC Partnership has appropriate staff recruitment practices.

Conclusions

298. In conclusion, the assessment team found that TEC Partnership meets criterion C1 because, through the scrutiny of evidence and during the visit, TEC Partnership has demonstrated that it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students. Everyone involved in teaching or

supporting student learning and in the assessment of student work is appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the level(s) and subject(s) of the qualifications being awarded. The assessment team further concluded that this has been the case for the last three years, even in the context of the merger with ERC, because the assessment team saw evidence that TEC Partnership had taken steps to ensure that staff from the new sites were also appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the level(s) and subject(s) of the qualifications being awarded. Therefore, the team was satisfied that, in regard to criterion C, TEC Partnership has been operating its DAPs securely over the last three years.

Assessment of DAPs criterion D: Environment for supporting students

Criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement

Advice to the OfS

299. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership meets criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement, because it meets the requirements for this criterion.
300. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence that shows that, in summary, TEC Partnership has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.
301. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Criterion D1.1

D1.1: Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

Advice to the OfS

302. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership meets criterion D1.1 because evidence shows that it has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.
303. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that TEC Partnership has met the evidence requirements for D1.1 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

304. To understand the extent to which TEC Partnership takes a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement for its diverse body of students, the assessment team reviewed a range of evidence. This included the Ambition 2030 strategic plan, policies and processes related to the validation and amendment of programmes, the college's higher education strategic targets. The assessment team also held conversations with staff and students undertaken during the assessment visit.
305. The assessment team's view is that determining and evaluating how student development and achievement is enabled, is considered a strategic and operational priority by TEC Partnership, and that there is appropriate differentiation in arrangements for this across the college's sites, based on the type and scale of higher education provision. For example, the code of practice for student retention and engagement of students sets out significant provision for student support, and details how this is differentiated to best represent the setup

of each delivery site. The college's Ambition 2030 strategy sets out its key objectives, including 'Empower Students to Succeed', with tangible, measurable targets related to higher education student development and achievement. The assessment team saw evidence which confirmed that at the point of validating or amending a programme, programme teams must fully consider all resources required for effective delivery of provision, including staff and physical resources.

306. From an operational perspective, the assessment team focused on the facilities and services which are designed to support development and achievement of students at the multiple delivery sites. During the assessment visit to the Grimsby Institute campus, the assessment team visited the dedicated student support hub and saw that learning resources, learning support and holistic and pastoral support for student success was available both in person and online to students at that site and at the other campuses.
307. The assessment team reviewed a report to HECQS on the progress of the TEC Partnership higher education Quality Improvement Plan. The report set out updates on actions outstanding across a range of areas and strategies related to improving student development and achievement. This included improvement actions for students in specific subject areas, at specific levels, and with physical or mental health challenges. In the minutes of the Higher Education Oversight Committee, the assessment team saw scrutiny of strategies for improvement relating directly to student development and achievement, including consideration of attainment gaps between different groups of students and updates on an action plan to eliminate gaps.
308. Having considered both the documentary evidence and the evidence seen on the visit, the assessment team concluded that TEC Partnership takes a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement for its diverse body of students.
309. The assessment team reviewed a range of evidence to test whether students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way and whether account is taken of different students' choices and needs. This included the academic regulations, an APL review paper, the higher education quality training document and the Code of Practice for the Retention and Engagement of Students. The assessment team also discussed programme induction with staff and students during the assessment visit.
310. The assessment team was satisfied that the academic regulations set out a clear framework for the APL including prior experiential learning. The assessment team also saw robust evidence of HECQS undertaking a formal review of the operation of this regulation through consideration of APL review papers. The higher education quality training document sets out resources related to ensuring a fair and inclusive admission of students. The assessment team also saw evidence that TEC Partnership pays due consideration to consumer protection with regard to admissions.
311. The assessment team considered the Code of Practice for the Retention and Engagement of Students. This code of practice sets out clear expectations for the induction of students, stating that 'teaching teams must ensure that a comprehensive programme level induction schedule is administered to each new student cohort'. The code of practice also sets out the requirements regarding the content of induction programmes. These include the provision of

information about the course, the assessment strategy, and access to support services and facilities such as the library. The induction also requires that students have good access to materials to support their learning such as handbooks for the course and for individual modules. In addition, the code of practice sets out how the Promonitor software tool is used to monitor levels of student engagement including a RAG-rating approach designed to enable early intervention should a student's engagement be a cause for concern. This enables the college to have insight into students' individual needs and enables the provision of support.

