

Degree awarding powers (DAPs) assessment report for Cornwall College

**Assessment for variation of degree awarding
powers**

Provider legal name: Cornwall College

Provider trading name: The Cornwall College Group

UKPRN: 10001696

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Executive summary

Type of assessment:	Quality and standards assessment for variation of degree awarding powers
For:	Cornwall College

1. This report represents the conclusions of an assessment for a variation of degree awarding powers (DAPs) for Cornwall College. The college is seeking indefinite foundation DAPs and an extension to 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 was a desk-based assessment and did not include a visit to the provider. This report contains the advice and judgement of the team following its assessment.
3. The assessment team concluded that the college met all the criteria for its application for indefinite foundation DAPs and extension to bachelors' DAPs. 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

Variation of DAPs

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).¹

A provider that already holds DAPs 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 DAPs

DAPs 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.²

¹ See [Higher Education and Research Act 2017](#).

² See [Annex C – Guidance on the criteria for the authorisation for DAPs - Office for Students](#).

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.

Assessments for DAPs 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.³ 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.⁴

Further information

We have published further information about varying DAPs in Regulatory advice 17.⁵

4. The college was awarded time-limited foundation DAPs by the Privy Council on 17 May 2018 for a period of six years. The time-limited foundation DAPs order was due to expire on 16 May 2024. This was extended by the OfS for a period of two years until 15 May 2026 by an order dated 3 May 2024.
5. In accordance with the OfS regulatory framework and Regulatory advice 17, the college was eligible to be considered for indefinite foundation DAPs because it had held time-limited foundation DAPs for a period of three years.⁶ The college also requested to extend its DAPs authorisation to bachelors' level DAPs.
6. The OfS appointed an external assessment team on 15 September 2023 to undertake a desk-based DAPs variation assessment. The OfS asked the assessment team to give its advice about the quality of and standards applied to higher education programmes at the college and whether the college continues to meet the DAPs criteria.

³ See [Higher Education and Research Act 2017, section 46](#).

⁴ See [Higher Education and Research Act 2017, section 2](#).

⁵ See [Regulatory advice 17: Variation and revocation of degree awarding powers](#).

⁶ OfS, '[Regulatory advice 17: Variation and revocation of degree awarding powers](#)' (OfS 2019.48), last updated July 2023.

7. The assessment team considered a range of information submitted by Cornwall College in support of its application to vary its DAPs authorisation).
8. This report does not represent any decision of the OfS in respect of whether the DAPs variation Cornwall College is seeking should be authorised.
9. The QAC will formulate its advice to the OfS regarding quality and standards at Cornwall College, having considered this report.
10. The OfS will have regard to this assessment report and the QAC's advice when making a decision about whether to vary the college's DAPs authorisation on the basis requested. The OfS will also consider its own risk assessment for the college 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.⁷

⁷ See Higher Education and Research Act 2017, section 2.

Introduction and background

11. This report represents the conclusions of a DAPs assessment for Cornwall College, which is seeking indefinite foundation and bachelors' DAPs. The assessment was a desk-based assessment and did not include a visit to the college.
12. The OfS's Quality Assessment Committee (QAC) will consider the report and formulate its advice to the OfS regarding quality and standards at Cornwall College. The OfS will have regard to the assessment report and QAC's advice when making a decision about whether to vary Cornwall College's DAPs authorisation on the basis requested.
13. The OfS will also consider its own risk assessment for Cornwall College 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.⁸

Context

14. Cornwall College's origins date back to 1929. The college operates higher education from its seven campuses:
 - Camborne Campus
 - Newquay University Centre
 - St Austell Campus
 - Eden Project University Centre
 - Bicton College
 - Duchy College Stoke Climsland
 - Falmouth Marine School.
15. It offers a range of subjects of study, such as agriculture, veterinary sciences and biosciences.
16. Prior to obtaining its own DAPs, higher education programmes were delivered under a validation agreement. The higher education programmes were delivered under an agreement with the University of Plymouth, Plymouth Marjon University, Falmouth University and Bath Spa University as degree awarding providers.
17. The college was awarded time-limited foundation DAPs in 2018 and since then has offered programmes at Levels 4, 5, and 6 under a validation agreement with partner higher education institutions. The college began offering Level 4 and 5 programmes under its own degree awarding powers in the 2022-23 academic year in the following subjects:
 - FdSc Photography

⁸ Higher Education and Research Act 2017, section 2.

- FdA Child and Family Studies
 - FdA Games Design for Industry
 - FdSc Agriculture
 - FdSc Counselling Psychology with Criminology
 - FdSc Soil Science
 - FdSc Coastal Adventure
 - FdA Equine Business and Innovation
 - FdSc Applied Management of Animal Collections
 - FdSc Rural Regeneration and Land Management
 - FdSc/CertHE Surf Science
 - FdSc/CertHE Animal Behaviour and Welfare
 - FdSc/CertHE Marine Biology with Conservation
 - FdSc/CertHE Zoology with Ecology and Conservation.
18. The college also continues to offer validated programmes alongside its own programmes as part of the strategic aims set out in the college's Higher Education Strategic Plan 2022-2027. The college seeks to continue its existing relationships with partner higher education institutions at Levels 4 and 5 where it considers using its own DAPs to be inappropriate. For example, where existing links to nationally recognised departments at a partner university provides benefits to student learning and experience such as The Golf Education Partnership and the School of Sport at Plymouth Marjon University. The college also seeks to strengthen its relationships with university partners by working together to explore opportunities for new curriculum offerings that meet student and industry demand and assist local economies in the Southwest.
19. By way of progression routes to bachelors' degrees, the college delivers Level 6 degree programmes in various subjects including Agriculture, Golf and Applied Zoology under validation arrangements with University of Plymouth and Plymouth Marjon University. The college did not provide the assessment team with a copy of the validation agreement with each partner university but it is clear from the evidence provided that these relationships are well-established.
20. Overall, based on the latest available data from the 'Size and shape of provision data dashboard', the college had a student population in 2022-2023 of 880 students. This included 490 full-time undergraduates, 260 part-time undergraduates and 20 undergraduate apprenticeships.⁹

⁹ Available at [Size and shape of provision data dashboard: Data dashboard - Office for Students](#).

21. The college reported to the OfS in February 2025 that it currently employs 24 full-time lecturers, 31 part-time lecturers and 18 support and administrative staff across its higher education provision.
22. In July 2023, the college requested to be considered for indefinite foundation level DAPs, as it had held time-limited foundation level DAPs for over three years. At the same time, the college also applied to extend its DAPs authorisation from foundation DAPs to bachelors' level DAPs.
23. In accordance with the OfS regulatory framework and OfS Regulatory advice 17, the OfS undertook an initial eligibility and suitability assessment of Cornwall College.¹⁰ It decided that a desk-based DAPs assessment should be undertaken to gather and test evidence. This is to inform a judgement about whether the college's powers have been exercised securely during the preceding six years, that 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.
24. The OfS appointed an assessment team on 15 September 2023, which consisted of three academic expert assessors and a member of OfS staff in the following roles:
 - a. Julie Messenger – committee chair and lead assessor
 - b. Michael Cottam – deputy committee chair and assessor
 - c. Dr Pascal Stiefenhofer – deputy committee chair and assessor
 - d. Holly Howe – committee member and assessment coordinator.
25. The assessment team was asked to give its advice and judgements about the quality of and standards applied to higher education programmes at the college and whether the college continues to meet the DAPs criteria.
26. The assessment team considered a range of information submitted by Cornwall College in support of its application to vary its DAPs authorisation.

¹⁰ OfS, 'Securing student success: Regulatory framework for higher education in England' (OfS 2022.69), last updated November 2022, Annex C; OfS, 'Regulatory advice 17: Variation and revocation of degree awarding powers' (OfS 2019.48), last updated July 2023.

Assessment process

Information gathering

27. In accordance with the process outlined in Regulatory advice 17, Annex B: Variation and revocation of DAPs in England - Operational guidance for providers on assessment by the Office for Students, Cornwall College submitted a self-assessment document on 8 November 2023. In this document, the college set out how it considered it met the DAPs criterion for the foundation DAPs authorisation it already held. The self-assessment also set out how the college considered it met the criteria in the context of the additional DAPs powers sought, specifically the extension of its DAPs authorisation to bachelors' level.
28. On 8 November 2023, the college submitted initial documentary evidence to support the statements made in the self-assessment document.
29. Following the assessment team's review of the college's initial evidence submission, the assessment team requested further evidence, which was submitted by the college on 11 January 2024. Following the assessment team's review of the further evidence submission, the assessment team made second and third further evidence requests. These were submitted by the college on 23 April 2024 and 3 May 2024. The assessment team also attended an online meeting with senior higher education staff at the college in July 2024 to ask further questions about the additional evidence submitted.
30. The assessment team undertook its desk-based assessment of the college's evidence submissions between 8 November 2023 and 7 February 2025.
31. The assessment team considered a range of information submitted by Cornwall College in support of its application to vary its DAPs authorisation.

Assessment of DAPs criterion A: Academic governance

Criterion A1: Academic governance

Advice to the OfS

32. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion A1: Academic governance because it meets subcriteria A1.1, A1.2 and A1.3.
33. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence. This shows in summary that the college has sound academic governance and management structures that deliver effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability. The college also has appropriate oversight to ensure that if it decides to work with other organisations, arrangements will guarantee the academic standards and the quality of programmes delivered by partner organisations, and the college will retain effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability. The college engages students as partners in the academic governance and management of academic standards and quality.
34. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Subcriterion 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

35. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion A1.1 because it has effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.
36. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the college has met the evidence requirements for A1.1.

Reasoning

37. The assessment team reviewed the college's updated self-assessment document. This shows that the college's academic governance structure sets out the 'Corporation Board' as the main governing body for the college, and this is reflected in the Standing Orders for the Corporation and its Committees. This document confirms that the following committees report to the Corporation Board:
 - Audit and Risk
 - Curriculum and Quality

- Finance and Resources
- Remuneration
- Search and Governance
- Higher Education.

38. The Higher Education Committee has oversight of the college's higher education provision as set out in its terms of reference. Its purpose is to oversee the strategic development and management of higher education, including monitoring the strategic development of higher education provision and the arrangements for the management and the activities of the Higher Education Academic Board, reviewing the college's self-assessment and quality improvement plans. The Higher Education Academic Board has oversight of the academic governance of higher education at the college. The purpose of the Higher Education Academic Board is to ensure that higher education is governed, managed and administered with appropriate reporting to the Corporation Board, with accountability for academic responsibilities, financial management and the quality and standards of provision as set in its terms of reference. The Higher Education Academic Board manages the quality of higher education provision to ensure academic standards are maintained and adhere to the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). This board has oversight for ensuring the quality of the student experience, including student support, assessment and teaching staff, while ensuring the higher education provision is informed by understanding of research and scholarly activity.
39. To determine whether the college's higher education mission, strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, published, understood and applied consistently, the assessment team reviewed the college's self-assessment document dated May 2024 and the Higher Education Strategic Plan 2022-27. In these documents, the college demonstrates commitment towards developing its higher education provision through 'transformational change processes'. The college's strategic intention for sustainability and growth is articulated in its mission. The plan demonstrates a coherent strategy for growth that draws on its local strengths as a land-based education provider, responsive to local population needs and industry. The assessment team found that the college's governance arrangements for strategic and operational oversight, outlined in the Higher Education Committee and Higher Education Academic Board terms of references, address specifically the college's higher education provision. This is evident in minutes from these committees, which are reflective of the purpose defined within the relevant terms of reference of both the Higher Education Committee and the Higher Education Academic Board.
40. The assessment team additionally examined staff and student facing policies, many of which specifically target the college's higher education provision, and the team considered the policies to be comprehensive and accessible to its intended audience. The policies included:
- higher education student support policy
 - safeguarding and child protection policy
 - student and staff mental health and wellbeing strategy 2022-25

- performance management review process for academic staff (which the assessment team found to be particularly impressive)
 - higher education hardship policy and guidance 2023-24.
41. It is clear from the review of these policies that the college has established policies in place to fulfil its accountabilities and responsibilities for staff and students. These policies align to the college's higher education mission and strategic direction and demonstrate consistency, such as through the theme of collaboration with industry and other partnerships. The assessment team also looked at information publicly available on the college's website and found that many of the college's policies are published there, such as the safeguarding and child protection policy. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the college's higher education mission, strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, published, understood and applied consistently.
42. To test whether there is evidence to show that academic policies support its higher education mission, aims and objectives, the assessment team examined the college's academic regulations and policies including:
- higher education strategic plan
 - higher education quality cycle
 - standard teaching contract
 - Audit and Risk Committee report dated November 2023
 - report from the Higher Education Committee Review meeting (Search and Governance) dated October 2023.
43. The assessment team found that the college's academic regulations support the college's higher education mission, aims and objectives as outlined in its strategic plan. For example, the assessment team reviewed the policy outlining the work of the Audit and Risk Committee and associated minutes for this committee dated November 2023. This committee has oversight of business continuity of the college and the minutes detail the importance of continual internal audit. It reports on improvements made in the previous 12 months on the governance framework, learner number systems, curriculum planning and budget setting processes. The assessment team is satisfied that this is in line with strategic theme one – 'to develop an outstanding and attractive higher education offer' – and strategic theme two – 'to provide an excellent higher education student experience' – as published in the college's strategic plan. These strategic themes are underpinned by the college's continuous improvement activities as part of its higher education mission, aims and objectives, which are reflected in the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee.
44. In addition, the assessment team examined policies relating to assessment including:
- Subject Assessment Panels and Award Assessment Boards 2023-2024
 - late submission and extenuating circumstances 2023-2024
 - student fitness to study 2023-2024

- exclusion of students on the grounds of unsatisfactory progress
 - examination and assessment offences
 - anonymous marking of examination scripts.
45. Regarding policies relating to assessment practices, documentation primarily outlines a requirement for annual review. However, the assessment team found that policies state the frequency of review and the date of any amendments that have been made but omit the date when they have been reviewed. For example, the policy relating to examination and assessment offences states that the last amendment occurred in 2021. The assessment team examined the contents of this policy and thought it was comprehensive and relevant. This increases confidence that policies are regularly reviewed, despite the review not being noted within the policy document. The assessment team therefore recommend that the college includes within each policy document space for capturing the date of review of the policy and the person responsible for the review. It may also be helpful to the college's staff if any dated amendments include what amendments have been made so that staff can easily see the changes that have been written into or removed from each policy.
46. In relation to the conferment of awards and overall student management, the assessment team examined the college's:
- regulatory framework for its undergraduate awards for Levels 4 and 5
 - draft regulatory framework for its Level 6 provision in readiness in case the college is awarded bachelors' DAPs
 - certification of awards and supplementary certification policy
 - payment of fees and withholding of student awards due to outstanding fees policy
 - policy on supporting pregnant students and students with very young children.
47. The assessment team found that the policies were consistent and in alignment with the college's values. For example, the policy on supporting pregnant students and students with very young children emphasises equality of treatment. This demonstrated to the assessment team that the college's academic regulations are in alignment with the college's values 'to put equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart' as outlined in the college's strategic plan.
48. The assessment team reviewed documentation describing the college's internal verification and internal quality assurance policy and management of existing time-limited foundation DAPs. This was demonstrated effectively in the FdSc Agriculture programme proposals. These documents included early thinking around the conceptualisation of the programme, links with industry, teaching and learning intentions, curriculum including intended programme structure and content, anticipated student numbers, impact on staffing and other resources and impact on existing provision. The assessment team found that the programme specification for FdSc in Agriculture is comprehensive, with learning outcomes reflecting FHEQ academic levels of the programme, which supports the college's fifth strategic aim of having strong links with industry, including representation on validation panels as discussed in the strategic plan. This shows that academic policies, including the college's regulatory

frameworks and internal verification and internal quality policies, support the college's higher education mission, aims and objectives.

49. The assessment team also looked at three external examiner reports for FdSc Marine Biology with Conservation, FdA Child and Family Studies and FdSc Horticulture. In all reports, external examiners stated confidence in the integrity of the academic standards judged against the work that they had seen and in the robustness of examination and assessment process. Their comments align with the college's strategic aim to drive high quality teaching, learning and assessment standards, as outlined in the college's strategic plan.
50. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that policies demonstrate the college's intention to 'provide exceptional education and training for every learner' as detailed in the strategic plan 2022-2025. Many policies promote the importance of maintaining a student-focused approach. The assessment team looked at the meeting minutes of the Higher Education Committee from November 2023 and February 2024 and the Higher Education Academic Board from February 2023, December 2023 and February 2024. These minutes included evidence of arrangements for managing higher education across the college, including discussions on strategic aims and policies. It is evident that these committees have distinct purposes and remits and, as such, enable strong academic governance. This governance aligns with the college's strategic mission, aims and objectives and is reflected in the college's policies.
51. To test whether there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in the college in relation to academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision, the assessment team examined the Cornwall College Group (TCCG) standing orders and its committees 2022-2023 document. This document outlines the college's governance structure including the accountability and monitoring of its processes for the college's higher education provision. The college's governance structure is explained in further detail above in paragraphs 37 and 38 and the assessment team is satisfied that this academic governance structure is appropriate and clear for a higher education provider of this size.
52. The assessment team's review of the terms of reference for the committees and boards found that there are appropriate delegations and reporting between the various committees and boards. For example, the terms of reference for the Higher Education Committee show that the Higher Education Academic Board reports and escalates any risks to quality of the higher education provision to the Higher Education Committee; this committee then takes the necessary action and reports to the Corporation Board. The assessment team is satisfied that this reporting structure functions appropriately in practice as the associated minutes of the Higher Education Committee dated 7 February 2024 referenced content from the minutes of the Higher Education Academic Board on 11 December 2023. Furthermore, the Higher Education Committee noted that it would like key points from Higher Education Academic Board meetings to be 'pulled out and presented' in future meetings, which highlights the Higher Education Committee's oversight function. The assessment team looked at the minutes from the Corporation Board held on 20 March 2024, which are publicly available on the college's website. These minutes reflect the Corporation Board's terms of reference and, of specific note, the chair of the Higher Education Committee provides a report to the Corporation Board. The assessment team is satisfied that appropriate oversight of higher

education provision was in place, with the necessary reporting and arrangements for managing this provision.

53. Overall, it is evident to the assessment team that committees and boards under the college's governance structure have distinctive terms of reference and membership focused on both operational and strategic higher education oversight. The associated minutes of these committees and boards demonstrate clear lines of accountability and reporting. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in the college relating to academic governance structures and arrangements for managing higher education provision.
54. The assessment team assessed whether the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is shown to be clearly articulated and consistently applied and found that this is demonstrated within the management structural diagram submitted by the college. This diagram demonstrates that the deputy principal for growth, higher education, land based and international provision reports directly into the college's chief executive and principal. Reporting into the deputy principal's portfolio are directors and heads of subject disciplines, heads of college centres and the higher education coordinator. The assessment team considered that the senior academic authority within the college manages the responsibilities, including compliance with requirements, for higher education and those associated with DAPs.
55. It is evident that governance processes exist to hold the senior academic authority to account for ensuring that the function and responsibilities of the college are consistently applied. For example, the Higher Education Academic Board is pivotal to the oversight of the quality of higher education and is accountable to the Higher Education Committee, and ultimately the Corporation Board, for its academic responsibilities and the quality and standards of provision. In respect to the quality and standards of the college's higher education provision, the Higher Education Academic Board terms of reference require it to ensure academic standards are maintained, programmes meet defined learning aims and objectives, and high levels of student satisfaction are reported. The assessment team considered minutes from the Higher Education Academic Board and was satisfied that it is discharging its responsibilities consistently across its higher education provision. For example, in the minutes from the Higher Education Academic Board dated February 2023, items for discussion included an update on programme approvals, future submission of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and an update on student recruitment.
56. Furthermore, the minutes from the Higher Education Committee dated February 2024 and associated action plan show that the college takes an appropriate management approach to higher education provision that is different from its further education provision. For example, in the section titled 'making the most of the foundation DAPs', the college highlights the need to encourage an appropriate research and scholarship culture to maintain the conditions of awarding its own degrees. In response to this, the minutes from this committee report that the college has reduced the teaching hours for higher education staff to encourage research and scholarship activities and increased the visibility of research across the college. This is a different approach to that of further education teaching staff who have increased teaching contact hours.