312. During the assessment visit the assessment team asked students about the effectiveness of this approach and students confirmed that they had received generally effective inductions. Staff confirmed to the assessment team that orientation sessions include course information as well as an induction to the library support services. The assessment team also heard that the college operates a 'keep warm' strategy whereby they maintain contact with students post interview and prior to enrolment to ensure they are fully aware of any additional support needs students might have.
313. There is evidence of staff training to ensure that student induction is effective and has both a course-specific and more holistic focus. The materials noted that the induction of students is ongoing and not just in their first week of study. Based on this evidence the assessment team concluded that students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way and account is taken of different students' choices and needs.
314. The assessment team saw evidence of the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services and that this is monitored, and any resource needs arising are considered. The code of practice for student retention and engagement of students sets out significant provision for student support, and that this is differentiated to best represent the setup of each delivery site. In the assessment team's view, the provision of student support officers, disability advisors and success coaches enables the delivery of good advisory, support and counselling services. The role of success coaches is further outlined in documentation reviewed by the assessment team and the assessment team spoke to students during the assessment visit who paid testament to the positive impact of student support teams and the wider support students were able to access.
315. These services are accessed in-person or remotely by students via the Learning Resources Centre. The assessment team reviewed quantitative evidence indicating the number of students who had engaged with student support services during an unspecified three-month period. This enabled the assessment team to see that student engagement with workshops, appointments with the support team, success coaches and tutors are monitored by TEC Partnership.
316. The assessment team saw in HECQS meeting minutes that HECQS has oversight of the provision of support services in the Learning Resources Centre as part of the overarching quality improvement plan. The assessment team noted that the plan includes actions relating to the improvement of provision of learning support resources across the group, with a requirement that updates on actions be reported back to HECQS. This is further demonstrated in HECQS monitoring of student outcomes and the levels of use of student support being considered in relation to student outcomes. The assessment team also reviewed reports submitted to HECQS on the implementation and outcomes of student

support activities. These included update reports on safeguarding support and strategies for improving mental health and wellbeing.

317. For staff support, the assessment team saw evidence of a comprehensive approach to staff recruitment, induction, development, appraisal and performance management. The staff induction week programme is designed to enable staff to make a successful transition into working for TEC Partnership and the assessment team noted that the effectiveness of this is monitored by the Group VP Employee Services. Reflecting on the range of evidence considered, the assessment team concluded that staff and student advisory, support and counselling services are provided, that these are monitored and that there is a mechanism, via the HECQS committee (student support) and the Group VP Employee services (staff), for resourcing needs to be considered.
318. It is the view of the assessment team that the administrative support systems enable TEC Partnership to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs. During the visit the assessment team heard how academic progress of students is monitored using the Markbook tool. Higher education quality training documentation set out resources relating to Exam Boards, referencing HE Markbook as a means to track student progress. The assessment team also saw a demonstration of Promonitor software used to keep student records and saw several case studies demonstrating the different applications of the software in practice.
319. The examples showed that the software enabled the monitoring of student progression and performance and is used to monitor trends in student attendance and engagement. The software is also used by support staff to enable academic staff to communicate in a secure space about student issues related to the need for additional support. The assessment team saw evidence that student data is monitored closely as part of ongoing student support in a timely way and in relation to management information. The assessment team also saw evidence that the tool enabled staff to monitor non-academic issues caused by student health and mental health conditions in a way that is timely and secure.
320. During the assessment visit, the assessment team discussed the use of the student support software with staff and students. It was satisfied that all the users of this system, including students, are able to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs. Oversight of student performance is monitored by HECQS on an ongoing basis as part of the institutional quality improvement plan. For example, the assessment team saw evidence of HEQCS reviewing student completion rates in relation to performance and OfS benchmarks and setting out actions in the QIP to improve performance in this area.
321. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership provides opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression, for example academic, employment and future career management skills. The TEC Partnership Strategy 2023 sets out an appropriate but ambitious target for student progression of 90 per cent. The strategy also sets out how that will be achieved, with a focus on inclusive practice and on ensuring that all students on a TEC Partnership course have access to an employer placement if wanted. The TEC Partnership Quality Enhancement report shows evidence of the progress towards these outcomes and details the actions taken at each site of higher

education delivery to implement the employability strategy. These include the opportunity for students to attend a graduate recruitment fair, hear industry speakers and earn a graduate skills award. At the Grimsby Institute Site this award focuses on four key areas for skills development: fortitude and criticality, teamwork, personal values and presentation. At other higher education delivery sites, the approaches to skills development vary, and include employability skills embedded in the specialist professional practice modules and opportunities for volunteering.

322. In terms of support for academic development, the college operates an academic achievement service. Academic achievement coaches offer support to students with higher education writing and research skills. TEC Partnership states in its DAPs self-assessment document that this support is in addition to in-programme study support underpinned by specific study and research skills modules. The assessment team saw evidence of a programme of academic achievement support workshops for students. As discussed more fully under criterion B3, Tec Partnership operates an extensive network of support staff which includes Success Coaches who provide pastoral support for students and a full-time counselling service for students who require support for mental health and wellbeing. The counselling service is accessed by referral from the Success Coaches.
323. The process for course validation has an embedded process for employers to offer views on the proposed curriculum and assessment of the course. In addition, the views of the prospective employer or stakeholder are sought in relation to the work-based learning opportunities on the proposed course. The assessment team also noted from the OfS student outcomes data dashboard¹⁶ that TEC partnership has progression rates above the numerical threshold for most student groups. The assessment team considered this range of evidence in relation to the opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic personal and professional progression. It was satisfied that there is provision of development for students' academic, employment and future career management skills.
324. In the view of the assessment team, TEC Partnership provides opportunities for all students to develop skills to make effective use of the learning resources provided, including the safe and effective use of specialist facilities, and the use of digital and virtual environments. The assessment team noted that in the college's DAPs self-assessment an overview of learning resources available to students was presented. During the assessment visit, the assessment team toured the Grimsby Institute campus and saw a range of facilities, including IT and specialist workshops for practical subjects. In addition, the assessment team visited the HE Learning Centre and met staff who provide holistic support for students. During the visit, the assessment team also saw students making safe and effective use of specialist facilities. The assessment team noted that students were carefully supervised in the use of the facilities by experienced staff. The assessment team formed the view that the services delivered by the centre evidenced that TEC Partnership provides opportunities for all students to develop skills to make effective use of the learning resources provided. The assessment team further concluded that students are well supported to make safe and effective use of specialist facilities.
325. As mentioned earlier in this report, the assessment team saw a demonstration of the VLE and Promonitor software which enables staff and students to monitor academic progression and

¹⁶ See [Student outcomes data dashboard](#).

performance. The assessment team saw that this was used effectively to support students to make effective use of the learning resources. Students that the assessment team met with confirmed their use of these digital resources. In addition, Academic Achievement Services, provide support workshops for students on critical analysis, sourcing information, referencing and academic writing.

326. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership's approach is guided by a commitment to equity. The values expressed in TEC Partnership's strategy are guided by equity, including commitments to an inclusive curriculum, routes into higher education and a commitment to reduce barriers to education. On the visit, the assessment team heard from students whose entry to courses had been through non-standard routes. For example, students had also been interviewed by teaching staff, rather than the college only considering their prior qualifications via a submitted application. The assessment team considered this was in line with TEC Partnership's strategic commitment to equity and the reduction of barriers to learning.
327. TEC Partnership's EDI policy sets out its legal duty clearly in relation to the Equality Act and the Public Sector Equality. It also sets out the roles of specialist staff in delivering equal opportunities and an EDI code of practice along with an approach to monitoring equality. The college is in the penultimate year of a five-year access and participation plan and in the process of submitting their next plan and getting it approved. The plan has been developed with a focus particularly on the attainment, completion and progression of students from areas of high deprivation and students with disabilities. The college has a significantly higher proportion of students with these characteristics than the sector. The college also has an access target in relation to students from Black, Asian and minority ethnic students.

Conclusions

328. The assessment team concluded that TEC Partnership has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. This is because the assessment team saw evidence of such arrangements and resources as part of the evidence submission and on the visit. For this reason, the assessment team concludes that this criterion is met.