57. Although addressed more fully under criterion C1, the assessment team further examined policies and practices designed to support the ongoing development of academic staff working across the higher education provision. This included, for example, supporting research and scholarly activity and contractual information. On review of the higher education standard teaching contract and staff remission practices, the assessment team found evidence of staff investment, shown by the college developing and supporting its higher education academic staff resource. Further evidence was also seen in the staff remission document, which demonstrates that many staff have secured academic awards at undergraduate, masters' and PhD level. This includes staff members who are senior leaders at the college. Many staff hold teaching awards, or are working towards attainment of an award, which is a contractual requirement within the first three years of appointment to the college. This demonstrates that staff at the college, including senior leaders, have appropriate expertise and are appropriately qualified to manage the college's higher education provision.
58. Delegated activities were also shown in the work of the Higher Education Committee whose terms of reference focus on development, delivery and evaluation of the college's higher education portfolio. Minutes from this committee demonstrate that robust processes exist to support higher education activity. This is comprehensively demonstrated in the Action Plan paper submitted to the Higher Education Committee dated February 2024. This plan used a traffic light system to assess progress across areas of practice supporting higher education including curriculum alignment, quality assurance and compliance, DAPs, high quality teaching, learning and assessment and student voice. It is evident to the assessment team that the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is clearly articulated and consistently applied across the college's academic governance structure with effective, clear and appropriate lines of accountability for discharging its academic responsibilities.
59. To determine whether there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership at the college, the assessment team reviewed initially the membership of the Higher Education Academic Board. The terms of reference of this committee are to ensure that higher education at the college is governed, managed and administered effectively, with accountability for its academic responsibilities, financial management and policy, and the quality and standards of provision. Membership of the Higher Education Academic Board includes the deputy principal for growth, higher education, land based and international, the vice-principals for quality of education and data, funding and compliance and the director of student experience. The college's management structure demonstrates lines of accountability from each of these roles to and from the principal and CEO of the college. Each post holder has oversight over other personnel and systems management within the college. In addition to membership of the Higher Education Academic Board, the college actively seeks governors to serve on its many committees. Current membership of governors includes, for example, the principal and CEO of the college, college staff members, experts from industry, educational consultants, chartered accountants and the higher education student governor as detailed on the publicly available information on the college's website. In addition, the extended leadership team minutes from December 2023 demonstrate that governance focused on communication and improvement across the college is practised. The assessment team is confident that the broad profile of personnel demonstrates that the college has appropriate depth and strength in its academic leadership.
60. While the CVs for senior academic leaders were not submitted as evidence as part of this review, the assessment team was able to look at publicly available background information

for senior leaders at the college. Firstly, the assessment team examined the staff profile for the Principal and Chief Executive of the college, which was publicly available on the college's website. The profile demonstrated that the Principal and Chief Executive has previously been a Deputy Chief Executive Officer at another college that offers further and higher education (including Levels 4, 5 and 6 courses). The experience outlined in the profile also demonstrated that the Principal and Chief Executive has a broad range of industry experience, including being an honorary member of the City and Guilds Group for commitment to vocational excellence and innovative partnerships. This experience is particularly important given the strong industry and partnership links within the college's higher education provision. The assessment team also reviewed the publicly available information on the LinkedIn profiles for the Deputy Principal for Curriculum and Quality and Director of Higher Education. The profiles demonstrated that senior leaders had worked in senior positions in other colleges that offer further and higher education or University Centres, such as the Deputy Principal, Director of Curriculum, Dean of Higher Education and Head of Higher Education. The profiles reviewed also demonstrated that senior academic leaders also hold a qualification at Level 6 or Level 7, and have other relevant academic experience such as external examining experience, leading on strategic monitoring and review and regulatory compliance. Based on its experience and expertise, the assessment team is satisfied that there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership at the college. This is because the experience shown in senior academic leaders' profiles demonstrates that they have relevant expertise and backgrounds to be key academic leaders at the college and they have held similar previous positions at other colleges or institutions that offer higher education provision similar to the provision offered by the college.

61. Governance processes set up within the college to support its higher education provision demonstrate to the assessment team that senior leadership has established processes whereby the college develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff, students and external stakeholders. This is shown in the structure and constitution of various committees, as described in the evidence document on the college's standing orders 2022–2023 as well as respective terms of reference, for example that of the Higher Education Committee and Higher Education Academic Board. When viewed with the committee membership flow diagram resource provided to the assessment review team, there is demonstrable evidence that curriculum and student facing committees draw on a range of personnel across the college, including students and (when relevant) industry specialists to inform their work. The impact of the richness of membership is captured in minutes from various committees that demonstrate evaluation of current practices as well as development opportunities for the higher education provision. A good example is the paper submitted to the Higher Education Committee on 7 February 2024 with a full action plan for higher education provision. It has been shown that across governance structures, multiple stakeholders have the opportunity to be involved in developing and implementing provision. This supports the statement made by the college in their self-assessment document May 2024 where it affirms that it uses a flexible approach when developing policies and its approach to programme design ensures that continuous improvement is supported and that all stakeholders can engage in the process and its evaluation. The assessment team tested how the college develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its students and found that, in many aspects of its higher education provision, it is engaging with students. This resonates with the college's vision of putting students first. Opportunities exist for student representatives to participate as student

governors on college committees and for wider engagement with students to listen to, be influenced by and respond to the student voice as described in the higher education student engagement strategy 2021-22. The opportunity for students to be involved in the college's governance processes affirms the importance of student participation in the college's mission and strategic aims. In addition, the college's student engagement strategy 2021-2022 states that the college recognises that the views and opinions of students, individually and collectively, inform all quality systems with the view to enhancing students' educational experiences.

62. The assessment team examined the attendance records 2023-2024 for the Higher Education Committee to consider collaboration with students, and also considered some individual examples of policy development with students, such as the activity risk assessment of the Borneo field trip and notes from a meeting held by student support with neurodiverse students working with the Eden partnership. The team found these evidence sources to be effective examples of student engagement. The latter document is a particularly positive example of where the college responded to student needs relating to assessment and in doing so, improved the overall experience for neurodiverse students, including the introduction for example of focused training for study advisors. It is evident that there are opportunities for students to engage with the college's policies and procedures but as this was a desk-based assessment without direct discussions with students, it is difficult for the assessment team to determine how proactive student engagement is in reality. For example, in the Higher Education Committee minutes, the student voice is minimal as the minutes fail to capture any specific contributions from students. However, in the Higher Education Committee review dated October 2022, it is formally noted that the student governor made a very valuable contribution to the committee during 2021-22. The minutes of Higher Education Committee meetings demonstrate that there is student representation and therefore students do actively attend high-level meetings and engage in governance processes. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the college develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its students.
63. The assessment team is also satisfied that processes exist to support communication with all staff working across the higher education portfolio of provision. The assessment team examined a presentation used during an all higher education staff meeting in September 2023. The purpose of this presentation was to inform and update staff on issues pertinent at the commencement of a new academic year, for example covering aspects such as student numbers, induction planning and programme documentation. Although the assessment team recognise the purpose of this presentation was to inform rather than collaborate with others, the assessment team saw this as an example of how the college is communicating its policies and procedures effectively with its staff. Contributing to effective communication, the college's Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy 2022-25 recognises that the greatest resource is the people who work and study within the college and that support for good mental health and wellbeing is a priority. The college commits to positive mental health actions through encouraging participation and engagement in activities that promote positive wellbeing. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the college develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff.
64. Similarly, the assessment team has seen evidence in the delivery of programmes and in partnership working where in the view of the team, long standing partnerships thrive, built from what to the team appears to be many years of effective communication and

collaboration. Although many of the policies submitted as evidence do not detail the original authors, often listing only the person responsible for review and maintenance, the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy states that the policies and procedures set out in this document are in accordance with those set out on the Southwest Child Protection Procedures website and the guidance issued by various local multi-agency safeguarding partnerships and boards. It is therefore evident the college draws on expertise and uses this to inform its practices and policies. Policies and practices are therefore clearly developed in collaboration and informed by external stakeholders. The assessment team is satisfied that the college develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff, students and external stakeholders.

65. To test whether the college will manage successfully the responsibilities that would be vested in it were it to be granted indefinite foundation DAPs and extended bachelors' DAPs, the assessment team looked at the Higher Education Strategic Plan 2022-27. The college commits to a strategic aim focused on its provision awarded under its own DAPs 'over the course of the strategy in order to develop a dynamic, strong and responsive curriculum that aligns to subject specialisms at each campus'. In addition, the action plan presented to the Higher Education Committee February 2024 reports on the importance of further curriculum development using the college's foundation DAPs in areas of coastal adventure and superyacht engineering. In the view of the team, policies such as that of Subject Assessment Panels and Awards Assessment Boards and Certification of Awards and Supplementary Certification 2023-24 are clear and precise and will enable the college to manage its responsibilities in the management of awards. Further evidence is also seen in the quality and completeness of processes underpinning work undertaken to design and implement the suite of provision developed since the college was awarded time-limited foundation DAPs. This is particularly clear in the evidence submitted relating to FdSc Agriculture from the initial expression of interest through to development and approval of programme specifications.
66. Governance processes are also in place, including strategic oversight of higher education by the Higher Education Academic Board holding accountability for the college's academic responsibilities, financial management, quality and standards of provision. Specifically relating to awards of qualifications, the assessment team reviewed the minutes of the Higher Education Academic Board to test that the Board is fulfilling its responsibility for academic oversight of higher education as stated in its terms of reference. Minutes from the Higher Education Academic Board showed a discussion on the production of certificates for graduates for the provision under the college's own time-limited foundation DAPs and inclusion of a standing item on the agenda of the number of awards made under its own time-limited DAPs. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the Higher Education Academic Board is fulfilling its responsibilities and following appropriate processes for conferring awards under the college's time-limited DAPs.
67. In conclusion, the college's approach to academic governance is to ensure effective governance processes are in place and to engage all stakeholders in relevant aspects of the college's business. For many years, the college has fostered partnerships with industry and other education providers. Through these partnerships, opportunities for continued learning and impact on the student experience is shown, for example in the inclusion of industry experts in the delivery of teaching thus increasing employability for students. It is evident to the team from the evidence reviewed that the college has effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.

Subcriterion 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

68. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion A1.2 because all aspects of the control and oversight of its higher education provision is conducted in partnership with its students.
69. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the college has met the evidence requirements for A1.2.

Reasoning

70. To assess whether students, individually and collectively, are engaged in the governance and management of the college's higher education provision, with students supported to be able to engage effectively, the assessment team examined the role of the student governor. In the assessment team's view, the expectations of the student governor role are well defined and a student member of the Governing Board plays a full part in college governance. Student governors are elected to serve for 12 months and attend approximately six full governing board meetings a year and Quality Committee and Higher Education Committee meetings to influence practices and ensure that the student voice is active. Students who are selected to be a student governor are invited to attend governor training to support them in undertaking this role and responsibility. The assessment team reviewed the student governor role description and found that students who take on the role as student governor are appropriately trained and supported by the college to be able to engage effectively in the governance and management of the college.
71. To test how this operates in practice, the assessment team examined the student engagement in the governor attendance records for the Higher Education Committee 2023-24. During this period, three students served as student governors. Of the three meetings monitored during this period, two student governors attended all meetings with their attendance captured in the minutes of the Higher Education Committee meeting dated November 2023 and February 2024. The minutes from November 2023 indicate multiple opportunities for student governors to participate including discussions relating to student admission and accommodation, the college's response to the National Student Survey (NSS), student retention initiatives and potential new curriculum development in niche markets. This indicates that academic governance, including the management of the college and its higher education provision, is conducted in partnership with the college's students.
72. The importance of student engagement in partnership with the college is also apparent in the following evidence:
 - the college's self-assessment document dated May 2024 where it emphasises its commitment to be student focused

- the college's systematic manner for providing assessment feedback intended to support student growth
- the higher education careers guidance reflected in the higher education careers officer support case studies
- the college's student engagement strategy 2021-22.

73. This evidence demonstrates that the college actively seeks student engagement and learns from listening to students at all levels of granularity involved in the student experience across higher education. It is clear to the assessment team that academic governance, including all aspects of the control and oversight of its higher education provision, is conducted in partnership with the college's students.

Subcriterion 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

74. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion A1.3. Where the college 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.
75. The assessment team's view is based on how the college currently approaches its management and governance, together with the review of evidence under criterion A1.3.

Reasoning

76. **[A1i]** The college offers a well established suite of higher education provision through its partnerships with industry such as the Eden Project and other higher education providers such as the University of Plymouth and Plymouth Marjon University, in addition to the college's programmes under its own time-limited foundation DAPs. The college has established long-standing partnerships with external organisations over many years, decades in some instances, that it describes as highly valued. These partnerships are intrinsically linked to the college's strategy for growth with the college confirming that it intends for partner-linked provision to continue alongside the college's own provision at Levels 4, 5 and 6, if it is successful in its application for extension to bachelors' DAPs. Since being awarded time-limited foundation DAPs, the college has developed 14 foundation degrees. Details of those degrees submitted as sources of evidence for this assessment demonstrate comprehensive and informed programme specifications. Were the college to be granted indefinite foundation DAPs and extended bachelors' DAPs, the college's intention is to build a land-based centre of excellence at Level 6 that aligns to its higher education strategic plan 2022-27. In a meeting with the assessment team in July 2024, senior staff at the college

confirmed that there is an increased awareness of programme quality reviews because the college had participated in programme quality reviews in partner higher education organisations to prepare itself for undertaking anticipated similar processes across its higher education provision within the next two years. This is one example that indicates that the college has a strategic approach when working with partner organisations.

77. The assessment team is confident in the ways in which the college works with, or proposes to work with, other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, including assurance that the arrangements are based on a strategic approach, informed by the effective assessment of risk including the carrying out of due diligence. The assessment team looked at evidence such as specialist industry teaching input over the last year, which demonstrates the college's ability to work with other organisations effectively. For example, in the FdSc Agriculture and BSc (Hons) Agriculture programme, industry speaker input has included industry representatives in cattle breeding in the teaching of its livestock modules. Similarly, a local qualified agronomist and farmer delivers the crops modules drawing on teaching opportunities from his mainly arable farm. Application of learning to practice and employability is also proactively sought. For example, with the agricultural programmes mentioned above, students use a live brief session at Level 6 to suggest enhancements for improving sustainability to grazing systems within the grassland module. A further example of applied learning is where students as part of the Agri-Tech Level 6 module visit a farm and are shown how significant carbon footprint reductions are met. From the evidence provided, the assessment team can affirm that local industry and larger organisations, such as the Eden Project in the Southwest, are actively engaged in all aspects of the student experience, from that of programme development through to teaching, practice support and assessment. This adds to the enrichment of the provision and employability for students.
78. Although the assessment team has not seen legal contractual agreement between the college and its current partnership organisations, including those with other higher education institutions, it has reviewed correspondence between the college and the University of Plymouth that refers to seeking ongoing ways to enhance collaboration. Minutes of key governance processes, such as the Joint Boards of Studies with the University of Plymouth and Plymouth Marjon University Strategic Partnership considered by the team, demonstrate oversight and governance across partnership working practices. It is clear to the assessment team that where the college works with, or proposes to work with, other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, the arrangements are strategic and informed by effective assessment of risk including conducting due diligence. The assessment team observed that the arrangements are subject to the same robust oversight and governance as the rest of the college's provision.
79. The assessment team is confident that the existing long-standing relationships with both industry and other higher education providers has served, and will continue to serve, as a platform for organisational learning. Since being awarded time-limited foundation DAPs in 2018, in the view of the team, the college has developed a suite of provision that is systematically managed and robust. The assessment team is satisfied that if the college is granted indefinite foundation DAPs and extended bachelors' DAPs, it will continue to work with industry and other higher education providers to ensure that its governance and management remains robust and ultimately leads to a quality student learning experience. The assessment team is satisfied that where the college works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, it ensures that governance and management of such

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

Conclusion

80. Through scrutiny of the college's governance processes, its partnership and student-focused ways of working, the assessment team concluded that the college has transparent and comprehensive academic governance to govern how it awards academic credit for its Level 4 and 5 qualifications granted under its existing time-limited foundation DAPs. It is evident that the college has effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities, and that its governance structures would be appropriate if the college is successful in extending its powers to bachelors' DAPs.
81. Academic governance, including all aspects of the control and oversight of its higher education provision, is conducted in partnership with the college's students. The strategic governance by the Higher Education Academic Board and the Higher Education Committee provides robust oversight of quality and delivery of higher education and has appropriate student representation. The college is intentional in its desire to engage with students throughout all governance processes and there is evidence that students are engaged as student governors as well as feeding into aspects of curriculum development and quality improvement. The assessment team recommends that the college continues to consider strategies for how student engagement might be further encouraged and recorded.
82. Where the college works with, or seeks to work with, other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, it is evident that 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. The college has benefitted through the partnership with its higher education partners, such as the University of Plymouth, and is ready to accept responsibility for awarding indefinite foundation DAPs and time-limited bachelors' DAPs. A particular strength of the college's practice is in its engagement with industry. This is evident through industry experts feeding into teaching, learning and assessment and enhanced opportunities to take learning into industry through associated field work. This not only enhances and maintains the currency of knowledge and understanding for teaching, but also increases employability for the college's students. Partnership working is also clearly aligned to the college's strategic aims, particularly the college's strategy for growth.
83. As set out in paragraph 17 of this report, the college has only begun offering provision under its own time-limited foundation DAPs in the 2022-23 academic year. However, the team's assessment has also drawn on the work undertaken by the college to prepare for its own programmes. The assessment team is satisfied from the evidence reviewed that the college has exercised its powers securely and has an approach that will be suitable for extending to bachelors' DAPs and meets criterion A1.

Assessment of DAPs criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks

Advice to the OfS

84. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks because it meets subcriteria B1.1 and B1.2. The assessment team examined evidence which demonstrated, in summary, that the college has in place a transparent and comprehensive existing regulatory framework and associated policies and procedures to govern how it awards academic credit for its current Level 4 and 5 qualifications. Additionally, the evidence shows the detail of how arrangements for awarding credit and the granting of its own higher education qualifications will be applied to the college's proposed Level 6 provision, if it successfully achieves an extension of its DAPs authorisation to time-limited bachelors' DAPs.
85. The assessment team also found that the college maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves, which constitutes the reference point for the delivery and assessment of the programme. There is evidence that students and alumni are provided with records of study.
86. This view is based on the assessment team's specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Subcriterion 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

87. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion B1.1 for its Level 4 and 5 qualifications granted under its existing time-limited foundation DAPs because the college has in place a transparent and comprehensive existing academic regulatory framework, and associated policies and procedures, to govern how it awards academic credit for its current Level 4 and 5 qualifications. Additionally, the college meets criterion B1.1 for its proposed Level 6 qualifications, if it successfully achieves an extension to its DAPs authorisation to time-limited bachelors' DAPs, because the college has prepared, in readiness, a transparent and comprehensive draft regulatory framework and draft undergraduate academic regulations which will be appropriate for the granting of its own higher education qualifications.
88. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that the college has met the evidence requirements for B1.1.

Reasoning

89. To determine whether the college's academic frameworks and regulations governing its higher education provision are appropriate to its current status, the assessment team

reviewed the college's regulatory framework for undergraduate awards (2023-24), along with supporting policies and guidance documents for the 2023-24 academic year, covering:

- admissions
- recognition of prior learning
- assessment
- extenuating circumstances
- appeals
- complaints
- external examiners
- assessment boards
- fitness to study
- certification.

90. The assessment team found that the college's regulatory framework includes appropriate detail of the arrangements for programme structures, levels and numbers of credit, assessment, arrangements and calculation of awards and procedures in the event of failure for the college's Level 4 and Level 5 qualifications. The assessment team is satisfied that the college's existing regulatory framework for undergraduate awards cover Level 4 and 5 qualifications, which relate to the college's existing time-limited foundation DAPs.
91. Some of the supporting policies listed above provide brief statements relating to specific aspects of assessment and awards. For example, the college's internal verification and internal quality assurance policy comprises only a brief summary of the policy principles for staff involved in internal verification and internal quality assurance to adhere to. However, the assessment team is satisfied that the information in the college's regulatory framework, together with the supporting policies, is sufficient to provide a transparent, comprehensive and appropriate framework to govern how the college awards credit and qualifications for its Level 4 and 5 qualifications.
92. To test whether the college's academic frameworks and regulations governing its higher education provision are implemented fully and consistently, the assessment team examined the terms of reference and four sets of minutes from the college's Higher Education Academic Board from academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24, minutes from Subject Assessment Panels, minutes from Award Assessment Boards and a sample of eight external examiner reports covering the academic year 2022-23. The assessment team also looked at three examples of completed applications for recognition of prior learning from the academic years 2021-22 and 2023-24, a summary of extenuating circumstances applications from the academic year 2022-23 and a sample of outcomes from three academic appeals from the academic year 2022-23.