Assessment of DAPs criterion E: Evaluation of performance

Criterion E1: Evaluation of performance

Advice to the OfS

329. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership meet criterion E1: Evaluation of performance because it meets the requirements for this criterion.
330. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the evidence which shows, in summary, that TEC Partnership takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths.
331. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Criterion E.1

E.1: An organisation granted degree awarding powers takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths.

Advice to the OfS

332. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership meets criterion E1 because it takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths.
333. The assessment team's view is based on the review of evidence which shows that TEC Partnership has met the evidence requirements for E1 and any other relevant evidence.

Reasoning

334. To assess whether critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of TEC Partnership's higher education provision, and whether action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review, the assessment team considered the following evidence:
- a. the Ambition 2030 HE targets
 - b. Higher Education Academic Regulations
 - c. Deliberative Committee Structure and Continuous Improvement of Quality
 - d. evidence of validation, amendment, and modification of programmes
 - e. the Board of Examiners and External Examiners code of practice
 - f. example AMR, SEED, QER, and QIPs

g. an example Periodic Review. report

335. The Ambition 2030 HE Targets set out the importance of critical self-assessment to TEC Partnership's higher education provision. For example, Strategy 2 is to, 'Improve Operational Performance by maximising sustainable processes, systems, resource management and employee support.' This includes ensuring that, 'quality and standards processes are operated securely by all parts of the TEC Partnership, with cyclical review to ensure they remain relevant and have impact.' In turn, academic regulations specify that 'all degrees or named awards must be monitored annually through the production of Annual Monitoring Reports', and that 'annual monitoring is a process of ongoing critical scrutiny of qualitative and quantitative evidence... undertaken by the academic staff responsible for their delivery', and furthermore that 'annual monitoring ... promotes a continual improvement agenda through the setting of actions'. The academic regulations also set out the requirement and process for the periodic review of programmes.
336. The assessment team noted that TEC Partnership's approach to critical self-assessment is further operationalised through the Deliberative Committee Structure and Continuous Improvement of Quality policy. This policy sets out the roles and responsibilities for different levels of staff, with regard to the assurance of quality and standards. For example, academic staff are directed to, 'commit themselves to rigorous, systematic quality assurance processes that work towards safeguarding and improving academic standards.' Leadership staff are required to take responsibility for the quality assurance and quality improvement of all higher education in their area. Moreover, this policy details the formal processes through which TEC Partnership implements critical self-assessment, including:
- a. Periodic Review – the principles and processes through which TEC Partnership will monitor and take a broader review of its programmes in an annual cycle.
 - b. Quality Improvement Plans (QIP) – 'to guide and track changes taken to enhance the quality of our programmes'.
 - c. Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR) which should, 'draw on all data sources to produce a trustworthy account of the programme, document enhancements made, with impact, during the year of review and suggest areas for future improvement.'
 - d. Self-Evaluation and Enhancement Document (SEED), which must be 'evaluative and based on rigorous analysis of evidence to support judgements made'.
 - e. Quality and Standards Audits – led by quality teams with reports and resulting actions into HECQS.
 - f. Quality enhancement reports – to 'report annually on the steps taken to safeguard academic standards and academic quality... identify changes that have been undertaken in the year under review... highlight good practices, areas for improvement, and action being taken to address any concerns... report on relevant datasets'.
337. The assessment team formed the view that the strategic targets together with the provisions for safeguarding and improving standards set out in the Deliberative Committee Structure policy demonstrated that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of TEC Partnership's higher education provision.

338. The sample of AMR, SEED and periodic review documentation evidenced TEC Partnership's review of programmes and processes in the faculties of Business Art and Media and Commercial Enterprise. The QER with QIPs reported on the quality and standards of higher education delivered within the TEC Partnership during the academic year 2021-22. Through scrutiny of this documentation the assessment team saw evidence of action being taken in response to matters raised through critical self-assessment, monitoring and review. For example, in the sample AMR and QIP documentation, the author provides Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ) data for all modules, and through analysis of the data, identifies specific areas for improvement in the content and assessment of a Level 6 module. The author subsequently includes an action in the QIP to undertake major amendments to the programme based on the responses to the 2022-23 MEQ.
339. The assessment team also noted that documentation confirmed these major amendments had been submitted and approved thereby closing the evaluation and review loop. The example SEED and QIP offers analyses and action at a suitably broader level than the AMR, for example, 'Business Arts, and Media will allocate a specific proportion of their work hours for remission to facilitate research, and scholarship'. In turn, action specified in the example QER and QIP is suitably broader still, for example, 'Close attainment gaps to match APP targets'. Finally, the assessment team saw that the sample Periodic Review documentation comprised a more qualitative report, with a panel assessing TEC Partnership against external reference points.
340. Overall, it is the view of the assessment team that this evidence demonstrates that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of TEC Partnership's higher education provision, and that action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review.
341. To assess whether clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of TEC Partnership's academic provision, the assessment team considered the evidence listed in paragraph 336.
342. The assessment team found that QIPs are present in the form of action plans across scrutiny and monitoring at all levels throughout TEC Partnership. These QIPs consistently assign accountability for each action outlined in the QIP, to a specific member of staff. Moreover, the assessment team saw in the HR documentation, details of the staff Personal Development Review (PDR) process, which specified that, performance objectives must be agreed, set and reviewed annually and must align with the faculty or business plan as appropriate. The PDR policy also sets out the process for reviewing staff performance against targets and objectives set in the previous year. At academic governance level, HECQS meeting minutes evidenced the committee reviewing progress and setting actions on improvement plans such as the college's quality improvement plan. During the assessment visit, governors spoke positively about the transparency of TEC Partnership's leadership staff in reporting their progress against actions plans. It is the view of the assessment team that this evidence demonstrates that clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of TEC Partnership's academic provision.
343. To assess whether ideas and expertise from within and outside the TEC Partnership (for example on programme design and development, on teaching, and on student learning and

assessment) are drawn into TEC Partnership's arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review, the assessment team considered the following evidence:

- a. the higher education academic regulations
- b. evidence of validation, amendment, and modification of programmes
- c. Board of Examiners and External Examiners code of practice
- d. example AMR, SEED, QER, and QIPs.

344. The assessment team noted that the academic regulations specify that when a programme is submitted for full approval, it must be supported by '...a suitably qualified and experienced external academic consultant; evidence of employer engagement in the development of the full approvals document; and evidence of feedback from students'. As discussed more fully under criterion B3, in reviewing validation documentation, the assessment team found clear evidence of input and actioning of feedback from external expertise. For example, development of the BA (Hons) Tourism and Management programme was informed by views from private and public sector experts, as well as the external examiner. These contributed to the development of employability skills within the programme. Furthermore, the assessment team saw that the academic regulations also require TEC Partnership to appoint 'one or more external examiner(s) to carry out the role(s) and responsibilities defined for all provision that leads to a degree, named award or credits.' The academic regulations also detail the responsibilities of external examiners, including their input to programme design and development, teaching, learning, and assessment.
345. The assessment team's review of the Student Engagement Framework found that it clearly defines TEC Partnership's commitment to ensuring that students are individually and collectively engaged in the governance of higher education provision. A fuller description of the mechanisms by which this engagement occurs is discussed under criterion A1.
346. The assessment team also reviewed evidence relating to the validation of programmes. It formed the opinion that these clearly and consistently demonstrate how ideas and expertise from students, staff responsible for writing the course, external employers and industry professionals contribute to programme design and approval. During discussions on the assessment visit, the TEC leadership team and teaching staff provided the assessment team with further examples of student attendance at validation panels, including an example of student feedback leading to major improvements on the design and approval of a programme.
347. An example AMR, SEED, and QER all include direct reference to feedback, ideas, and expertise from students and external examiners which subsequently inform actions within QIPs. For example, the sample AMR, reviewed by the assessment team, indicated how the analysis of programme data informed actions set out in the QIP to make major amendments to the programme based on feedback received from the 2022-23 MEQs. These improvement actions included increasing communication and in-person engagement with the external examiner. Similarly, in the sample SEED and QER documentation the assessment team saw that actions were included to enhance the incorporation of employer and student perspectives into curriculum design and to ensure that developmental feedback from external examiners is being used by programme leaders across all programmes.

348. The assessment team concluded that this evidence demonstrates that ideas and expertise from within and outside the TEC Partnership (for example, on programme design and development, on teaching, and on student learning and assessment) are drawn into TEC Partnership's arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review.

Conclusions

349. In conclusion, the assessment team found that TEC Partnership meets criterion E1 because the evidence demonstrated that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of TEC Partnership's higher education provision and that TEC Partnership has demonstrated that it takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths.