93. The college's Higher Education Academic Board has oversight and responsibility for academic standards across the college and receives reports from the Higher Education Academic Regulations subgroup. The assessment team found that the sample of minutes from the college's Higher Education Academic Board do not specifically reference academic standards but the sample does include items related to academic standards. For example, the Higher Education Academic Board meeting minutes include a specific agenda item on updates on recent validations and new programme proposals and minutes from 5 February 2024 note that the Board was waiting for approval of certificates for foundation DAPs.
94. The college runs its own Subject Assessment Panels for programmes validated by its partner university and the sample of minutes from the meetings provided robust documents with positive and constructive comments from external examiners. This confirmed to the assessment team that the college implements the relevant partner university's academic regulations fully and consistently. The assessment team also found that external examiner reports contained positive and constructive commentary and confirmed that academic standards were being fully and consistently maintained by the college.
95. Furthermore, the assessment team examined examples of how the college implements specific aspects of the regulatory framework and supporting policies in practice. For example, the assessment team looked at evidence of documentation from three applications for recognition of prior learning, which included examples of completed application forms, supporting evidence and confirmation of the decision outcomes. The assessment team also reviewed a summary of extenuating circumstances and documentation relating to three academic appeals, which included a summary document detailing the nature of the appeal, the evidence taken into account when considering the appeal and the rationale for the decision outcome, along with correspondence to the student which confirmed the outcome with a detailed explanation of the rationale for the decision taken. This evidence demonstrated to the assessment team that the college's academic frameworks and regulations for its higher education provision are implemented fully and consistently. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the college's academic frameworks and regulations governing its Level 4 and 5 higher education provision are appropriate to its current status and are implemented fully and consistently.
96. To test whether the college has created, in readiness, one or more academic frameworks and regulations which will be appropriate for the granting of its own higher education qualifications at Level 6, should the college be successful in its application for bachelors' DAPs, the assessment team examined:
- the college's draft undergraduate academic regulations for 2024-25
 - a summary document titled 'Evidence of use of foundation DAPs and next steps'
 - a summary document titled 'Draft regulatory framework bachelors' DAPs'
 - supporting policies and guidance documents covering the 2023-24 academic year (as outlined in the paragraphs above).
97. The college's draft undergraduate academic regulations for 2024-25 and associated policies, as detailed above, cover the college's existing Level 4 and 5 qualifications and the college's proposed Level 6 qualifications in detail which relate to both the college's existing time-limited

foundation DAPs and its proposed bachelors' DAPs. The assessment team understands that the college has taken the opportunity to update its academic regulations to cover qualifications for Levels 4, 5 and 6 in one document in preparation to deliver its own Level 6 qualifications, if it is successful in its application for DAPs (this is explained in more detail below).

98. The college's draft undergraduate academic regulations for 2024-25 includes arrangements for accreditation of prior learning, enrolment and registration of students, award titles, programme structures and the amount of credit for each award, assessment, module pass requirements, assessment boards and the calculation of awards. The assessment team found that the document provides an appropriate level of detail in each section. For example, the section on calculation of awards includes appropriate detail for each qualification of the number of credits required, the weightings applied to each level and the bandings for different levels of awards. This demonstrated that the draft undergraduate academic regulations that the college has created in readiness for its proposed extension to time-limited bachelors' DAPs will be appropriate for the granting of its own higher education qualifications.
99. Furthermore, the assessment team reviewed two summary documents which set out the college's intentions for Level 6 qualifications, should the college be successful in its application for bachelors' DAPs. The document titled 'Draft regulatory framework bachelors' DAPs' provides a list of the college's policies and procedures that will comprise the proposed regulatory framework. The document outlining the college's use of foundation DAPs and next steps broadly sets out its intention to use the robust structures that it has used to operate its foundation provision for approval for Level 6 qualifications. The documents demonstrated to the assessment team that the college has set out appropriate detail of how it intends to operate its Level 6 provision and how it intends to build on its experience in managing its foundation degree arrangements. For example, the assessment team noted that the college acknowledges that this additional level requires more scrutiny and an additional level of process and responsibility. The college set out how it would provide this in a number of ways, which include arrangements for scholarly activity, teaching, learning and assessment and supporting the student experience at Level 6. This demonstrated to the assessment team that the college has taken an appropriate and strategic approach to the development of its academic frameworks, which will be appropriate for the granting of its own proposed Level 6 qualifications.
100. The assessment team assessed the college's draft undergraduate academic regulations for 2024-25, which were made available towards the end of the assessment. The assessment team initially had some concerns that these regulations were still in draft format so close to the start of the academic year for which they were intended (academic year 2024-25). The assessment team also observed that these regulations differ significantly from the college's existing regulatory framework that is currently in place for its foundation DAPs and were, in places, the same as the academic regulations of its current university partner, the University of Plymouth, a validator for the college's current Level 6 provision.
101. The college confirmed in a statement that the approach taken was a deliberate step to align its own Level 6 academic regulations with those of its current university partner to ensure a consistent approach in relation to students' academic progress and strengthen the college's response in meeting its regulatory requirements. Additionally, the college articulated ways in which it intended to adapt the academic regulations to its own specific requirements. For

example, the college articulated planned adaptations to reflect how it manages student interruptions and suspensions of study, late enrolments, work-based learning, referrals and compensation of modules. This demonstrated to the assessment team that the college has taken appropriate ownership of its draft academic regulations. The college also confirmed in this statement that the draft academic regulations, and any subsequent changes to them, will be reviewed by the college's higher education regulatory subcommittee and reported to the Higher Education Academic Board and actioned accordingly. Although the college did not provide a specific timeframe for final approval, the level of detail in the content of the draft academic regulations, along with the college's explanatory statement, confirmed to the assessment team that the draft academic regulations were sufficiently advanced and well developed that this did not pose a significant risk to the college meeting the requirements of criterion B1.1.

102. The assessment team concluded that the college has created, in readiness, academic frameworks and regulations which will be appropriate for the granting of its own higher education qualifications up to and including Level 6. This is in addition to having transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how the college awards academic credit and qualifications for its current provision under its own time-limited foundation DAPs.

Subcriterion 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

103. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion B1.2 because there is sufficient evidence to show that the college maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves (and of subsequent changes to it), which constitutes the reference point for the delivery and assessment of the programme, and its monitoring and review. There is also evidence that students and alumni are provided with records of study.
104. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that the college has met the evidence requirements for B1.2.

Reasoning

105. To determine whether the college maintains definitive and up to date records of each qualification to be awarded and each programme being offered and that those records are used as the basis for the delivery and assessment of each programme and there is evidence that students and alumni are provided with records of study, the assessment team reviewed the following documents:

- curriculum development and programme approval procedure dated 11 November 2022

- policy for certification of awards and supplementary certification covering the academic year 2023-24
- example transcript of results
- template for programme specifications
- a sample of three programme specifications at Level 5 from the academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24
- four sets of minutes from the college's Higher Education Academic Board from academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24.

106. The records for each qualification to be awarded by the college are maintained through a programme specification for each programme, which is developed by the programme team. The assessment team found that the three Level 5 programme specifications it examined included detailed arrangements for delivery and assessment of the programme. For example, the learning outcomes module map identifies where each of the intended learning outcomes is assessed for each module within a programme. Additionally, the sections on structure, mode of delivery, mode of assessment and work based or related learning (the latter is particularly relevant to the foundation degrees covered by the example specifications) clearly outline how the programme specification is used as the definitive reference point for the delivery and assessment of the programme.
107. The college's curriculum development and programme approval procedure outlines appropriate arrangements for minor and major changes to programmes, which may include changes to programme definitive documentation. Minor and major change processes are run by the college's Higher Education Strategy and Operations Group. Minor and major changes are proposed by programme leaders and require consultation with external examiners. Outcomes from minor and major change processes are reported to the college's Higher Education Academic Board and a summary of changes made are included at the end of the programme specification. For example, the assessment team found that the programme specification for FdA Counselling Psychology with Criminology included details of changes to both formatting and content made through five versions of the document. This demonstrated to the assessment team that the college has appropriate arrangements in place for recording minor and major changes to programmes and ensuring programme documentation is maintained and up to date.
108. The assessment team examined the college's policy for certification of awards, supplementary certification and example transcript and found that these documents clearly outline the college's arrangements for providing students with records of study on completion of a programme including certification, transcripts and certification of attendance. The assessment team noted that the policy does not include a template for certificates, which in the assessment team's view is considered good practice. However, the minutes from the college's Higher Education Academic Board on 5 February 2024 set out that the Board was waiting for a proof of the certificate for approval for foundation degree qualifications. As outlined in paragraph 17 of this report, the programmes approved to be delivered under the college's own time-limited foundation DAPs had its first cohort of students start in the 2022-23 academic year. This means that those programmes have not yet completed. Nevertheless,

the assessment team is satisfied based on the evidence reviewed that the college's arrangements for providing students with records of study on completion of a programme are appropriate, and that students and alumni will be provided with records of study for the programmes approved under the college's own time-limited foundation DAPs started in the 2022-23 academic year. The assessment team is confident that, although this work has not yet been actioned in practice for programmes started in the 2022-23 academic year, the college is adequately prepared to provide students with records of study on completion of a programme and this does not pose a significant risk to the college meeting the requirements for criterion B1.2.

109. The assessment team concluded that the college maintains definitive and up to date records of each qualification to be awarded and each programme being offered and that those records are used as the basis for the delivery and assessment of each programme, and there is evidence that students and alumni are provided with records of study.

Conclusions

110. Through scrutiny of the college's regulatory framework and associated policies, the assessment team concluded that the college currently has in place a transparent and comprehensive academic regulatory framework, and associated policies and procedures, to govern how it awards academic credit for its Level 4 and 5 qualifications granted under its existing time-limited foundation DAPs.
111. The assessment team also concluded that the draft regulatory framework and draft undergraduate academic regulations 2024-25 provide appropriate detail of how arrangements for awarding credit and the granting of its own higher education qualifications will be applied to the college's proposed Level 6 provision. The assessment team considers that this is appropriate, if the college successfully achieves an extension to bachelors' DAPs, because the college has taken the deliberate approach to align its draft regulatory framework with the established regulatory framework of the college's current awarding university, which will provide consistency for students.
112. Through scrutiny of relevant policies and programme documentation, the assessment team also concluded that the college maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves, which constitutes the reference point for the delivery and assessment of the programme, and there is evidence that students and alumni are provided with records of study.
113. In addition, the assessment team found that the college's regulatory frameworks have been exercised securely, as evidenced by the college's minutes from assessment boards, external examiner reports, and examples of how the college implements specific aspects of the regulatory framework in practice, such as applications for recognition of prior learning and academic appeals.
114. As set out in paragraph 17 of this report, the college has only begun offering provision under its own time-limited foundation DAPs in the 2022-23 academic year. However, the assessment team's assessment has also drawn on the work undertaken by the college to prepare for its own programmes. The assessment team is satisfied from the evidence reviewed that the college has exercised its powers securely, and has an approach that will be suitable for extending to bachelors' DAPs and meets criterion B1.

Assessment of DAPs criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B2: Academic standards

Advice to the OfS

115. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion B2: Academic standards and quality assurance because it meets subcriteria B2.1 and B2.2.
116. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows, in summary, that the college has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications. Furthermore, the college has demonstrated that it is able to design and deliver programmes and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the sector-recognised standards and FHEQ and that the standards it sets and maintains above the threshold are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.
117. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Subcriterion 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

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

Reasoning

120. To determine how the college ensures that its higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ, as set out in the sector-recognised standards, the assessment team looked at the college's:
- Higher Education Strategic Plan 2022-27
 - current regulatory framework for undergraduate awards for 2023-24
 - draft undergraduate academic regulations for 2024-25
 - curriculum development and programme approval procedure dated 11 November 2022.

121. The assessment team found that the college's Higher Education Strategic Plan 2022-2027 highlights its intention to 'remain compliant with initial and ongoing conditions of Office for Students registration and satisfy enhanced external scrutiny'. In terms of the setting and maintaining of academic standards, the principal evidence that the assessment team reviewed to support this was the college's regulatory framework and the college's curriculum development and programme approval procedure, as outlined below in paragraphs 122 and 123.
122. The college's current regulatory framework for undergraduate awards for 2023-24 clearly sets out the existing arrangements for the award of credit for its higher education qualifications at Levels 4 and 5. Additionally, the college's draft undergraduate academic regulations for 2024-25 clearly set out the arrangements for the award of its higher education qualifications at Levels 4, 5 and 6 from the academic year 2024-25 onwards. Both include appropriate arrangements for credit and award at each level of qualification. For example, the qualification titles and the credits required for each qualification are in line with the requirements of the FHEQ and the sector recognised standards. Although neither regulatory framework explicitly references the FHEQ, it is evident to the assessment team from its experience and expertise that the college's regulatory frameworks are aligned to the FHEQ and sector-recognised standards for Level 4, 5 and 6 qualifications. Additionally, the assessment team found that the college reinforced its intent to remain compliant with OfS conditions of registration in a statement articulating the rationale for the development of its new draft undergraduate academic regulations, namely that one of the intentions of the approach taken was to strengthen the college's response in meeting its regulatory requirements. This demonstrated to the assessment team that the college recognises the importance of externality in the setting and maintaining of academic standards.
123. In addition, the assessment team found that the college's curriculum development and programme approval procedure clearly states that the college's higher education qualifications must reflect the FHEQ and take account of relevant external reference points. The college's curriculum development and programme approval procedure also outlines appropriate operational arrangements for the implementation of academic standards at the appropriate level. For example, the criteria for new programme approval includes that assessment criteria allow different levels of achievement to be distinguished.
124. To test whether the college's mechanisms for ensuring higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ and are consistently applied, the assessment team reviewed:
- a sample of three programme specifications at Level 5 from the academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24
 - 24 (20 credit) module descriptors from Levels 4 and 5
 - programme approval meeting minutes for two new programmes
 - a sample of eight external examiner reports from a range of subjects covering the academic year 2022-23.
125. The assessment team is satisfied from the examination of the sample of programme specifications and module descriptors that the programme learning outcomes align

appropriately with the relevant qualification descriptors at Levels 4 and 5 of the FHEQ. This includes the appropriate use of credit sizes, learning hours and use of terminology for learning outcomes that are appropriate to the level of the programme and modules. However, the assessment team found that there are quite a lot of references to 'demonstrate understanding of...' in learning outcomes, which could be made more specific. This does not pose a significant risk to the college meeting the requirements for criterion B2 but the assessment team recommends that this is an area where the college could improve.

126. The assessment team considered that the programme specifications and module descriptors clearly set out the skills and learning that students will have achieved on completion of each module and on completion of their programme of study. In addition, the programme specification and module descriptor documentation identifies how the module learning outcomes are mapped to the programme learning outcomes and correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ. The assessment team looked at the outcomes from the programme approval meetings and this confirmed to the team that the approval panel was confident that the requirements of the FHEQ had been appropriately considered. Programme learning outcomes were confirmed as being aligned with the relevant qualification descriptors and the programme proposal met the college's requirements in relation to academic frameworks and regulations for the award of credit.
127. The assessment team also looked at the sample of external examiner reports. The sample includes confirmation from external examiners that the programmes and their component parts continue to be coherent, with their outcomes aligned with the relevant qualification descriptor set out in the FHEQ. The assessment team found that external examiner reports confirm that academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions in relation to national frameworks (including the FHEQ) and professional body standards, where applicable. For example, the external examiner for FdA Games Design in Industry comments on the good level of academic rigour across the programme, the variety of assessment methods that give all students the chance to gain the best grades possible and the comparability of assessments for their level as well as being relevant to industry-based practice. The assessment team therefore concluded that the college's higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ.
128. To determine whether the setting and maintaining of academic standards takes appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and independent points of expertise, including students, the assessment team reviewed the college's:
- curriculum development and programme approval procedure dated 11 November 2022
 - new programme proposal guidance documents
 - guidance for the appointment of external advisors
 - guidance notes for external examiners.
129. The assessment team examined the college's curriculum development and programme approval procedure and guidance documents. It found that the process for new programme approvals includes the involvement of external individuals to the college to offer independence and objectivity to the decisions taken. This includes one external academic

advisor and one external industry advisor. Additionally, the procedure confirms that student representatives are included in validation panels for new programmes. The assessment team also noted that the criteria for approvals, as outlined in the procedure, include that the programme must reflect the FHEQ, other external reference points and arrangements which must be considered in the setting and maintaining of academic standards, such as the arrangements for assessments. Furthermore, when submitting proposals for the development of a new programme, programme development teams are required to provide evidence to support the proposal, including evidence of employer feedback, student feedback and sector demand for the development. This demonstrated to the assessment team that the college takes appropriate account of relevant external reference points and external and independent points of expertise in the development and setting of standards for its new programmes.

130. It is clear to the assessment team that the college uses external examiners to provide appropriate external oversight for the setting and maintaining of academic standards of its higher education programmes. This was demonstrated by the college's external examiner guidance notes for modules and taught programmes of study. This requires external examiners to provide informative comment and recommendations on, firstly, whether the college is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards and, secondly, whether the standards of student performance is comparable at award level with similar awards in other UK institutions with which they are familiar.
131. To test whether external reference points and independent points of expertise had, in practice, been considered in the setting and maintaining of academic standards, the assessment team assessed documentation related to the approval of a sample of two Level 5 programmes and a sample of eight external examiner reports covering the academic year 2022-23. These documents confirm that appropriate consultation had taken place with employers and students in developing the proposal for the new programme, and that the proposal included evidence of sector demand for the development. For example, there was a survey of current students, the outcomes of which were included in the approval documents presented to the approval panel. The assessment team discovered that the approval meeting minutes confirm that the approval panels included both an external academic advisor and an external industry advisor. For example, the industry advisor for the FdSc Agriculture programme was a knowledge exchange manager from the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board. The assessment team also found that requirements of the FHEQ had also been appropriately considered, account had been taken of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA) qualification characteristics and subject benchmarks (external frameworks that the college had opted to use) and the programme proposal met the college's requirements in relation to academic frameworks and regulations for the award of credit.
132. The assessment team also examined the new programme approval panel meeting minutes and concluded that students who successfully achieve the learning outcomes of the programme would meet college academic and UK threshold standards. The assessment team found that the approval panels did not appear to include a student representative, as outlined above in the college's curriculum development and programme approval procedure. However, the assessment team is satisfied that this does not pose a significant risk to the college meeting the requirements for criterion B2.1 as other mechanisms for including student consultation had taken place for new programme approvals (as detailed above). The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the college has clear arrangements to take

appropriate account of relevant external reference points and independent points of expertise, including students, and these are consistently applied in the setting and maintaining of academic standards.

133. The assessment team looked at a sample of eight external examiner reports covering academic year 2022-23, which confirm that the threshold standards set for progression and award are appropriate for qualifications at the level of the award, programme outcomes are aligned with the relevant qualification descriptor set out in the FHEQ and supplemented where applicable by one or more subject benchmark statements, and that the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions. The assessment team also discovered that external examiner reports are responded to appropriately by the college as detailed further under criterion B2 and B3. This confirmed to the assessment team that the college makes appropriate use of external examiners in setting and maintaining academic standards for its programmes.
134. The assessment team concluded that the college meets criterion B2.1 as the evidence reviewed shows that the college has clear mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications, and that these are consistently applied.

Subcriterion 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

135. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion B2.2 because it has demonstrated that it designs and delivers courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ. Furthermore, the college has also demonstrated that the standards it sets and maintains above the threshold are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.
136. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that the college meets the evidence requirements for B2.2.

Reasoning

137. To test whether the college's programme approval arrangements are robust and applied consistently, ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets UK threshold

standards for the qualification, and are set in accordance with the college's own academic frameworks and regulations, the assessment team reviewed the following documents:

- curriculum development and programme approval procedure dated 11 November 2022, which includes details of arrangements for minor and major changes to programmes
- programme development and approval documentation for two new foundation degree programmes approved by the college in 2023
- four sets of minutes from the Higher Education Academic Board from academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24.

138. The assessment team found that the college implements a clear deliberation and decision-making process in the development and approval of its qualifications throughout the programme development and approval process. The programme approval documents for the new foundation degree programmes that the college has approved through its own time-limited foundation DAPs demonstrate and describe a robust programme approval arrangement. This comprises a two-stage process from expression of interest to final approval. Stage one of the procedure is an internal documentation check and stage two is the formal approval panel, including external representation. This process is in line with the college's curriculum development and programme approval procedure. The assessment team discovered that, at each stage, the annotations in the documents identify where improvements and changes are required, including in relation to the FHEQ. For example, the module record for FdSc Agriculture includes a number of comments to improve the wording of module learning outcomes. This demonstrated that the college's programme approval arrangements are robust and applied consistently.

139. The assessment team is satisfied that programme development teams robustly ensure that academic standards remain aligned to the threshold standards of the FHEQ. For example, the final approval meeting minutes include a confirmatory statement that the panel was confident that:

- the requirements of the FHEQ had been appropriately considered in recommending that the programme be approved
- programme learning outcomes were aligned with the relevant qualification descriptors
- account had been taken of relevant qualification characteristics and subject benchmarks
- the programme met the college's requirements in relation to academic frameworks and regulations for the award of credit.

Evidence to substantiate this was demonstrated in the approval panel meeting minutes, which include, for example, discussion of assessments in relation to level and assessment of relevant module learning outcomes. Additionally, the assessment team found that outcomes from each panel set out actions to review the modules and the use of some of the verbs in the assessed learning outcomes to ensure that they accurately reflect the level of the module. The assessment team is therefore confident that academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with the college's own academic framework and regulations.

140. The assessment team examined the college's curriculum development and programme approval procedure and discovered that the membership for new programme approval panels should include a chair, who is a senior member of staff, an external panel member, a non-departmental member, a student representative, a quality representative and a library and learning services representative. The assessment team examined the stage two programme approval meeting minutes for both new programmes which confirm that each approval panel had been chaired by the Head of Campus and included the higher education Academic Policy and Quality Lead and industry and academic external representatives. One approval panel included a non-departmental member. Neither panel included a student representative or a library and learning services representative. However, the assessment team is satisfied that this does not pose a significant risk to the college meeting the requirements of criterion B2.2. This is because other evidence it reviewed demonstrated that, in practice, consideration of resources and student consultation had taken place during the programme development and was included in the approval documents for new programmes being considered by the approval panel. Nevertheless, the college clearly has the intention to include those representatives at panel events and so this is an area where the college could consider how to successfully achieve this in the future.
141. The assessment team also found that programme teams are given clear deadlines for completion of actions arising from conditions and recommendations set by new programme approval panels. These are signed off by chair's action and the outcomes from programme approval events are confirmed at the college's Higher Education Academic Board. This was confirmed in the final programme documentation, which was approved by the college's higher education academic policy and quality lead, following completion of any conditions and recommendations.
142. The assessment team further considered the role of the Higher Education Academic Board in setting and maintaining academic standards, particularly regarding the approval of new programmes. The assessment team discovered that the minutes from the Higher Education Academic Board include a standard agenda item on updates and outcomes from new programme approval events.
143. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the college's programme approval arrangements are robust and, although the approval panel membership does not always match the policy, were otherwise applied consistently. Furthermore, the college's programme approval arrangements ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with the college's own regulatory framework and associated policies and procedures.
144. To determine how the college ensures that credit and qualifications will only be awarded where the achievement of learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment, and both UK threshold standards and the academic standards of the relevant awarding body have been satisfied, the assessment team assessed the college's:
- regulatory framework for undergraduate awards 2023-24
 - draft undergraduate academic regulations for 2024-25
 - associated policies and procedures for the 2023-24 academic year for assessment

- feedback
- quality assurance
- assessment boards
- certification.

145. The assessment team also reviewed documentation associated with assessments, including assessment briefs, pre-issue assessment verification forms and post-marking assessment moderation forms.
146. The assessment team found that the college's regulatory framework for undergraduate awards, along with the policies and procedures outlined above, clearly set out the college's arrangements to assessment and the award of credit and qualifications. The documents provide appropriate guidance on arrangements for assessment, marking and moderation, which promotes consistency and ensures that credit and qualifications will only be awarded where the achievement of learning outcomes has been demonstrated. The assessment team determined that assessment briefs identify the relevant module learning outcomes being assessed, which are aligned to the FHEQ, and included a detailed marking criteria grid, which identified the threshold standards, to be used by the assessor and included in feedback to the student. This demonstrated a clear linkage between the intended module learning outcomes, completed student work, feedback and marking criteria, ensuring that students only gain credit in line with the achievement of relevant learning outcomes.
147. The assessment team is confident that the college's procedures for the pre-issue verification and post-marking moderation of assessments, which are led by the quality manager, provide further assurance of the maintenance of standards. For example, the process of verification of assessment briefs and exams prior to issue provides an internal check on the assessment of relevant module learning outcomes, implementation of marking criteria and that the assessment is set at the appropriate level. Additionally, the post-marking assessment moderation process ensures that a sample of assessed student work is reviewed to check the standard of marking and the use of marking criteria, and to ensure credit is only awarded where learning outcomes have been achieved.
148. To test whether credit and qualifications are only awarded by the college where the achievement of learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment, and both UK threshold standards and the academic standards of the relevant awarding body have been satisfied, the assessment team looked at assessment documents from a sample of 12 assessments at Levels 4, 5 and 6, including three honours projects, from the 2022-23 academic year. The assessment documentation included:
- assessment briefs
 - grading rubrics
 - marked student work
 - feedback

- pre-issue verification
- moderation.

149. The assessment team also examined a sample of five sets of minutes from Subject Assessment Panels covering the academic year 2022-23, and one set of minutes from the Award Assessment Boards covering the academic year 2022-23.
150. The assessment team determined that, in the sample of assessed student work, students are marked in line with the standards identified in the marking criteria and relevant learning outcomes which align to the FHEQ and threshold academic standards. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the college only awards credit and qualifications to students who have achieved the required academic standard.
151. Furthermore, the assessment team found that dissertations are double-marked (marked by a second academic staff member) and samples of moderation forms for assessed student work confirm the standard of marking of assessments, including whether the assessor's feedback corresponds to the marking criteria. This confirmed that the college's procedures for assessment were consistently followed in practice.
152. The assessment team considered that the college's Subject Assessment Panels and Award Assessment Boards have responsibility for ensuring that threshold academic standards of student performance are being maintained at module and award level. Membership of the college's Subject Assessment Panels includes the higher education academic policy and quality lead (chair), external examiners and members of the programme team. The chair and the external examiners sign a declaration following the meeting to confirm their agreement that academic standards have been met in relation to the results discussed at the meeting. The assessment team found that the minutes from the Subject Assessment Panels and Award Assessment Boards provide confirmation of the college's commitment to ensuring credit and qualifications are only awarded where relevant learning outcomes have been achieved and both the UK threshold standards and the academic standards of the relevant degree awarding body have been satisfied.
153. The Subject Assessment Panel and Award Assessment Boards meeting minutes also include comments from external examiners regarding the maintenance of academic standards. The assessment team found that minutes from one Subject Assessment Panel include a comment from the external examiner about possible under-marking. However, from a review of other minutes, the assessment team is content that this was an isolated incident and did not pose a significant risk to meeting criterion B2.1.
154. The assessment team therefore concluded that the college only awards credit and qualifications where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment, and that both the UK threshold standards and the academic standards of the relevant degree awarding body have been satisfied.
155. The college's arrangements for annual monitoring and review include internal processes through its own bi-annual (spring and autumn) programme review and external processes through the university institutional and programme monitoring and review procedures, operated by one of the college's validators, the University of Plymouth. The assessment team found that these are evidence-based quality assurance processes which provide opportunity

for curriculum teams to review feedback and comment on all aspects of programme content and delivery. When the assessment team met with the college in an online meeting in July 2024, the college also clarified that the self-assessment completed by programme teams (as part of its internal programme review) forms an operating plan for each subject area. Furthermore, the assessment team discovered that external examiners provide comment and feedback through the external examiner annual report, which asks for explicit comment on whether academic standards are being achieved and maintained. Actions and outcomes identified through the annual programme review processes feed into a higher education quality improvement plan submitted to the college's Higher Education Academic Board. The Higher Education Academic Board, which has oversight and responsibility for academic standards across the college, monitors and reviews the higher education quality improvement plan. This demonstrated to the assessment team that the college has robust arrangements in place for programme monitoring and review.

156. To test whether the college's programme monitoring and review arrangements are robust, applied consistently and explicitly address whether academic standards are achieved and maintained, the assessment team considered a range of programme review documentation, including the awarding university's institutional and programme monitoring and review documents and internal programme review documents for the academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24. The assessment team also examined a sample of eight external examiner reports, covering the academic year 2022-23 and a sample of the college's annual review and improvement days covering the academic year 2022-23.
157. These documents mainly focus on quality and enhancement aspects, such as review of student recruitment, teaching and learning, student support and resources, and student voice mechanisms, including the NSS. However, these documents also provide opportunity for academic teams to comment on the maintenance and achievement of academic standards such as assessment, student outcomes and external examiner feedback. As described below in paragraphs 158 to 166, the assessment team considered that external examiner reports specifically provide an opportunity to comment on whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved, and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree awarding body are being maintained. Furthermore, the college holds an annual review and improvement day for each curriculum team where these teams have the opportunity to discuss performance against internal and external quality and standards indicators.
158. The assessment team found that this documentation shows that the college's monitoring and review arrangements include appropriate consideration of programme delivery to ensure that the quality and standards of its programmes are maintained. For example, minutes from the college's autumn programme monitoring and review meetings include opportunity for discussion of feedback from Subject Assessment Panels, Award Assessment Boards and external examiners along with progress updates on any actions arising. Furthermore, external examiner comments in the external examiner reports confirm explicitly that academic standards are maintained and achieved and any areas of good practice, or issues, raised by external examiners are considered and responded to by the college. This demonstrated to the assessment team that the college's monitoring and review arrangements are robust and applied consistently and address whether academic standards are being maintained.
159. The assessment team acknowledges that, as the college's own awards using its foundation DAPs were first approved in 2022-23, the college is not yet at a stage where it needs to

undertake a (usually five yearly) periodic review and revalidation of its own programmes. However, the assessment team recommends that this is an area that the college will need to address as it operates more provision under its own DAPs. The assessment team discussed the college's plans for this during its online discussion in July 2024. The college confirmed that it will have a periodic review for its own provision in the next academic year and wants to use best practice from its recent periodic review with its partner validating university to inform its own future practice. The college also confirmed that it had drafted a document setting out its proposed arrangements for periodic reviews and was working towards its completion. The assessment team is satisfied that, as the college already undertakes its own independent review of its programmes through its bi-annual reviews and has a credible planned approach to future periodic review, the college meets the requirements of criterion B2.2.

160. The assessment team concluded that the college's 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.
161. To determine how the college makes use of external and independent expertise in establishing and maintaining threshold academic standards and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications, the assessment team looked at the external examiner notes for guidance for modules and taught programmes of study dated September 2022 and the guidance and nomination form for the appointment of an external examiner 2023-24.
162. The assessment team found that the college's guidance clearly outlines the role of external examiners, which includes ensuring that academic standards are appropriate with reference to the FHEQ, relevant professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), its own programme and module specifications, and other national frameworks the college has opted to use, such as the UK Quality Code and subject benchmark statements. The guidance outlines that this is facilitated by a range of external examiner activities, which include visits to the college, meetings with staff and students, review of programme documentation and assessed student work and membership of Assessment Panels and Boards. Nominations for external examiners, which are submitted by programme managers, are reviewed and confirmed by the HE Strategy and Operations Group.
163. External examiners produce an annual report on the programmes for which they are responsible, to include discussion of any issues or concerns as well as areas of good practice. The report template also asks them to confirm and include comment on the maintenance of threshold academic standards and the comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications. External examiner reports contain a section for the college to provide a response to any areas of good practice or issues identified by the external examiner. External examiner reports are reviewed by programme teams and key themes and actions from external examiner reports feed into the evidence base for annual programme review. This demonstrates that the college has appropriate arrangements in place to make use of the external and independent expertise provided by their external examiners in establishing and maintaining threshold academic standards and comparability with other providers.

164. To test whether the college makes use of external and independent expertise in establishing and then maintaining threshold academic standards and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications in practice, the assessment team examined:
- a sample of eight external examiner reports covering the academic year 2022-23
 - a sample of five sets of minutes from Subject Assessment Panels covering the academic year 2022-23
 - one set of minutes from the Award Assessment Boards covering the academic year 2022-23.
165. The assessment team found that external examiner reports provide consistent and valuable feedback on academic standards. The external examiner reports confirm that the threshold standards set for the progression and award are appropriate for qualifications at this level, programme outcomes are aligned with the relevant qualification descriptors set out in the FHEQ, and that the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions.
166. External examiner reports also include areas of good practice and issues raised by the external examiner. For example, external examiners comment positively on the quality and fairness of assessment, marking, moderation and feedback processes. Examples of issues relating to academic standards raised by external examiners include discussion over small mark changes and lack of outstanding (100 per cent) grades. The assessment team is satisfied that the issues raised by external examiners serve to further improve practice and do not present a significant risk to the college's overall maintenance of academic standards. The assessment team also found that responses from the college to good practice and issues raised by external examiners are included in the report and that reports are shared with students through the virtual learning environment and student and staff meetings, such as programme committee meetings. This demonstrated to the assessment team that the college makes scrupulous and effective use of external examiner reports, drawing on its recommendations to ensure the maintenance of academic standards. The assessment team also considered that minutes from Subject Assessment Panels and Award Assessment Boards provide evidence of robust discussion which include positive and constructive comments regarding academic standards from external examiners who were present.
167. The assessment team therefore concluded that, in establishing and maintaining threshold academic standards and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications, the college makes use of appropriate external and independent expertise.

Conclusions

168. The assessment team concluded that the college's higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ and the college has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards.
169. The college's programme design and approval procedures are appropriate and demonstrate that design and delivery of programmes and qualifications meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ.

170. The samples of assessed student work and minutes from assessment boards confirm that credit and qualifications are only awarded where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated and where academic standards have been satisfied.
171. Through scrutiny of programme design and approval documentation, including external examiner reports, the assessment team concluded that the college makes use of appropriate external and independent expertise to establish and maintain threshold academic standards that are reliable and reasonably comparable with other providers of equivalent level qualifications.
172. The assessment team also concluded that the college's approach and arrangements for setting and maintaining of academic standards, programme design and approval, assessment, and award of credit are appropriate for an extension to bachelors' DAPs, because those arrangements include the college's Level 6 programmes.
173. As set out in paragraph 17 of this report, the college has only begun offering provision under its own time-limited foundation DAPs in the 2022-23 academic year. However, the team's assessment has also drawn on the work undertaken by the college to prepare for its own programmes. The assessment team is satisfied from the evidence reviewed that the college has exercised its powers securely, and has an approach that will be suitable for extending to bachelors' DAPs and meets criterion B2.

Assessment of DAPs criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience

Advice to the OfS

174. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion B3: Academic standards and quality assurance because it meets subcriteria B3.1.
175. The assessment team is satisfied that, based on its review of evidence, the college effectively designs its curriculum, teaching, learning, assessment and feedback processes in a way that delivers a high quality academic experience for all students. Furthermore, the college exhibits robust quality assurance practices to ensure its intentions are successfully implemented.
176. This view is informed by specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, applicable to both time-limited foundation DAPs and the extension to bachelors' DAPs, alongside any other relevant information.

Subcriterion 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

177. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion B3.1 as it designs and delivers courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students, regardless of their backgrounds. All learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously assured, and the college operates effective processes for the design, development, and approval of programmes.
178. This view is based on the review of evidence, which demonstrates that the college has met the requirements for criterion B3.1.

Reasoning

Design and approval of programmes

179. To test whether the college operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes, the assessment team looked at the internal verification and internal quality assurance policy together with the college's quality improvement strategy 2022-24. The assessment team found that these policies, along with evidence of application of the policies in practice, demonstrate that new programme proposals must be appropriately benchmarked and approved at annual programme monitoring.

180. The design, development and approval of programmes follow a rigorous process (as set out in the paragraph below) that ensures educational challenge, effective delivery and coherence. The higher education operations team coordinates this process with experienced higher education staff and input from industry and external experts. Academic staff are supported by quality assurance procedures across the college such as contracts of employment, staff remission policies, and the report from the Higher Education Committee meeting produced by the Director of Governance. These quality assurance procedures support staff by providing clear guidelines, structured support and regular feedback mechanisms to ensure that teaching practices are consistent with institutional standards and industry expectations. They also enable staff to engage in continuous professional development, maintain academic integrity, and adapt to evolving educational needs. This contributes to the delivery, in the assessment team's view, of high quality programmes and positive student outcomes. This shows that the college's processes demonstrate a robust, effective and clear internal approval process. The college's programme approval process involves a structured, multi-stage approach to ensure that new programmes are rigorously designed, benchmarked and aligned with industry standards. Initial proposals are reviewed by the Higher Education Academic Board and Operations Group, followed by two Approval Panels incorporating internal experts, industry representatives and external higher education professionals. This comprehensive process, supported by clear quality assurance policies, ensures coherence, educational challenge and adherence to external standards, with ongoing monitoring and guidance for relevant staff. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the college operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.
181. The assessment team considered whether relevant staff are informed of, and provided with guidance and support on, procedures for the design, development and approval of programmes, and their roles and responsibilities in relation to them. Two key evidence sources examined were the college's internal quality assurance strategy and the quality improvement strategy 2022-24. These documents demonstrated that the approval of higher education programmes is a three-stage process. Initial scrutiny of the proposal is conducted by the Higher Education Academic Board and Operations Group. If supported, the programme advances to a Stage One Approval Panel which includes independent academic staff and members of the proposed programme team. This is followed by a Stage Two Approval Panel meeting, featuring input from relevant industry representatives and experts from another higher education institution and ensures external validation. Additionally, the assessment team examined three Level 4, 5 and 6 programme proposals. For example, the programme approval documents for FdSc Agriculture, including approval minutes and programme specifications, show evidence that programme managers, cluster directors and programme teams are well informed about procedures and their roles and responsibilities. The college clearly ensures that staff involved in programme approvals are well informed, guided and supported regarding procedures and their roles in the process. This is achieved through the three-stage approval process which is outlined in the college's internal quality assurance and improvement strategies. The assessment team examined evidence, such as approval minutes and programme specifications, which demonstrate that programme managers, cluster directors and programme teams are well informed and understand their responsibilities within the approval process in practice. The assessment team's review of specific programme proposals, such as the FdSc Agriculture, confirmed that staff received adequate guidance and support throughout the approval stages, meeting the requirement for a clear and supported approval process. The assessment team is satisfied that relevant staff

are informed of, and provided with guidance and support on, these procedures and their roles and responsibilities in relation to them.

182. To evaluate whether the responsibility for approving new programme proposals is clearly assigned, including the involvement of external expertise and the monitoring of subsequent actions, the assessment team reviewed the higher education programme proposal document. This document details the submission process for new programme proposals within the college. Each proposal is presented to the Higher Education Academic Board, which conducts an annual review. The Higher Education Academic Board, comprising the HE Registry, the Quality and Data Manager, HE Operations and the Head of HE and Access to HE, may recommend further actions or approve proposals directly. In the view of the team, this structure ensures that proposals align with institutional standards for quality, with appropriate oversight and accountability.
183. The assessment team also examined the beyond the boardroom feedback form for the FdSc Applied Management of Animal Collections programme and found that the college's higher education approval process is thorough and well executed, with recommended actions consistently followed up. For example, during the approval process for foundation degrees granted under the college's time-limited foundation DAPs, an external expert raised concerns about higher education recruitment, with recommended actions addressed accordingly. The Stage Two Approval Panel meetings also included representatives from relevant industries and experts from other higher education institutions, ensuring robust and well rounded evaluation. The assessment team found evidence of external expertise feeding into programme approval discussions, including valuable input from organisations such as RSPCA Cornwall and Derby College. This external expertise is effectively leveraged to benchmark programmes against external standards, satisfying the assessment team that responsibility for new programme approvals is clearly assigned, appropriately involves external expertise and is followed by careful monitoring of subsequent actions.
184. The college's intention to develop a joint partnership strategy with one of its university partners demonstrates the college's efforts to secure coherence of programmes with multiple elements. The strategy has a focus on fostering a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring compliance with academic standards, and facilitating collaboration among departments to align programme objectives with institutional goals. These procedures also enhance staff confidence in delivering robust educational experiences and provide a framework for addressing challenges effectively. This commitment is evidenced in partnership letters and scheduled activities that were reviewed by the assessment team. These documents highlighted the college's efforts in developing a partnership strategy and a joint university and college strategy to ensure coherence across programmes with multiple elements. This is because this evidence outlined the college's commitment to continue to collaborate on academic programmes with its university partner, which will ensure the coherency of its programmes. This will also ensure coherency for students on current Level 6 courses if the college extends its DAPs to bachelors' DAPs.
185. The assessment team also examined three Level 4, 5 and 6 programme proposal documents with associated approval minutes and programme specifications, two programme review meetings for Level 4, 5 and 6 and stage one approval minutes for the FdSc Agriculture programme. The latter document particularly demonstrated how modules have been updated to reflect current contexts, for example in the areas of adaption and mitigation of climate

change and carbon footprints. From the review of this evidence, the assessment team found that the college has established robust mechanisms to ensure the coherence of its programmes, reflecting a commitment to strategic collaboration and continuous improvement. These measures collectively demonstrate how the college's strategies and processes contribute to a coherent academic experience for students and provide a solid foundation for extending its DAPs to bachelors' DAPs.