Assessment of overarching criterion for the authorisation of DAPs

Full DAPs: A self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems

Advice to the OfS

350. The assessment team's view is that TEC Partnership meets the overarching criterion for Full DAPs because it meets all the underpinning criteria.
351. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the evidence, which shows, in summary, that TEC Partnership develops and encourages a self-critical and cohesive academic community. It has clear commitment to the assurance of standards, supported by effective and robust quality systems.
352. This view is based on consideration of the evidence requirements for the DAPs criteria alongside any other relevant information.

Reasoning

353. The assessment team found that self-criticality is demonstrated in a number of ways, including through TEC Partnership's robust reviews of its academic governance structures since the merger with ERC, which provide firm underpinnings for the implementation of the Ambition 2030 Strategic Plan. The recently implemented Student Engagement Framework ensures that TEC Partnership's diverse student community can contribute to the college's academic governance and the development of its higher education provision. During the assessment visit, the assessment team saw evidence that TEC Partnership is engaged with regional providers of higher education through various initiatives which enables it to have a meaningful external perspective on its higher education provision. The assessment team saw evidence demonstrating that TEC Partnership takes appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and independent points of expertise in the development, approval and review of its higher education provision and that critical self-assessment is integral to its operation. During the assessment visit, the assessment team met with members of the TEC Partnership governing body and found them to be fully engaged in ensuring that self-criticality contributes, through their scrutiny, to the maintenance of high quality higher education provision for all students.
354. The assessment team found TEC Partnership is a highly cohesive academic community. Delivery of the higher education provision takes places across a number of campuses but the approach to academic governance and day-to-day management ensures there is consistency of approach across delivery sites that is meaningful for students and staff. All students, irrespective of the location of their in-person teaching, have physical and virtual access to the student support services located at the main Grimsby Institute campus. This cohesive but geographically distributed approach to the provision of higher education is in line with the mission of this provider set out in the Ambition 2030 Strategic Plan to 'contribute

to economic development by developing programmes, projects and partnerships that meet regional skills needs’.

355. TEC Partnership demonstrated its proven commitment to the assurance of standards, through its clear and consistently applied academic policies and regulations. The assessment team found that the robust implementation of governance structures and quality systems ensured that academic standards meet sector thresholds. The assessment team considered the process for external engagement in its academic systems and processes such as course review and found this to be effective. In addition, the assessment team found that TEC Partnership has, during the last three years, developed an approach to staff development which is focussed on the maintenance of consistent high standards in teaching and learnings across all the college’s delivery sites.
356. The assessment team considers the effectiveness of TEC Partnership’s quality systems is demonstrated through its robust and consistently applied approach to programme design, approval and review which take appropriate account of external regulatory requirements as well as internal and external points of expertise. The assessment team also found that in relation to student assessment and outcomes, the college’s quality systems ensure that academic credit and qualifications are only awarded when students achieve relevant learning outcomes. Furthermore, TEC Partnership ensures that quality systems, frameworks and regulations are regularly updated to align with its strategic priorities as well as external benchmarks and expertise. Considering this evidence, the assessment team were assured that TEC Partnership has effective quality systems.

Conclusions

357. The assessment team therefore concluded that TEC Partnership meets the overarching criterion as the evidence demonstrates that it has a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards as supported by effective quality systems.

Annex A: Abbreviations

| Abbreviation | Meaning |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| APL | Accreditation of prior learning |
| AI | Artificial intelligence |
| ATP | Assessment Task Proforma |
| CQOC | Curriculum and Quality Oversight Committee |
| DAPs | Degree awarding powers |
| ERC | East Riding College |
| ELT | Executive leadership team |
| FHEQ | Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications |
| HEA | Higher Education Academy |
| HERA | Higher Education and Research Act 2017 |
| HECQS | Higher Education Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee |
| MEQs | Module Evaluation Questionnaires |
| OfS | Office for Students |
| PDR | Personal Development Review |
| QAC | [OfS's] Quality Assessment Committee |
| QER | Quality Enhancement Reports |
| QIP | Quality Improvement Plan |
| RTS | Recognised Teacher Status |
| SEED | Self-Evaluation and Enhancement Document |
| VLE | Virtual learning environments |



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