186. The assessment team also looked at the Level 4 and 5 summary of consultations and liaison with other programmes and subject areas impacted by new or revised programmes in the FdSc Agriculture approval document. This review illustrates how the college organises a range of degrees, ensuring that diverse programme elements are consistently integrated across the college. Careers within the psychological sector were also thoughtfully considered, resulting in diversified pathways responsive to industry demand. Programme specifications clearly offer detailed mapping of admissions criteria, intended learning outcomes, progression routes, final award criteria and a comprehensive outline of the programme structure. This provided evidence that the coherence of programmes with multiple elements or pathways is secured and maintained in practice.
187. In considering whether close links are maintained between learning support services and the college's programme planning and approval arrangements, the assessment team found evidence that learning support services are a standard item discussed at programme review meetings. For example, the programme review meeting document for Level 5 FdSc Surf Science and Technology shows that library staff are helpful with providing learning support for students, and are approachable and supportive. By having learning resources as a standard item addressed at programme reviews, this suggests to the assessment team that there are robust and close links between learning support services and the programme review and approval processes. The higher education student handbook also outlines the key support available to all higher education students and how this can be accessed. This handbook further outlines additional support provided by the college's higher education partners.
188. Furthermore, according to the higher education student support policy, specialist support staff collaborate closely with campus curriculum teams to ensure they are informed about available support services and stay updated on students' needs. The assessment team examined a higher education proposal and 12 programme proposal examples across Levels 4, 5 and 6. Notably, the higher education proposal, which discusses proposals for the development of new higher education programmes at the Higher Education Academic Board, recommends that collaboration with the Learning Resources Coordinator be documented and integrated into the proposal process. The assessment team also reviewed the capability statements. These statements are included when a student applies to the college to study on a higher education course and notifies the college of any registered disability or need for learning support. The college's admissions officer will then inform the programme manager and student services to ensure that applicants are aware of the support available at the college. The programme manager is notified through an individual capability statement for each student and will look at this before the course starts to ensure that the appropriate adjustments are in place. The assessment team found evidence in the capability statements of well-established links between learning and support services and the college's programme review and approval processes. For example, student services proactively reach out to students, guiding them through the support application process to ensure that essential resources are in place at the start of the academic year. Additionally, a variety of online

resources are available to students, offering study support and access to further services, primarily through the Moodle platform. The assessment team found evidence in the capability statements that strong connections are consistently maintained between learning and support services and the college's programme review and approval processes. Overall, the assessment team's view is that close links are maintained between learning support services and the college's programme planning and approval arrangements and this is demonstrated in practice.

Learning and teaching

189. To test whether the college articulates and implements a strategic approach to learning and teaching which is consistent with its stated academic objectives, the assessment team reviewed the college's higher education strategic plan. This provides the overarching objectives for the college's higher education provision and details how they are achieved. Under strategic aim three, titled 'High quality teaching, learning and assessment to drive outstanding student engagement and employability', the college aims to pursue a TEF gold award, building on its TEF silver achievement in 2021. To reach this goal, the college's strategy states that it will collaborate closely with industry partners to foster innovation in teaching, learning and assessment. It will further ensure a consistently high quality approach in communicating all aspects of these areas, providing a robust, clear and student-centred experience across all programmes and campuses. Additionally, the college will consider programme design that includes flexible delivery models to meet the needs of both industry and students.
190. To assess how the college uses this strategy in practice, the assessment team looked at the strategic key performance indicators included in the strategic plan. This illustrates how the college supports its strategy through targeted actions and key performance indicators aimed at refining higher education offerings to meet both student and industry needs. This evidence outlines that the college conducts regular gap analysis, informed by feedback from students, staff and industry partners, which identifies areas where the current higher education offering may fall short of demand. The assessment team is confident that this allows the college to adapt swiftly to evolving industry standards and emerging career fields, and insights from this analysis drive new programme development, which facilitates the launch of programmes that expand the catalogue and align with diverse career pathways. Additionally, the assessment team reviewed the college's November 2023 risk register, which demonstrated to the assessment team that the college uses key performance indicator tracking to measure the success of these initiatives, using metrics such as programme launches, enrolment growth and student satisfaction to ensure that actions remain impactful and strategically aligned with the college's growth objectives. The assessment team further reviewed meeting minutes of the Higher Education Committee and found that these minutes effectively document the college's dedication to strategic alignment and its ongoing commitment to continuous improvement in its higher education programmes and reflects the practices outlined above.
191. The assessment team further considered how the college's strategic plan enables effective monitoring of institutional performance. The college's strategic plan 2022-25 sets out the details of the curriculum strategy and how these are achieved. For example, the college commits to inspire, be ambitious, respect and support all students, including those with special educational needs, and to provide consistently inclusive high quality education and support to maximise students' potential relevant to their starting points. The assessment team

examined appendices two to four of the strategic plan which outline the key performance indicators associated with these aims. This evidence demonstrates that the college articulates and implements a strategic approach to learning and teaching which is consistent with its stated academic objectives noted within the learning and teaching strategy and strategic plan. The assessment team also examined the minutes of the Higher Education Committee meeting held on 7 February 2024 and found that there are standing agenda items on discussing higher education-related risks on the risk register and the Higher Education Strategy. For example, in regard to the risk register, the committee discussed a risk in relation to higher education recruitment student numbers, which directly relates to the strategic key performance indicator for student recruitment. In regard to the college's strategic plan, the committee discussed that the student feedback model has been redeveloped because there was a lack of consistency in module feedback. This directly relates to a strategic key performance indicator in regard to quality of education. This evidence demonstrated to the assessment team that the college uses a strategic approach to assessing performance and strategic key performance indicators in regard to teaching and learning.

192. The assessment team also reviewed the higher education student engagement strategy, which outlines the mechanisms that enable students to participate in the quality assurances processes of the college. The policy shows that students have an opportunity to actively co-create their curriculum and engage in a number of activities at various levels. At module level, students have an opportunity to have an open dialogue with module leaders on all aspects of the learning resources and feed their views in the programme level meetings and onto annual programme monitoring. At programme level, students from each academic level act as representatives of their peers. The programme representative is a full member of the programme committee with a set of responsibilities including providing feedback to peers and college management. At college level, students have the opportunity to be involved in the college's board of governors. The assessment team found that programmes are well designed, providing a high quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed. Students actively contribute to programme design and approval by providing feedback, collaborating with staff, and serving as co-creators of the curriculum. This approach aligns with the higher education strategy plan, specifically advancing strategic aim three and its associated key performance indicators as outlined above.
193. This evidence demonstrated to the assessment team that the college takes a strategic, well-articulated approach to learning and teaching, ensuring alignment with its stated academic objectives and enhancing the educational experience and this is evident in practice.
194. The assessment team assessed whether the college 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 college operates on six main sites spread throughout Cornwall and one main site in Devon. In considering the physical, virtual and social learning environments maintained by the college, the assessment team reviewed the higher education strategic plan, in particular focusing on section four, strategic aim four and the strategic plan 2022-2025, in particular focusing on section seven titled 'Infrastructure-estates strategy'. The assessment team observed that the college has acknowledged that it has excess space across its sites. The college's estates strategy aims to address this by reducing accommodation in order to enhance the learner experience and provide efficient, financially sustainable education facilities. For example, the aim of the St Austell campus

redevelopment is to create a vibrant, sustainable learning environment that supports high quality education for young people, businesses, and the local community in key sectors. The assessment team found evidence of this development in the appendix of the strategic plan's key performance indicators. The assessment team also looked at the publicly available information on the college's website about the St Austell campus redevelopment, which included a virtual tour of the current campus and plans, with a video, of what the improvements will look like once completed. This evidence satisfies the assessment team that the college maintains its physical environment and its plan to reduce accommodation to refocus space for learning and teaching is positive and will enable more modern and innovative facilities for learning and teaching at the college. The assessment team also looked at 2024 NSS results, which show that the college performs above benchmark in how students perceive its facilities, reflecting a high level of student satisfaction with the learning environment and resources provided.

195. The assessment team further looked at the beyond the boardroom feedback form and is satisfied that the college effectively monitors the safety, accessibility and reliability of both physical and social learning environments for all students. Additionally, the assessment team reviewed the college's scheme of work. The scheme of work integrates essential elements of educational planning, including curriculum intent, the skills pyramid, assessment criteria, learning outcomes and measurable impact. Acting as a cohesive framework, it aligns the curriculum's purpose with a structured approach to skill development, guiding students from foundational knowledge to advanced competencies as outlined in the skills pyramid. Through clearly defined assessment criteria and learning outcomes, the scheme of work ensures that each lesson supports student progression and academic goals, offering a structured and outcome-focused learning experience. In an online meeting with the college in July 2024, the assessment team asked the college questions about the scheme of work and the skills pyramid and the college's responses confirmed alignment with curriculum goals and educational standards. This verified the scheme of work's practical effectiveness in fostering skill progression, meeting assessment criteria and achieving targeted learning outcomes to the assessment team.
196. The college's virtual learning environment is mainly through a Moodle online platform. It is clear to the assessment team that the teaching, learning and assessment resources available on Moodle are well aligned with curriculum design and contributed to a positive learning experience. The assessment team also looked at 2024 NSS results in regard to question 21 'how easy is it to access subject specific resources?'. The results show that the college performs above benchmark, which demonstrates that students are satisfied with how they can access online and physical resources.
197. During an online meeting with the college in July 2024, the assessment team examined further details on how the college's higher education policy ensures comprehensive support and orientation for students across both physical and online study environments. The college emphasised induction processes designed to introduce students to a full range of academic and wellbeing resources, supported by initial assessments that allow for tailored guidance to meet individual needs. This approach is evidenced by structured initiatives such as the college's schemes of work and skills pyramid framework, which outline progressive skill development and targeted support strategies, reinforcing the college's commitment to individualised student success. Further details of this are outlined in paragraph 195 of this report. The assessment team also reviewed the higher education student handbook, which

the college confirmed serves as a central resource for guiding students in accessing support and resources both on campus and online, with particular emphasis on the online platform. Additionally, the assessment team clarified how the Student Behaviour and Misconduct Policy, along with the Student Code of Conduct, which was accessed via publicly available information on the college's website, establish standards for respectful and responsible use of all study spaces, ensuring appropriate interactions across both physical and virtual learning environments. For specialised programmes that require access to facilities such as laboratories and studios, the college outlined the implemented safety protocols and specific equipment training, reinforced by safeguarding measures detailed in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. The assessment team is satisfied that this evidence shows that the college maintains physical, virtual and social learning spaces that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use.

198. The assessment team assessed whether robust arrangements exist for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to those of its students who may be studying at a distance from the organisation are effective. The assessment team was not able to evaluate learning opportunities for students exclusively studying at distance because all the college's programmes are currently, and are intended to be, delivered on-site at the college's premises. However, the assessment team did consider that the college's virtual learning environment provides appropriate support to students who may have to study at a distance from time to time.
199. To test whether every student is enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development, the assessment team looked at the college's scheme of work, the details of which are outlined above in paragraph 195, and its relation to the college's skills pyramid as well as the staff scheme of work. The assessment team is satisfied that these schemes enable students and staff to sequentially monitor student progress and further academic development. For example, the assessment team examined the staff scheme of work and student scheme of work for skills for scientific success for BSc (Hons) Applied Zoology, BSc (Hons) Applied Zoology and Conservation, BSc (Hons) Applied Marine Conservation, BSc (Hons) Environmental Resource Management and BSc (Hons) Marine Sports Science. It is clear that the documentation linked to the college's skills pyramid and the student scheme of work reflected the learning and impact objectives included in the staff scheme of work so that staff and students can monitor progress. This showed that this is an appropriate tool that the college uses to ensure that students are enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development against defined learning objectives.
200. The assessment team also reviewed the way in which the college provides assessment feedback to students to allow continuous improvement in their academic performance. The assessment team considered:
- 18 assessment feedback documents covering programmes at Levels 4, 5 and 6, and three documents containing a grading matrix
 - a sample of four assessment briefs
 - a sample of five learning support referral documents
 - a sample of two moderation forms.

201. The assessment team identified examples of detailed feedback throughout the evidence reviewed. For example, the assessment team examined two Level 5 essay assessment feedback forms. One from a theatre practice and anaesthesia module for Level 5 veterinary programme and one from a practice in context module for foundation degree Art and Design in Practice. In both cases, the assessment team found that feedback was substantial and thoroughly addressed the relevant learning outcomes by making reference to the assessment grading criteria. This assured the assessment team that every student is enabled to monitor their progress and further academic development. The assessment team also identified robust systems for monitoring student progress, including accessible, ongoing feedback mechanisms and clear channels for progress tracking via online platforms. Students are able to view their marks and feedback digitally, providing them with real-time insights into their academic development. During an online meeting with the college in July 2024, the college assured the assessment team that feedback would be distributed through the online platform, ensuring that updates are both timely and easily accessible.
202. The assessment team also examined specific examples of detailed feedback on assessments, such as the essay assessment feedback for the theatre practice and anaesthesia module on the Level 5 veterinary programme and essay assessment feedback for the practice in context module for foundation degree Art and Design in Practice. Both examples demonstrated substantial feedback that directly referenced learning outcomes and assessment grading criteria, enabling students to clearly understand their performance in relation to academic expectations. Additionally, the scheme of work and skills pyramid framework were identified as key tools to support structured progress monitoring. These frameworks provide a scaffolded approach to skill development, ensuring that students receive not only an assessment of their current progress but also guidance on how to meet future learning objectives. The structured feedback loops, coupled with scheduled progress discussions, allow students to continuously address areas for improvement while advancing both their academic and practical skills. Personal tutors further play an essential role in this process, actively engaging in formal feedback loops and regular progress discussions beyond module assessments. The assessment team views this as a proactive approach that helps identify areas where students may require additional support. Tutors can also promptly upload and share detailed feedback through the online platform, offering students timely access to their marks and progress updates. This comprehensive approach to feedback, facilitated by both structured frameworks and tutor involvement, assures students and assessors of consistent, targeted support, ultimately promoting academic success and continuous improvement.
203. Overall, the college's approach to learning and teaching of its courses delivers a robust a high quality experience for all students and that learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously assured.

Assessment

204. In considering the types of assessments used throughout the college's higher education programmes, the assessment team reviewed the college's higher education strategic plan, which provides overarching principles to be adopted in the design of assessments. The assessment team further examined the observation of teaching, learning and assessment procedure policy, which sets out the procedure supporting the continuous improvement of the standard of teaching, learning and assessment. The assessment team also looked at the

college's definitions of elements and components of assessment (2023-24) policy along with nine assessments across a range of programmes across Levels 4, 5 and 6, including FdSc Animal Behaviour and Welfare, Foundation Degree Veterinary Nursing and BA (Hons) Art and Design in Practice and moderation forms. The Higher Education Assignment Brief Front Cover confirms that assignment briefs have been moderated and approved as suitable for use. The document is completed by the assignment author and then is reviewed by the internal moderator. The assignment author is then responsible for actioning any feedback comments and both the internal moderator and the assignment author sign the document to confirm that any follow up actions have been completed. There is also a target date for the amendment, which indicates that actions are to be followed up in a timely manner. The assignment brief is used to ensure the quality of assessment across programmes, providing clear guidelines and expectations for both students and teaching staff to maintain consistency and academic standards. This document provides evidence to demonstrate that assignment marks undergo internal moderation and are processed through the Award Board. Additionally, the Higher Education Assessment Decisions Moderation Form verifies that assessment decisions are thoroughly reviewed, with a clear rationale documented for any recommended actions within the internal moderation process. This document is completed by the internal moderator and reviewed by the assessor. The assessor is then responsible for actioning any feedback comments and the assessor and internal moderator then sign the form to confirm that the feedback comments have been actioned. This form can also be reviewed by external examiners. This provided evidence to the assessment team that the college employs valid and reliable assessment processes.

205. The assessment team also looked at the following documents:

- APL higher education recognition of prior learning policy 2023-24
- the higher education APL application form 2023-24
- APL TCCG Recognition of Prior Learning by Accreditation of Prior Learning (2023-24)
- APL Application Form (11 April 2019) and the undergraduate academic regulations 2024-25.

206. The assessment team found that the college operates robust and reliable assessments, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes.

207. The assessment team reviewed examples of the application process for accrediting prior learning, which enables college students to claim credits toward a University of Plymouth award and specifies credit allocations for Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7. From this evidence it is clear that robust processes are in place, requiring students to submit written statements and supporting evidence to substantiate their claims. Additionally, the assessment team observed that the higher education accreditation of prior learning application form is regularly updated to reflect changing conditions related to specific awards, with the document originally created in October 2014 and last revised on 13 April 2023.

208. The assessment team also examined this evidence alongside the assessment feedback mechanisms and feedback provided to students and the comments provided by external examiners on assessed work. This demonstrated that the college 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. Further detail about how the college approaches assessment is given above at paragraphs 204 to 206 and under criterion B2 at paragraphs 144 to 154.

209. The assessment team looked at the higher education student engagement strategy, which sets out how the college collaborates with students in a partnership to co-create the curriculum. The strategy outlines the mechanisms that enable students to participate in the quality assurance process, including reliable assessment of student work. It states that listening and responding to the student voice is at the heart of the college values and that college seeks to involve students in strategic decision making and fundamental quality processes. This evidence shows that staff and students engage in formal dialogues through a number of engagement activities including module and programme level committees and at the Higher Education Academic Board and college level to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made. Further detail is given above under A1.3 starting at paragraph 76.
210. To evaluate whether staff and students engage in dialogue to foster a shared understanding of the basis for academic judgements, the assessment team examined the scheme of work and its integration with the skills pyramid, which enables students to track their progress within individual modules throughout the academic year. Additionally, the assessment team analysed two marking rubrics, two assessment briefs and three assessment feedback examples across a representative sample of nine programmes. The documents collectively demonstrated that the college is committed to fostering continuous dialogue between students and staff, thereby promoting a shared understanding of the criteria and rationale behind academic judgements (the basis on which academic judgements are made). For example, this dialogue is evidenced through the scheme of work and skills pyramid, which enable students to engage with their progress and expectations actively. The marking rubrics and assessment briefs provide clear evaluation criteria that students can discuss with staff to clarify expectations, while the feedback examples show how staff offer constructive insights into performance, encouraging students to reflect and ask questions. Together, these documents facilitate an ongoing exchange of ideas and feedback, strengthening the collaborative understanding of academic standards.
211. To test whether students are provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice, the assessment team examined the higher education student support policy. This policy outlines the college's approach to providing access and support for higher education students and details how the college supports students' educational success, considering academic, personal wellbeing, safety and financial needs. The assessment team found that the college supports students in developing good academic practice through personalised academic and learning support, including personal tutoring, one-on-one meetings and specialised study skills assistance. This demonstrated to the assessment team that there is structured distribution of responsibilities among managers, programme managers, personal tutors, lecturers, specialist support staff and students, which fosters good academic practice by ensuring clear and accessible support pathways and adherence to college policies. For example, managers maintain updated policies and accessibility for all, while programme managers and tutors serve as consistent points of contact, updating student records on ProMonitor to ensure relevant support is well

coordinated. Specialist support staff also actively engage with curriculum teams, promote services at key events and maintain visibility on campus to inform students about available resources. Students are encouraged to proactively communicate their support needs, consult the higher education student handbook and engage with the available resources. The assessment team is satisfied that these measures provide students with robust opportunities to understand and demonstrate good academic conduct, supporting their development as independent and ethical learners. For example, the incorporation of study skills workshops into induction programmes equips students with essential competencies in referencing, plagiarism prevention and effective research methodologies. Additionally, the implementation of the skills pyramid, combined with the active involvement of personal tutors (further details can be found above in paragraph 195) in tracking and coordinating student support needs, ensures that interventions are timely, personalised and impactful. It is clear to the assessment team that these efforts collectively reinforce a culture of accountability and promote adherence to good academic practices at the college.

212. The higher education student handbook also establishes a structured framework that promotes good academic practice by clearly defining support mechanisms, communication channels and strategies for student success. Personal tutors act as a reliable, primary point of contact for students on personal or academic concerns, which provides consistent guidance throughout their studies. Additionally, the handbook details effective communication protocols between the college, programme staff, and students, which fosters transparency, accessibility and a supportive academic environment. Student representation is encouraged through elected representatives on the Programme Committee, which fosters active student engagement and feedback within the programme structure. For example, elected students attend regular Programme Committee meetings where they have the opportunity to raise concerns, suggest improvements and provide feedback from their peers. This active engagement demonstrates to the assessment team that the college ensures that student voices are heard and that any issues or areas for enhancement are addressed promptly, further strengthening the sense of community and collaboration within the academic environment. Additionally, comprehensive details on assessment schedules, submission procedures and grading processes are shared by programme managers and accessible on Moodle, supported by the assessment flowchart, which offers detailed guidance from assignment submission to mark awarding. The key strategies to 'become a successful student' resource further reinforces good academic practice by equipping students with approved strategies for managing their learning, including private and group study techniques, time management and stress management. The assessment team is confident that together these elements create a supportive, well organised academic environment that empowers students to succeed. This comprehensive approach promotes a supportive academic environment which aligns with best practices for student success and wellbeing.
213. Furthermore, it is clear that students receive tailored learning support, such as through reasonable adjustments or Disabled Students Allowance. Pastoral and wellbeing support is also provided, with safeguarding staff, mental health support and access to counselling services. Careers guidance further aids students in planning their next steps. The assessment team further examined:
- the HE student handbook
 - safeguarding and child protection policy

- examination and assessment offences policy
- the higher education student support provision statement, section 5 'responsibilities'.

214. To test how this operates in practice, the assessment team considered the 2024 NSS results in regard to question 9 'how well has your course developed your knowledge and skills that you think you will need for your future?'. This scored 90.5 per cent, which is above benchmark and suggests that the college's current processes enable students to feel that they have the necessary knowledge and skills on their programme. Overall, the assessment team is confident that this evidence demonstrates that students are provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice.
215. The assessment team considered whether the college operates processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice. It reviewed the examination and assessment offences (2023-24) policy and is satisfied that appropriate policies are in place to ensure that there is sound academic practice across the whole spectrum of education provision at the college. The policy clearly demonstrates how the college aims to prevent academic misconduct. The intended recipients are involved in the delivery, study and management of higher education.
216. The higher education academic handbook outlines academic standards, policies and procedures, making them accessible and understandable for students. By providing detailed information on academic integrity, including procedures for late submissions, extenuating circumstances, academic offences and proper use of tools like artificial intelligence, the handbook sets clear expectations for students. Additionally, the handbook directs students to the learning centre for support on referencing and other academic matters, reinforcing adherence to guidelines and fostering a culture of accountability and integrity. In the view of the team, this structured approach ensures students are well informed and supported in upholding academic standards.
217. The team considered the data on extenuating circumstances requests for 2022-23, and found this shows that the college's processes are effectively supporting students facing challenges. The assessment team saw that the college had 152 extenuating circumstances requests addressing a range of issues. The assessment team looked at a Level 6 student complaint, illustrating how the organisation operates processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practices. The documentation showed that the complaint was thoroughly documented, with evidence collected from all relevant parties and handled promptly. The outcome letter of the appeal provided a comprehensive explanation, referencing the specific academic regulations that underpinned the panel's decision and offering a clear rationale to ensure the student's understanding. Furthermore, the letter informed the student of their right to appeal, including detailed criteria and timelines for taking further action if dissatisfied.
218. The assessment team also reviewed the policy on exclusion of a student for unsatisfactory progress, which allows for the withdrawal of a student deemed by the chair of an award assessment board and the programme manager to be making unsatisfactory academic or professional progress, or displaying unethical, unprofessional, or dangerous conduct. Withdrawal is only considered if the programme manager can provide evidence, such as

tutorial notes or communications, showing that efforts were made to address the issues. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the college operates effective and transparent processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice.

219. To test whether the college has processes for marking assessments and moderating marks that are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process, the assessment team looked at a substantial sample of assessed work across Levels 4, 5 and 6 and across a range of programme subjects. This included looking at the process by which work was marked and moderated as detailed under criterion B2 (see paragraphs 150 to 153). The assessment team found that the marking of student work is undertaken fairly and consistently by the college academic staff. External reports and programme reviews informing the Higher Education Academic Board show that the college ensures the overall quality of its higher education provision.
220. The assessment team examined a sample of 12 assessments across Levels 4, 5 and 6 (as discussed above under criterion B2 in paragraphs 150 to 153), which demonstrated that there are robust and systematic processes for marking assessments and moderating marks, including moderation processes before and after assessments are issued, that are fairly and consistently applied across assessments. For example, the assignment brief for FdSc Animal Behaviour and Welfare shows that assessment briefs and grading rubrics provide clarity and guidance are being provided to both students and markers, ensuring that marking criteria are transparent and consistently applied. The assessment team found this to be consistently operated across the sample of evidence reviewed. There was also alignment between student work, marking and feedback, which illustrates that markers adhere to established rubrics. For example, the assessment team looked at a Level 4 sample of assessed work and feedback and it was clear that the marker appropriately analysed the work and the feedback given was of sufficient quality, which is essential for students' developmental progress.
221. The college's moderation process also provides an additional layer of review. For example, the moderation form for the module 'marine invertebrates' shows that the moderator is someone different than the module leader and provides commentary on whether they agree with the marks awarded. The assessment team is confident that this process ensures that the marks awarded are reliable and align with the relevant grading criteria.
222. Additionally, the assessment team reviewed five sets of minutes from Subject Assessment Panels and one set from the Award Assessment Boards to gain an insight into the collective oversight of assessment results (as detailed above under criterion B2 at paragraphs 152 to 153). The sample of minutes highlighted that the college has detailed discussions around marking consistency and that the college identified any issues and makes any final adjustments. The assessment team is satisfied that this evidences that robust, clear and consistently operated processes are in place at both the subject and award level. As outlined above under criterion B2 at paragraph 151, the assessment team observed that dissertations undergo double marking and moderation forms confirm alignment between marking standards and assessor feedback, with established criteria. This demonstrates that the college consistently adheres to its assessment procedures.
223. The assessment team further analysed the college's NSS results for assessment and feedback and this highlighted the effectiveness of the processes for marking assessments

and moderating marks. While the overall score for assessment and feedback has risen from 78.6 per cent in 2023 to 81.2 per cent in 2024, reflecting a positive trend, the result remains slightly below the benchmark. This incremental improvement suggests an ongoing commitment by the college to refine and improve assessment practices. For example, in regard to fairness and transparency in assessment, the scores for the questions directly addressing the fairness of marking (question 11) and the extent to which assessments allow students to demonstrate their learning (question 12) are particularly high, both above 90 per cent in 2024 and surpassing the benchmark. This indicates to the assessment team that students feel confident in the integrity and purpose of the assessments and suggests that the college is operating consistently effective marking practices. In regard to feedback timelines (question 13), the results were 67.6 per cent satisfaction, which is below benchmark. The assessment team would suggest that this lower NSS score highlights an opportunity for the college to improve in delivering prompt feedback, which is critical to students' ability to act on constructive insights. However, the questions on improvement through feedback, including clarity of the marking criteria (question 10) and the feedback's usefulness in helping students improve (question 14) had steady scores of 81 per cent and 77 per cent. All feedback and assessment questions, except question 10, therefore demonstrated improvements from 2023 to 2024. This trend shows that the college is enhancing most areas of assessment and feedback over time and is viewed positively by students.

224. While there are areas for improvement for the college to work on, particularly in regard to feedback timeliness, the general positive trend and high marks in fairness and assessment usefulness confirm to the assessment team that the college is committed to robust and transparent assessment processes that align with students' needs and the college's benchmarks. This comprehensive and progressively improving approach reflects effective coordination among those involved in the assessment process. The assessment team reviewed comprehensive evidence that demonstrates that the college applies structured, transparent and thorough processes for marking assessments and moderating marks, which are clearly articulated and consistently followed by all involved in the assessment process. This rigorous approach supports fair assessment outcomes and continuous improvement, aligned with the college's academic standards and benchmarks.

External examining

225. To test how the college uses external examiners, the assessment team looked at the college's policies in regard to external examiners. The assessment team examined the internal verification and quality assurance policy, which has the principle to ensure all assessment elements are valid and fit for purpose. The policy mandates a structured sampling of assessor work across all programmes, sites and teams to ensure compliance with national standards and external verification requirements. The assessment team found that the college effectively utilises external examiners as part of its quality assurance process. For example, the assessment team reviewed five external examiner reports, finding consistent evidence of high quality feedback from examiners and clear, responsive actions taken by the college to address this feedback. This demonstrated the college's commitment to continuous improvement and its proactive approach to incorporating external insights. The external examiners' reports are also integrated into the higher education quality cycle, with formal responses to their feedback documented annually in September of each academic year as evidenced by the higher education quality cycle 2023-24 document.

226. The assessment team further looked at the subject assessment panels and award assessment boards (2023-24) policy, which outline the role of external examiners at assessment board meetings. The college uses a two-tier system where subject assessment panels, including subject external examiners, confirm or adjust module marks, review assessment standards and make recommendations for module referrals. The confirmed marks and recommendations are then reviewed by the award assessment board, which includes the designated award external examiner, to make final decisions on the results for specific awards. In the unavoidable absence of a subject external examiner, the panel may proceed provided the external examiner has given comments on the standard of all modules for which they have responsibility and any queries regarding marks have been resolved in advance with the module leader. To test this, the assessment team also examined a sample of external examiners' reports across a range of subjects and is satisfied that this evidence showed that the college makes scrupulous use of external examiners in practice, in accordance with the college's processes and practices.
227. The assessment team also examined the 'External examiner notes for guidance for modules and taught programmes of study policy' and found that this policy states external examiners play a crucial role in maintaining the college's academic standards. In the assessment team's view, how the college utilises external examiners' involvement ensures that standards align with national benchmarks, the FHEQ, PSRBs, the UK quality code and the college's specifications. It is also clear from the evidence that the college also ensures that the assessment process accurately measures student achievement against intended learning outcomes and adheres to the college's assessment policy. Additionally, external examiners verify that the college's awards are comparable to those of other UK higher education institutions and that the assessment process is fair, equitable and follows college regulations. The assessment team also reviewed the 'Guidance and nomination form for the appointment of external examiners policy', which confirms that the college consistently adheres to established criteria for appointing external examiners. The assessment team is therefore satisfied with the college's approach as it aligns with the assessment team's broader experience within higher education, reflecting best practices across the sector.
228. The assessment team also examined the subject external examiner report for year one and year two of the BA Counselling, Level 4 certificate in Counselling and Level 5 Diploma in Person-Centred Counselling. The review confirmed that external examiners are provided with comprehensive briefing materials, including a representative sample of student work across all modules, programme handbooks, programme specifications, regulations, module descriptors, and assessment briefs and criteria. It is clear that this ensures that examiners can offer holistic feedback on the assessed work. The external examiners' comments highlighted that academic tutors and lecturers effectively utilised the rubric marking grid to complete the marking for each module. Furthermore, the report indicated that past feedback had been successfully integrated into the current marking process, enhancing the quality and constructiveness of the feedback provided. Evidence was also provided throughout the external examining and marking process, which demonstrated strong alignment between assessed work, relevant learning outcomes and module specifications. The assessment team found that external examiner requests are addressed promptly, with responses submitted within deadlines, approved by the head of school or partner higher education coordinator and copied to the faculty or academic partnerships administrator for thorough record-keeping and accountability. This evidence assured the assessment team that external examiners are fully

engaged in the process of moderation of student work in advance of the examination boards. This evidence supports the view that the college makes scrupulous use of external examiners including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work.

229. To test how the college considers the comments and recommendations contained in external examiners' reports, the assessment team examined the template subject and award external examiners' report and found that it is fit for purpose. To test how the college uses external examiners' reports in practice, the assessment team reviewed a sample of 14 completed subject external examiners' reports across a range of programmes and considered how the college responded to these reports. There was clear evidence that the college thoughtfully considers and addresses feedback from external examiners. For example, in regard to the external examiner's report for FdSc Marine Conservation and BSc Applied Marine Zoology programmes, the report revealed that the exercises had been revised in response to the external examiner's recommendations. This led to an improved assessment process for students. Additionally, the report highlighted that concerns regarding assessment anonymity were addressed by the programme organisers, resulting in improvements that met the external examiner's expectations. The external examiner also raised several queries regarding exam questions, all of which were resolved promptly and to the examiner's full satisfaction.
230. In further consideration of how the college utilises feedback from external examiners, the assessment team found that the college produces a formal timely response within four weeks of receiving an external examiner's report, which is approved by the head of school or the partners' higher education co-coordinators and shared with faculty or academic partnerships administrators. The assessment team reviewed the sample of 14 completed subject external examiners reports across a range of programmes and it was clear that the college's responses were robust and provided clarity to the external examiner as to how the college would address the issues raised. For example, in regard to the external examiner's report for FdSc Marine Conservation and BSc Applied Marine Zoology programmes, a section in the report, titled 'Responses to External Examiner's Report', provides a detailed account of how the college addressed the examiner's concerns within four weeks of receiving the report. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the college 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.
231. Overall, the assessment team's view is that the college's approach to external examining contributes to a high quality academic experience for students and that learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured.

Academic appeals and student complaints

232. To test whether the college has effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of the academic experience and whether these procedures are fair, accessible and timely and enable enhancement, the assessment team reviewed the college's procedures. First, the assessment team examined the college's higher education academic appeals procedure 2023-24 and found that it is designed with clear conditions, grounds and timelines for resolving academic appeals as the college aims for resolution within 20 working days, with extensions for complex cases. The assessment team was satisfied that the response times were comparable with sector averages, in the

assessment team's experience. The procedure outlines the grounds for academic appeals and explains the possible outcomes in a thorough manner. The assessment team was satisfied that this structured approach ensures that students have access to a fair and transparent process, supporting both timely resolution and equitable treatment. It is also written in a clear and accessible way.

233. Secondly, the assessment team reviewed the appeal against the decision of an Assessment Board policy which is a structured process for students to challenge academic decisions. The assessment team found that this policy addresses individual concerns and also contributes to enhancement by ensuring that feedback from appeals is reviewed and incorporated into wider academic quality assurance processes. The college tracks trends in these appeals and complaints to identify common issues, allowing it to take a proactive approach in refining policies and practices.
234. Finally, the assessment team examined the complaint management policy. The policy is also publicly available on the university's website and the assessment team was satisfied that the policy is easy to find for students. The policy outlines that the complaints process has six stages:
- stage 0 is an eligibility check carried out by the complaint officer
 - stage 1 is an informal stage managed by the relevant department and monitored by the complaint officer
 - stage 2 is a formal stage managed and monitored by the complaint officer
 - if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of stage 2, they proceed to the request for review stage, which has an eligibility criteria set out in the policy
 - stage 3 is a review stage and a reviewing officer is appointed (this stage is managed and monitored by the complaint officer)
 - the final stage is external referral.
235. All documents relating to complaints, including informal complaints, are held by the college's complaints office and there is an outlined retention period in the policy. From the review of this policy, the assessment team is assured that there are clear stages and responsible personnel outlined in the policy who ensure that complaints are handled promptly and effectively, reducing the risk of escalation. Importantly, this policy is not just about resolving individual complaints, but also identifying recurring issues that may highlight areas for improvement for the college. By systematically addressing these complaints and using the outcomes to inform future actions, the college supports its enhancement efforts. Overall, the assessment team found that the academic appeals and complaints policies and procedures are effective, fair, accessible and timely.
236. To test whether the academic appeals and complaints procedures enable enhancement to the student experience, the assessment team examined the higher education complaints report. This document provided an overview of the college's complaints received over the previous three years and included a summary of the complaints and how they were resolved. This evidence demonstrated that the college uses systematic tracking of trends and patterns

in complaints and appeals, which allows the college to identify recurring issues and make necessary adjustments to policies and practices. For example, where multiple students raise similar concerns, the college adjusts its procedures, communication, or support services. For instance, a complaint about noise disruption led to timetable and room changes. This shows that the college actively seeks to use the feedback from complaints and appeals to improve the student experience and academic quality. The assessment team was assured that this focus on continuous improvement demonstrates how the college uses feedback from complaints and appeals to enhance the student experience and strengthen academic delivery. The assessment team is therefore assured that the college's complaints and appeals procedures effectively support academic enhancement by identifying areas for improvement and ensuring that changes are based on stakeholder feedback. It is also clear that the college keeps thorough and appropriate records of complaints in practice. This evidence further supports the assessment team's view that the college has a fair, accessible, and timely process as the examples reviewed show that the college's processes are followed in practice. It is clear from the examples given that individual case details and rationales for decisions were well documented, which ensures transparency and fairness in how each case was handled.

237. The assessment team also found that the higher education complaints report was presented and discussed in the Higher Education Committee meeting in March 2024, as detailed in the minutes. The minutes demonstrated that the committee was pleased with how complaints were dealt with and notes that all complaints had been resolved. Although the minutes did not reflect a discussion on academic appeals and complaints outcomes and considerations of any changes to arrangements needed following complaints or appeals, the assessment team was satisfied that the committee does monitor complaints and would discuss any changes needed as a result of any trends in complaints (as reflected in the complaints report).
238. Through this evidence, the assessment team concluded that the college consistently follows its procedures, ensuring a fair and transparent process. This contributes not only to individual complaint resolution but also to the ongoing enhancement of academic quality and operational effectiveness.
239. To test whether appropriate action is taken by the college following an appeal or complaint, the assessment team reviewed an evidence sample of three appeals, three appeal outcomes and the higher education complaint report. The assessment team considered this to be an appropriate sample to review and is satisfied that the appeals and complaints were dealt with appropriately following the relevant college procedures. For example, the assessment team examined a Level 6 student complaint within the BSc (Hons) Horticulture (Garden and Landscape Design) programme. The documentation revealed that the complaint was meticulously documented, with evidence gathered from all involved parties and processed efficiently. The appeal outcome letter also provided a comprehensive explanation of the panel's decision, referencing the relevant academic regulations that supported their conclusions. Additionally, the letter offered a detailed rationale for the decision, ensuring clarity for the student. The student was also informed of their right to appeal the decision, with clear criteria and timelines outlined for pursuing further action if dissatisfied with the outcome. This demonstrated to the assessment team that appeals and complaints are dealt with in a timely and robust manner and that appropriate action is taken following an appeal or complaint.

240. Overall, the assessment team is satisfied that the college meets criterion B3.1 as the evidence clearly demonstrates that the college provides a consistently high quality academic experience for students from all backgrounds and that learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured.

Conclusions

241. The assessment team concluded that the college demonstrates that it designs and delivers courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students from all backgrounds. Learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured and the college designs the curriculum, assessment and feedback in a way that provides students the best chance of achieving the qualification being sought.
242. The assessment team is satisfied that the college's procedures for design, development and approval of courses are effective and accountable. Staff are provided with the relevant support and guidance and responsibilities are clearly assigned with appropriate input from external expertise. Courses are also coherent and learning support services have relevant involvement.
243. From the evidence reviewed, the assessment team is assured that there is a strategic approach to learning and teaching. Although distance learning is not a main feature of the college's higher education offer, it is clear the college has in place suitable arrangements to ensure those that need to learn at a distance can do so effectively. It is clear from the evidence that the college maintains physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe and accessible for all students. Students are also able to monitor their progress and academic development through the scheme of work.
244. Recognition for prior learning and assessment processes are appropriate and reliable and the assessment team is satisfied that students can show their achievement of learning outcomes through assessments. Students are clearly given opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of good academic practice and processes for marking and moderation are clearly articulated and consistently applied from the examples reviewed. It is clear to the team that the college also makes good and thorough use of external expertise, including external examiners, and the college gives full consideration and response to external examiner comments and feedback.
245. The college also has effective policies and procedures for dealing with academic appeals and student complaints, which are fair, accessible and timely. From the evidence reviewed, the assessment team is satisfied that the college ensures that appropriate actions are taken following an appeal or complaint and the procedures are followed in practice.
246. Overall, the assessment team is confident that the mechanisms in place in regard to the design and approval of programmes, learning and teaching, assessment, external examining and academic appeals and student complaints are appropriate for the college's current provision under its time-limited foundation DAPs and will also be suitable for indefinite foundation DAPs and extension to bachelors' DAPs. Therefore, the assessment team concluded that the college meets criterion B3.
247. As set out in paragraph 17 of this report, the college has only begun offering provision under its own time-limited foundation DAPs in the 2022-23 academic year. However, the team's

assessment has also drawn on the work undertaken by the college to prepare for its own programmes. The assessment team is satisfied from the evidence reviewed that the college has exercised its powers securely, and has an approach that will be suitable for extending to bachelors' DAPs and meets criterion B3.

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

248. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion C1: the role of academic and professional staff because it meets subcriterion C1.1.
249. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows, in summary, that the college has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students. Furthermore, the college demonstrates that all staff involved in teaching, supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work are appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the level(s) and subject(s) of the qualifications being awarded.
250. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Subcriterion 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

251. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion C1.1 because it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students. All staff involved in teaching and learning or supporting learning, and in the assessment of student work, are qualified, or working towards qualified teacher status. The wider staffing resource includes industry personnel who have contributed to the development of new provision, support teaching, apply learning to meaningful practices and contribute to student assessment.
252. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that the college has met the evidence requirements for C1 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

253. The college provided multiple documents as evidence towards the requirements of this criterion. This evidence includes documents relating to the contractual basis for employment; academic engagement in teaching, learning and assessment; the college's commitment to professional development; and staff engagement in research and scholarship activities. Many of these aspects are integrated in the college's 'Research and scholarly activity statement'. This document promotes staff engagement in research and scholarship with the purpose of assuring the currency and advancement of subject and pedagogical knowledge. Investment in staff is continually referenced, whether this be through staff holding teaching qualifications

within three years of being appointed, promoting active participation in Advance HE teaching accreditation, continuing opportunity to study for relevant higher level subject-based or pedagogical qualifications, or in the engagement of research and scholarship. Commitment to staff investment is shown through appraisal processes that integrate competency-based performance management (measured through observations and self-reflection) with discussions targeted towards ongoing development. The college uses the professional standards for teachers and trainers competency framework in appraisal processes for teaching staff. The inclusion of this framework in the appraisal process requires staff to consider their performance against 20 competency or professional standards and, where necessary, with their line manager to agree areas of professional development to address. This framework was originally published in 2014, but was updated in 2022 by the Education and Training Foundation. Many competencies relate to criterion C1, especially reference to teaching staff being appropriately qualified, supported and developed in their role. This includes:

- developing and updating knowledge of subject specialism, taking account of new practices, research and industry requirements
- reviewing and applying knowledge of educational research, pedagogy and assessment to develop evidence-informed practice
- developing and applying knowledge of special educational needs and disabilities to create inclusive learning experiences
- applying motivational, coaching and skill development strategies to help learners progress and achieve
- developing enrichment and progression opportunities for learners through collaboration with employers, higher education and community groups.

254. The assessment team considered whether learning, teaching and assessment practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice and subject-specific and educational scholarship. This was initially tested through reviewing programme specifications developed as part of the college's time-limited foundation DAPs provision. For example, the stage two approval meeting and approval document for FdSc in Agriculture 2022-23 contain comprehensive accounts for the development of this programme including, within the minutes, detailed discussion to aid programme development on optimising the involvement of industry partners in creation of teaching and assessment practices that reflect contemporary and relevant practices in agriculture in the Southwest. The minutes reflect a level of criticality for this programme aimed at enabling the programme team to reflect on feedback and continue to shape provision that is relevant to students. Within the approval report, the college's programme team has presented a level of criticality that is commendable. This is especially demonstrated in the justification for amended provision within this new award. At times, feedback speaks to modules in previous legacy provision awarded by the college's university partner containing, for example, content that is no longer relevant to teaching and requiring what they describe as an overhaul to reflect advances in research and development across agricultural provision.

255. Of notable strength in this new programme is the fit with the Duchy College of the Future Farm, which is described in the approval document as a unique dairy and resource management centre. The purpose of this farm facility is to generate research and knowledge exchange leading to production efficiency, interactions with animal health and welfare and the promotion of economic and environmental best practices. By aligning teaching, assessment and research practices with the Future Farm facility, staff and students will have opportunities for involvement in evidence-based practices in their discipline. Although students are the main benefactors of the work-based learning within FdSc Agriculture, through input from guest industry experts contributing to teaching and field work, the college argue appropriately that the close links and often direct engagement teaching staff have in many of these activities enable staff as well as students to acquire insight into enterprises and activities that take place on the ground. This therefore supports teaching staff's ability to assist students to integrate theory into practice. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that relevant learning, teaching and assessment practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship at the college.
256. To test whether the college has academic and professional expertise, the assessment team looked at the staff remission spreadsheet, which provides detail of the level of academic study for teaching staff. This spreadsheet demonstrates that all but a very small minority of staff have degrees or postgraduate degrees at masters' or PhD level. Many staff in managerial or programme manager roles hold professional qualifications in addition to academic award credit. For example, the Deputy Head of Cornwall Counselling is listed as holding a professional qualification as well as an academic qualification at bachelors' level. The assessment team has also had the opportunity to review a sample of 21 CVs or college application forms of staff holding teaching or student support roles at the college. From the review of CVs and application forms supplied covering teaching and student support roles, the college effectively demonstrates that staff have relevant, and appropriate academic and (where applicable) professional expertise. For example, a lecturer working on the FdSc Zoology, Ecology and Conservation programme has a FdSc Zoological Conservation degree awarded in 2007, an undergraduate degree in Environmental Resource Management (awarded in 2008), with a PgCHE (awarded in 2010). Another example is that of study programme manager for the FdSc Agriculture whose academic profile includes an undergraduate degree in Agriculture with Animal Science (awarded in 2015), PgCHE (awarded in 2010) and a MSc Bio Innovation (awarded in 2022). Further safeguards are shown in the latter parts of programme approval, which requires assessment to determine that staff with relevant expertise can support new provision development. An example of this has been provided in the stage two minutes of the approval of the FdSc Agriculture, where assurances were sought that appropriately experienced staff are available to support new programme initiatives.
257. The assessment team also reviewed the publicly available profiles of senior leaders at the college such as the Principal and Chief Executive, the Deputy Principal for Curriculum and Quality and the Director of Higher Education and found that senior leaders have relevant and appropriate academic and professional expertise for the senior leadership roles that they hold. Further details on senior leaders' experience and expertise are available above under criterion A1.1 at paragraphs 59 and 60. The review of staff profiles demonstrates that the college has appropriate academic and professional expertise to offer its range of provision

with many staff on academic contracts demonstrating a trajectory of teaching expertise, curriculum leadership, research engagement and success in publications.

258. In the view of the assessment team, the integration of industry experts in qualification delivery, in both teaching and assessment, demonstrates that content is relevant and supports the college's employability agenda. For example, in the definitive module records for the FdSc in Agriculture, there is reference to all the business focused modules incorporating collaboration across teaching and assessments with industry. For example, in the Level 4 module on Crop Production and Soil Science, the teaching and learning strategy includes guests lecturing and supports students in guided independent study with assessment drawing from farm data to consider soil health and crop management including a report of fertiliser use. Another example is at Level 4 in FdSc in Agriculture where industry experts are actively engaged in assessment. Students assess a farm business, which includes a marketing exercise, calculating gross margins and analysis from a top-quartile dairy farm and profitability (Farm Business Survey data). From the evidence reviewed, the assessment team is confident that the college employs staff with appropriate academic and (where applicable) professional expertise to support activities across the college's higher education portfolio.
259. The college demonstrates that teaching staff are actively engaged with pedagogic development of its discipline knowledge and that this is supported and encouraged by the college. For example, in its terms of reference, the college's Higher Education Academic Board's purpose is seen as taking responsibility for ensuring quality and enhancement of the student experience by taking responsibility for student support, administrative support and ensuring staff are competent to teach, facilitate learning and undertake assessment to the level of the qualifications being awarded. The team considered a positive example of this is provided in the action plan paper presented to the Higher Education Committee in February 2024 where it is reported that the college is actively monitoring staff engagement in research and scholarship as well as investing in initiatives that promote engagement. The minutes include acknowledgement that the college has reduced teaching hours for higher education staff to encourage research and scholarship to enhance teaching staff's subject knowledge as well as seeking ways to promote the visibility of research opportunities across the college.
260. Furthermore, the college uses the professional standards framework for teachers and trainers. One of the professional standards requires teaching staff to critically review and develop their knowledge of educational research, pedagogy and assessment to develop informed evidence-based practices. This requirement, with the addition of targeted research and scholarship to advance subject and pedagogical knowledge, supports the college's distinctive and focused higher education development for teaching staff. Evidence of evaluation and progress against staff engagement in research and scholarship in their discipline areas is evident in the paper and associated action plan presented to the Higher Education Committee in February 2024. Evaluation against action plan objectives shows that since February 2024 the college has supported staff who are eligible for a 10 per cent discount on programmes, including postdoctoral study, to study at the University of Plymouth. In addition, the college has several higher education teaching staff currently enrolled on the PGCHE with the University of Falmouth. It highlights that higher education staff have been encouraged to submit proposals to the college's research and scholarly activity fund. This has resulted in staff receiving funding to pursue higher level study and the college has stated their intention to continue to support this. In the view of the assessment team, the evidence

reviewed therefore demonstrates that the college promotes active engagement with the pedagogic development of discipline knowledge.

261. The college demonstrates that its staff are encouraged to understand current research and advanced scholarship with this informing and enhancing its teaching. This is evident through the active engagement of staff in research and advanced scholarship described in the college's research and scholarly activity statement. The impact of this engagement is seen in an improved student learning experience and opportunities for students to engage in scholarship activities. From a staffing perspective, engagement in research and scholarship is seen to build confidence in subject disciplines and encourage application to teaching. The college intends to develop a land-based centre of excellence and, if it is successful in its extension to bachelors' DAPs, the college sets out that this initiative will lead to further engagement in research and scholarship, building on what has already been evidenced with the CVs of staff, many of whom already hold masters' or PhD awards. The college considers the ongoing pursuit of research and scholarship as essential to achieving its aim of becoming a centre for excellence in the Southwest. The assessment team is satisfied that the current and planned engagement with research and advanced scholarship is commensurate with the levels being offered and planned for at the college. The assessment team acknowledge that this is an area for continued growth for the college, especially as conditions are now in place to enable staff working in higher education to expand their research and scholarly activities with, for example, support to reduce teaching hours expectations in their contracts.
262. In the People Strategy 2024-27, the college acknowledges that its staff are the force behind the college's success in delivering high quality and responsive education and training to students. To support this, the college's self-assessment document in support of its DAPs assessment discusses the decision to appoint a director of higher education to support staff in securing time for research activity, broadening research practice and sharing across the college. The team observed evidence of the impact of this appointment, as shown in the action plan presented to the Higher Education Committee in February 2024 whereby confirmation of reduced teaching hours is affirmed, as are strategies to increase staff engagement in research and scholarship. This example of collective activities demonstrates that the college has relevant strategies for planning and engaging with staff to develop, support and enable them to engage with research and advanced scholarship. Although new programmes developed using the college's time-limited foundation DAPs remain relatively new, in the view of the team, teaching, learning and assessment reflects evidence-based practices reflective of specific discipline provision. Furthermore, it is evident that the college has the support of industry experts providing examples of well informed practitioners being able to contribute to the student experience. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the evidence has demonstrated that the college provides appropriate development and engagement activities for teaching staff. These activities provide the opportunity for engagement in meaningful research and scholarship, including affirming excellence in teaching within schemes, such as the Advance HE Fellowship.
263. The key evidence source that is most reflective of internal criticality is the action plan submitted to the Higher Education Committee in February 2024. As stated in the above two paragraphs, there are multiple entries linked to research and scholarship investment and pursuit. In one entry, this has been linked to the expectations of demonstrable activity across research and scholarship while holding time-limited foundation DAPs. Although the college does not reference that further research or scholarship interventions will be necessary if it is

awarded indefinite foundation DAPs or bachelors' DAPs, it does refer to maintaining a thriving culture of research and scholarship as a requirement in continuing to award its foundation degrees, as well as recognising the requirement to remain compliant with conditions required by the OfS. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the college has the necessary understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in its discipline and that such knowledge and understanding directly informs and enhances teaching. The college is actively engaged with research and advanced scholarship, providing evidence that engagement in both research and scholarship is commensurate with the level and subject of the qualifications being offered and planned for at the college.

264. To test whether there are opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice, the assessment team examined the college's engagement with the performance management tool for teaching staff. This serves as an appraisal tool designed for staff to self-reflect on their role and achievements and determine future objectives. Through a process of reflection and evaluation, undertaken with line managers, teaching staff consider practice against the professional standards for teachers and trainers to identify areas of excellence and growth needs across the spectrum of teaching practices. This is a robust tool capturing the competencies needed for excellence in teaching and explicitly demonstrated in the worked-up example presented to the assessment team. Aiding this process is the college's policy on the observation of teaching, learning and assessment whereby each member of staff has at least one formal observation annually with tutorial and work-based assessments included in the observation process. The college views this as essential for raising the standards of teaching, learning and assessment and for enhancing the student learning experience. The college has set out that this is a supportive process and not intended to be punitive, with observation development plans feeding into the appraisal process. In addition to appraisal processes the college, in its updated self-assessment document dated May 2024, confirms that it will support all staff whatever their level and experience to develop. Included in this commitment is support for staff to engage in Advance HE Fellowship schemes, designed to demonstrate evidence of professional practice that meets the requirements of the Professional Standards Framework (2023) using a reflective framework. Evidence provided to the assessment team does not detail how many staff have engaged in Advance HE Fellowships. However, the fact that this is being discussed as a valid outcome of scholarship by the college is encouraging. Essentially, the use of the performance management tool for teaching staff, alongside formal observation processes of tuition and assessment practices, assured the assessment team that the college promotes opportunities for all staff to undertake reflection and evaluation in respect of continued development of learning, teaching and assessment practices. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the college demonstrates that staff have opportunities to undertake reflection and evaluation in respect of their learning, teaching and assessment practices.
265. The assessment team is confident that the college promotes and enables staff to engage in development opportunities aimed towards enhancing teaching practice and scholarship. For example, staff use the performance management report for appraisal, which includes a requirement for teaching staff to self-assess and discuss with their line manager their practice against college objectives. Teaching staff also self-assess against the professional standards for teachers and trainers competency framework. The inclusion of the professional standards for teachers and trainers framework provides a level of granulation for the teaching role against the domains of professional values and attributes, professional knowledge and

understanding and professional skills. By doing so, there is a robust and comprehensive framework for teaching staff to determine current strengths and areas for development. The assessment team reviewed a completed example performance management document for a lecturer. This document demonstrated that staff are expected to draw on a range of evidence to inform their reflective process including lesson observations, student feedback, learning walks, self-assessment and student achievement. For instance, the lecturer detailed that they will soon be a published academic author and so the lecturer suggested that this experience could be used to support students' research capabilities. From this performance management process, targeted learning and development can be considered, including scholarship designed to increase understanding of student learning and needs in higher education.

266. The college also holds an annual review and improvement day, which is an example of an internal forum for staff to disseminate their practice and receive feedback to support them in their own practice and scholarship. The assessment team examined the agenda for the review and improvement day, which included an agenda item for feedback. This indicated time for groups to feedback what they have ascertained from reviewing other areas, which indicates that the college encourages staff to improve their work by sharing internal best practice. This evidence demonstrates that the college has development opportunities aimed at enabling staff to enhance their practice and scholarship.
267. The college provides opportunities for its staff to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design and engage with the activities of other higher education providers, for example, through becoming external examiners, validation panel members or external reviewers. The assessment team looked at staff CVs and application forms and found that some staff profiles list previous external examining and external reviewing experience. However, it is difficult for the assessment team to ascertain how recent some of these activities are as they were supported in the format of joining applications to the college, rather than in the format of a CV. From the sample of staff submitting CVs rather than application forms, it is possible to see a range of experience being undertaken since working for the college including curriculum development lead, programme validation lead, external examining experience and games design experience used by students in simulation activities. The integration of the professional standards for teachers and trainers framework into the college's appraisal processes demonstrates continued commitment by the college to providing support for enhanced teaching, learning and assessment practices with teaching staff reviewing their practices against criteria that include:
- developing collaborative and respectful relationships with learners, colleagues and external stakeholders (essential for working as external examiners or reviewers)
 - engaging with and promoting a culture of continuous learning and quality improvement
 - critically reviewing and applying knowledge of educational research, pedagogy and assessment to develop evidence-informed practice
 - sharing and updating knowledge of effective practice with colleagues, networks and research communities to support improvement
 - planning and delivering learning programmes that are safe, inclusive, stretching and relevant to learners' needs.

268. Opportunities exist for reviewing the teaching skills of those employed at the college. The staff profiles submitted as CVs show that for some staff, opportunities to engage in roles focused upon curriculum and programme management leadership and module leader experience exist while employed in college roles. Additionally, some staffing profiles list roles undertaken for other higher education institutions since commencement of employment at the college. Additionally, opportunities exist for industry experts to contribute to learning design, teaching and assessment. This is shown in the evidence submission from the college with examples given such as an external trust research officer leading modules in the Zoology with Ecology and Conservation programme, and publishers working with college staff to develop prototype games building that is being integrated within relevant programmes. Overall, the assessment team is satisfied that there are opportunities for staff to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design and to engage with the activities of other higher education providers.
269. To test whether there is expertise in providing feedback on assessment which is timely, constructive and developmental, the assessment team firstly reviewed a sample of assessment feedback at Level 4 and Level 5 across multiple programmes including Art and Design and Zoology. The assessment team found that the tool used to guide marking and feedback is systematic and robust. Given that Level 4 students would be new to higher education, the assessment team considered it good practice to see detailed qualitative feedback, in addition to marker transparency against academic competencies provided as suggestions for future improvement. The tools used for marking and feedback aid transparency to this process and provide assurances that practices are well informed and can be moderated. From the sample provided, markers are encouraged to mark up student work with localised feedback that would be further formative development for students. For example, in the samples reviewed, markers had explained where the student had done well and provided clear instructions on where there were gaps to enhance their practice for future assessments.
270. Additionally, the assessment team examined the moderation process to assess if the college's internal process is constructive, developmental and timely. The assessment team examined a sample of post-marking assessment moderation forms and found that the process used is fair and supportive and contains appropriate development action points. For example, the internal moderation form for Level 4 Animal Behaviour and Psychology module demonstrated that general comments are given by the moderator and the module lead, including actions taken as a result of the feedback provided. In this example, the moderator suggested that the tone of feedback is slightly negative and so the module leader confirmed that they amended feedback to be more positive. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the college's internal moderation processes are appropriate to ensure that feedback is timely, constructive and developmental.
271. The assessment team considered how students view feedback at the college. The assessment team examined the teaching, learning and quality cycle for 2022-23 document, which shows student experience measures. This document demonstrated that overall 75 per cent of students who responded agreed that feedback on their work has been timely. This indicates that assessment feedback is on time and most students are satisfied with this.

272. The assessment team therefore considers, based on the evidence provided, that the college has expertise in providing feedback on assessment which is timely, constructive and developmental.
273. To assess whether there is experience of curriculum development and assessment design, the assessment team reviewed staff CVs. This evidence shows that several staff have listed module development, including development of assessment schemes for the college and for other higher education providers in previous appointed roles. Some staff CVs include substantial experience. For example, one staff member has held the position of corporate curriculum development lead (Business and IT) since 2011 for the college. Further evidence of staff experience of curriculum development and assessment design is provided in the paper and associated action plan presented to the Higher Education Committee in February 2024. This document includes an objective to work with curriculum teams across campuses to ensure a vibrant and distinctive offer and to prevent overlap and duplication of content unless clearly justifiable. The action plan also evidences that the college is committed to sharing best practice and offering relevant development opportunities across teaching, learning and assessment. This shows that the college commits to offering activities and workshops as part of an annual higher education conference, open to all staff and stakeholders with the intention to share best practice.
274. The process for curriculum development and approval is also clearly established. In the curriculum development and approval document, the college has captured the roles of external stakeholders, including external academic advisors and external industry advisors in informing new programme development. In addition, the document captures the importance of including students in this process. This is a clear process from inception through to a two stage validation approval process, which enables ongoing feedback from multiple perspectives. The process also involves relevant partnerships where necessary. The criteria used for determining approval also includes reference to the following requirements related to curriculum and assessment design:
- the module structure, curriculum content and module learning outcomes will ensure that students completing the programme will have met the programme learning outcomes
 - the assessment process proposed is appropriately inclusive and rigorous, and allows students to demonstrate the achievement indicated in the learning outcome
 - the assessment methods are appropriate to the award and target student group
 - the assessment criteria allow different levels of achievement to be clearly distinguished
 - the staff contributing to the delivery of the award are sufficient in number and suitably qualified
 - due consideration has been given to the equality impact of assessment and how the reasonable needs of disabled students can be accommodated.
275. The assessment team is satisfied that the above criteria are demonstrated in practice. For example, the assessment team looked at the programme proposal Stage Two Programme Specification for FdSc Agriculture. This evidence included marked up tracked changes to support staff in improving their experience and skills in curriculum development and

assessment design in regard to a programme proposal. The document and feedback aligned with the criteria referenced above. The assessment team found that the college's approach is one of inclusivity, creating opportunities for staff and student engagement throughout teaching, learning and assessment process to enhance the learning opportunities for its students. The assessment team is therefore satisfied on the evidence reviewed that the college has demonstrated that it has experience of curriculum development and assessment design.

276. To test whether staff at the college are engaged with the activities of other higher education providers such as involvement as external examiners, validation panel members, or external reviewers, the assessment team assessed the professional standards framework for teachers and trainers that is used as part of the appraisal process and documented in the performance management tool for teaching staff. Included in this framework, teaching staff are encouraged to consider ways in which they could benefit the wider higher education community through experience in roles such as external examiners, external advisors or quality reviewers. The assessment team also considers that the appraisal process is likely to generate objectives designed for staff improvement and these objectives would be supported by the college if deemed relevant to their roles.
277. The assessment team also examined evidence of staff CVs and application forms and found that some staff have experience of engagement with other higher education providers such as external examining and external reviewing experience. This is discussed in detail above in paragraphs 267 and 268. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that evidence exists of staff engagement with the activities of other higher education providers and that the college provides opportunities to encourage staff to reflect on ways they could seek out such opportunities.
278. The team considered whether the college has made rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach all students with the appropriate staff and student ratios. The college has sufficient and experienced staff for each programme, which is considered in the sign off for the programme approval process. For example, in the meeting minutes of the FdSc Agriculture Stage Two approval process there is recorded commentary on the expertise of each member of staff who contributes to the programme. It was also clear to the team that the college appoints staff members with appropriate expertise to lead on modules. For example, the minutes reflect a discussion that a member of staff has the appropriate industry expertise to lead the module but does not yet have the academic experience and so was chosen not to lead the module. This demonstrated to the assessment team that there is clear recognition of the industry skills that staff members bring to the programme, but the college acknowledges the need to appoint a module lead with the necessary academic background and skills, due to the academic qualifications needed to ensure the quality of the programme. All teaching staff are also appointed on probationary contracts of six months, which is discussed in the standard teaching contract. The college has provided comprehensive documentation used for performance management, including a worked example of how this is used within the college. The inclusion of the professional standards framework is comprehensive and provides a useful vehicle for staff with their respective line managers to assess individual skills and determine areas for development. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the college has made a rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach all students. This demonstrates that academic staff have appropriate expertise and ability to deliver teaching.

279. Furthermore, the meeting minutes of the FdSc Agriculture Stage Two approval process outline that staff and student ratios is considered in programme design. Included in the minutes is a discussion around student admissions to the programme and that the college needs between 12 and 15 students to run the programme with one academic member of staff. There is later further discussion on the expertise of staff, the hours of teaching that would need to be covered and resources needed. One academic staff member to a student ratio of between 12 and 15 students would indicate an appropriate and small class size in the assessment team's opinion based on its experience and expertise. This demonstrates to the team that the college has made rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach all students with the appropriate staff and student ratios in relation to programme design. This also shows that staffing and resource requirements are set in advance of course start date so that there is time to appoint staff and arrange the resources needed before the students start their courses. This is appropriate for the college's provision in relation to its time-limited foundation DAPs and would be appropriate for an extension to bachelors' DAPs.
280. The assessment team also reviewed the college's TEF 2023 submission in regard to information on staff and student ratios. This highlights that the college has small and supportive class sizes which are in industry-aligned spaces. Academic staff are able to offer regular tutorial support individually and in groups, and staff can be responsive to students' needs through their 'open door policy'. This indicated to the assessment team that there are appropriate staff and student ratios. The assessment team further considered this in practice and reviewed student feedback. Student feedback included that staff 'encourage and help students develop and feel safe', which indicates that students support the view that there is appropriate staffing levels. The latest available 'Size and shape of provision data dashboard' also states that the college had a student population in 2022-2023 of 880 students across all of its higher education provision. This also indicates there are small class sizes at the college and that the college has the appropriate staff numbers for its higher education courses.
281. The assessment team has confidence in the recruitment practices used to ensure appropriate staff are recruited to roles appropriate to their experience. This is effectively demonstrated in the college's people strategy 2024-27 and in the staff remission document. Within its people strategy, the college affirms it is staff who are the force behind the college's success in delivering high quality education and training. The college states that it is committed to recruiting and selecting the best possible staff who share the values of the college and are committed to college's mission. The assessment team is satisfied with recruitment processes after reviewing the evidence within the staff remission data as data profiles of 31 staff included within this document show that all are educated to the minimum level of an undergraduate degree, with eight staff holding PhD qualifications.
282. The assessment team also reviewed staff CVs to determine the college's recruitment practices. Of the 21 staff profiles submitted as evidence by the college, 10 profiles were offered in CV format while the remainder were in the format of original application forms for entry to the college. The assessment team is satisfied from its review of evidence that the college appointed staff who provided impressive profiles on application. For example, from the 10 CV samples reviewed, many staff profiles included qualifications higher than those they would be teaching if appointed and relevant to the subject discipline. In terms of its recruitment and selection processes, the college demonstrates that it is recruiting staff to roles commensurate to their experiences. To assess its recruitment operation in practice, the assessment team looked at the publicly available information on the college's website

regarding current job vacancies. While there were no specific job advertisements for higher education vacancies when the assessment team reviewed the website in early November 2024, there were live job vacancies for teaching roles such as a vet nursing lecturer. The job description for this vacancy had a clear person specification and the essential criteria explain that the successful candidate must have the appropriate qualifications and industry experience, such as that of a registered veterinary nurse.

283. Related to staff recruitment and its impact on student learning, the college demonstrates its commitment to ongoing learning and development through the provision of a range of training and development opportunities that include focused programmes, mentoring, coaching and on-the-job learning in order to develop, maintain and retain a motivated workforce who are able to provide high quality education and training for students. The college did not submit its written recruitment procedure as evidence for this assessment, but the assessment team is satisfied on the evidence reviewed that the college has appropriate staff recruitment practices.
284. Overall, it is clear through the evidence reviewed that the college invests in its staff to support their development and benefit the learning experience of its students. The college works effectively with its partners and industry to support its overall portfolio of provision. There remains ongoing commitment to continue to work with partners where retaining such relationships will enhance to quality of provision or improve the attractiveness of specific qualifications. An example of this is retaining partnerships with the Eden project. The college shared that they view retaining partnerships as a way to create and enhance opportunities for collaboration in shared activities such as collaborative research. The college has also been transparent about securing staff, or developing its own workforce, to attain higher degrees, including doctorate studies, in line with the practice of other higher education providers.

Conclusions

285. The assessment team is satisfied that the college has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students, and persons involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, are appropriately qualified, supported and developed to levels and subjects of the qualifications being awarded. The assessment team was particularly impressed by the scrutiny given to the latter stages of the approval processes for new programme development in relation to securing appropriate staff to deliver new programmes. While this remains an essential part of new programme approval, the assessment team is confident that processes are in place for both existing provision and to manage risks associated with staffing resources in regard to an extension to bachelors' DAPs.
286. Relevant learning, teaching and assessment practices are evident that are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice and subject-specific research and educational scholarship. The assessment team found that this is particularly robust in the manner that staff development and appraisal is managed and the college's focus on enhancing research and scholarship impact activities across its higher education staff.
287. The college has provided evidence that all staff involved in teaching, assessment or supporting student learning hold appropriate academic expertise. This is noted specifically in many staff holding higher degrees and postgraduate teaching qualifications. In addition, the college has built a network of industry experts who actively contribute to programme

provision, which allows students to relate learning to practice and gain meaningful experiences of workplace initiatives.

288. The assessment team further concluded that the college has appropriate learning, teaching and assessment practices that are informed by industry. The college has provided evidence of significant engagement with industry which positively contributes to learning, teaching and assessment. This is an area that the assessment team would like to positively highlight as this can be linked directly to enthusing students for further study and enhancing employability. It is clear from the evidence reviewed that the college's staff have appropriate experience of curriculum development and assessment design informed by research and professional practice.
289. The assessment team is confident that staff are actively engaged with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge. The college attributes much of this enhancement to the appointment of a deputy principal for growth (including higher education) and their leadership in terms of renegotiating the contract for staff working in higher education to attain more dedicated time to research and scholarship, as well as promoting a culture within the college for research and scholarship activities.
290. From the evidence provided, the assessment team is confident that staff have the opportunity to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design, and in many instances have shown in CVs that they have engaged in wider activities of other higher education providers, taking on roles such as external examiners, validation panel members or external reviewers. This increases their pedagogic understanding of effective teaching, learning and assessment practices.
291. As set out in paragraph 17 of this report, the college has only recently begun offering provision under its own time-limited foundation DAPs in the 2022-23 academic year. However, the assessment team's assessment has also drawn on the work undertaken by the college to prepare for its own programmes. The assessment team is satisfied from the evidence reviewed that the college has exercised its powers securely, and has an approach that will be suitable for extending to bachelors' DAPs and meets criterion C1.

Assessment of DAPs criterion D: Environment for supporting students

Criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement

Advice to the OfS

292. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement because it meets subcriterion D1.1.
293. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that the college has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.
294. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Subcriterion 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

295. The assessment team is satisfied that the college meets criterion D1.1 because there is evidence to show, in summary, that the college has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Specific attention was given to assess how the college sought to inspire and increase students' ambitions and to unlock the potential of all students.
296. The assessment team's view is based on review of evidence provided which shows that the college has met the evidence requirements for D1.1 and other supporting evidence requirements.

Reasoning

297. The assessment team reviewed evidence that shows that processes exist to enable student development and achievement of a diverse body of students. The college is responsive to the changing needs of students and activities to promote academic, personal and professional progression often have an industry-applied focus to qualifications, which enhances employability.
298. In the strategic plan 2022–25, the college acknowledges that due to adopting the government's 'fresh start' process, it has benefitted from strong and significantly improved governance and leadership. One improvement is in relation to the collection of more comprehensive data, including student-facing data, which has supported effective decision making. An example of evidence that the college has submitted is the achievement of a 'Good' rating by Ofsted in February 2022. Two of the college's five strategic aims are student-

focused. Firstly, the strategic aim relating to quality of education suggests that the college sets a culture of high expectations for student achievements, progress and career destinations. Secondly, in terms of infrastructure, the college aims to ensure high quality sustainable resources to enhance the learning experience for all. The findings of the Ofsted report in February 2022 included that 'governors and leaders have high expectations for learners. Leaders are passionate about the power of education to change lives and benefit the wider community.'

299. In addition to the college's effective governance on teaching, learning and assessment as demonstrated in detail throughout criterion C, specialist support services such as counselling, disability services and careers advice at the college cover both the generic provision of services to the wider community of students alongside targeted support for individual students. Evidence for this is shown in the college's management structure, where as part of senior management there is appointment of a director of student experience whose portfolio includes safeguarding and prevent, accommodation, careers and student experiences. Multiple comprehensive policies also focus on student wellbeing, including safeguarding and child protection, student and staff mental health and wellbeing strategy 2022-25 and student support.
300. The assessment team is confident that the college has strategic and operational approaches established to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement across its diverse body of students. This is primarily demonstrated through the work of the Higher Education Committee. Its terms of reference state that its purpose is overseeing the strategic development, review, enhancement, governance and management of higher education across the college and, specifically, to oversee the college's access and participation plan and monitor performance.
301. The assessment team reviewed minutes for meetings of this committee, which demonstrate how it is discharging its responsibilities. For example, the assessment team looked at a paper prepared for the February 2024 Higher Education Committee meeting that included a comprehensive action plan informed by evaluation of the progress made towards previously agreed targets over a 12-month period. The action plan addresses themed areas including:
- curriculum alignment, including introducing bite-sized offers as continuing professional development for targeted students
 - marketing and recruitment
 - making the most of its DAPs
 - promoting high quality teaching, learning and assessment
 - enhancing the student voice so that higher education provision is viewed as value added by students
 - seeking ways to offer bespoke accommodation to higher education students to support strategic growth
 - ensuring that the college retains an inclusive culture embracing diversity for access to higher education for its students

- promoting academic partnership
- celebrating successes of its students and staff.

302. The assessment team reviewed the section on sustaining high quality teaching, learning and assessment to drive outstanding student engagement and employability and found that two areas were risk-rated amber and two were risk-rated green. The greatest progress (green rated outcomes) was in the continued use of programme committee meetings to monitor the student and staff experience and understand the learner voice across programmes. The second outcome considered green was to create and share teaching, learning and assessment activities at an annual conference that would be open to all stakeholders to share best practice and create contemporary pedagogies to benefit learners. The two amber outcomes relate to firstly, the college's readiness to review existing quality enhancement processes to determine a fit with higher education and secondly, to consider the integration of flexible delivery models to meet both student and industry needs. This demonstrated to the assessment team that the college takes a strategic and risk-based approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement. Activities are targeted so that they include the college's diverse body of students.
303. The Higher Education Committee also has strategic and operational oversight across provision affecting students. For example, included in its terms of reference, the committee considers the key risks to the delivery of higher education qualifications, seeking assurances that risks are being appropriately managed. At a more granular level, the committee seeks to scrutinise and monitor performance around increasing diversity and in doing so, reviews progress against targets associated with access and participation such as work to reduce attainment gaps. This is reflected in the minutes of the committee, for example those dated February 2024. It is the assessment team's view that the college takes a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement for its diverse body of students.
304. 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, the assessment team initially examined information on the college's website. Regarding access to initial information, potential students can see the range of higher education provision that the college offers, for example wildlife conservation and zoology and this can be accessed across the college's various campuses. The programmes offered under the college's time-limited foundation DAPs are accessible and links on the webpage lead to further content relating to programme information, fees, content, entry requirements, work experience, assessment, progression and campus location. In addition, there are invitations to upcoming open days where prospective students can meet staff involved in programmes they may be interested in pursuing. The assessment team consider the college's website in relation to programme information to be informative, visually attractive and accessible. The information and guidance available to students is effective and includes relevant information to prepare students for study at the college.
305. Within aspects of induction and programme delivery, it is apparent that the college is robust in the information it provides to students. For example, the assessment team examined information on the format of programme handbooks so it could determine the relevance of information provided to students as they enter programmes of study. Although the college has

not supplied an example of a programme specific handbook, the assessment team was able to consider the programme student handbook template to assess the scope of information shared with students. This is a comprehensive document covering all aspects of the student learning experience including, for example, the context of learning, study skills management and assessment. From the evidence reviewed, the assessment team is confident that students receive core information, for example, in relation to student support, in a consistent manner. The assessment team is impressed with the clarity of the template programme handbook that would inform induction and communication sharing practices with students.

306. The student-focused nature of the college's induction practices is also demonstrated in the evidence where field trips, for example, are part of the student's programme. Field trips come with detailed risk assessment with one such example being the college's offer of a field experience in Borneo. The college states its commitment to ensuring that students will:

- be fully briefed and work directly under the supervision of staff members
- work in groups
- be aware of their surroundings at all times.

307. In another example, taken from a risk assessment with students engaged in ecological surveys of woodlands, fields and watercourses in Cornwall, the college commits to students being individually briefed, in relation to rules of conduct and expected behaviour, footwear and clothing and receiving instruction not to approach wild animals for personal safety. This demonstrates that students are appropriately advised about and inducted into study programmes, including extra-curricular activities and visits, and account is taken of different students' choices and needs.

308. Once students are inducted onto their programmes, processes exist to support students with their financial, study skills and emotional wellbeing needs. The assessment team examined documents such as the supporting student at EPL document, which contains concise information on a range of services available to students including study support, wellbeing and mental health counselling, careers and finance. This information includes contact details should assistance be required. This additional evidence provided by the college relating to reasonable adjustments, where the college intervened to support students with differing learning needs, appeared to the team to be helpful and informative for students. Student support information is also incorporated into programme handbooks. This demonstrates that the college is committed to supporting students and providing the information they need at the start and throughout their programme. These examples illustrate and provide confidence to the assessment team that the college has processes in place to assess and respond to the needs of individual students. Furthermore, for undergraduate students only, there is information relating to a hardship fund designed specifically to alleviate cases of severe financial hardship. Available funding can be used to intervene in cases where the level of hardship is considered sufficient to prejudice students' continuation on programmes. The assessment team found these documents to be clearly presented, accessible and relevant for students and the policies and guidance appropriate for the provision offered by the college and its student body.

309. Additionally, the assessment team looked at data relating to complaints, appeals and extenuating circumstances. It is clear from this evidence that students have access to information to pursue a complaint, appeal and present extenuating circumstances impacting on assessment if needed. Practices relating to the admission of minors under the age of 18 years, application of accreditation of prior learning, programme joining instructions and readmission are clearly defined in the higher education admissions policy. Therefore, given that these practices are all student-focused, the assessment team considered that students would have access to this information on entry to their programmes to allow the college to discharge their induction responsibilities. The assessment team did not see further detailed information on any further induction activities offered by the college. However, from the evidence presented, including the student handbook template, the assessment team is confident that processes and communications are in place for the college to provide adequate induction for its students. Overall, the assessment team is satisfied that student information, advice and guidance is effective and students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in a systematic way with account taken of different students' choices and needs.
310. The college has provided detailed information to confirm that the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services is monitored and any resource needs arising are considered. The assessment team found this to be comprehensive and substantial. For example, the higher education learning support provision statement outlines the detail of specialist learning support tutor roles. Learning support tutors, for example in the context of reasonable adjustments, assist with supporting students with learning needs and environmental adaptations. The assessment team considered examples of how the college has effectively monitored learner support with reasonable adjustments for students with needs such as ADHD, auditory processing disorder, language and reading impairments and short-term memory losses. This evidence source contains a selection of short, anonymised case studies related to students with additional learning needs who have come forward for support. Interestingly, not all case studies reflect behaviour that could lead to, or demonstrate, a diagnosed learning disability. For example, in some instances, the college has demonstrated how it works to support students who find writing assignments difficult and students who struggle with formatting appropriate essay structures and verb tenses within their writing. It is clear to the assessment team from this source of evidence that the range of support available to students is extensive, with advisers guiding students on strategies for managing study limitations. This includes arrangements for more formalised study interventions, such as up to 50 per cent extra examination time where indicated. Additionally, the college provided evidence of impact through case studies. For example, the assessment team reviewed a case study from a careers advice and guidance officer for students in higher education. This case study demonstrated that careers advice and guidance was achieving positive outcomes with students considering higher level degree studies in relation to their areas of interest, as well as showing ways in which the college monitors and records interactions with students to inform resource needs.
311. The college acknowledges the need to respond to increased mental health challenges affecting future and present students and staff. In response to this heightened challenge, the college has developed a student and staff mental health and wellbeing strategy 2022-25. The assessment team examined this strategy and found it to be a comprehensive document encouraging students and staff to reach out to seek signposted support when needed. The

document is designed to develop a 'cultural change' in student and staff mental health and wellbeing at the college. The strategy proposes five aims to support all students and staff in reaching their full potential. These include:

- learners and staff being provided with relevant, appropriate and inspiring personal development opportunities, resources and strategies to enhance their mental health and wellbeing
- implementing a consistent, appropriate (non-clinical) and risk-based approach that is linked to, and in consultation with, local mental health services, including provision for in-college support when working with learners
- developing partnerships with integrated health services to identify clear referral pathways and resources for staff and students
- creating a structure that manages resources effectively and efficiently to support all individuals within the college, using an evidence-based approach and data analysis to support priorities and focus which are reported and acted upon
- ensuring that dedicated and regularly updated policies for staff and students provide the processes and support to meet the needs of key stakeholders.

312. These aims and actions are relevant to improving mental health and wellbeing for students and staff. The assessment team has not received information on how this policy is to be, or has been implemented, nor has it seen any evaluation of its impact on students or staff wellbeing, but note that the strategy has been recently introduced. The team has, however, seen evidence of the college considering the ongoing need for effective student support services. For example, in the Review and Improvement Day agenda, there is reference to activities relating to the student experience and specifically, the resources available to support and encourage student engagement. Therefore, although the assessment team has not seen evidence of impact or evaluation, the assessment team see the college paying appropriate attention to an important strategy, which is likely to inform best practices for promoting students' wellbeing. The assessment team would recommend that the college continues to progress its implementation.

313. The assessment team also examined minutes from the Higher Education Academic Board from December 2023 and February 2024 and found that student support is a regular agenda item in Board meetings. For example, in the December 2023 meeting, the minutes captured that the college had seen an increase of extenuating circumstances forms noting mental health issues as the reason for the application. The team is satisfied that student and staff advisory, support and counselling services are appropriate to the resource and wellbeing needs related to students' mental health concerns. This is in light of the comprehensiveness of the college's mental health and wellbeing strategy, combined particularly with its commitment to promote a culture of increased transparency around mental health.

314. The importance of ensuring that administrative support systems enable the college to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs is described well in the college's higher education strategic plan 2022-27. In this plan the college recognises that enhanced student expectations have led to a range of monitoring

requirements for teaching, administrative and management staff to understand and utilise. The college identifies that the effective use of management information systems leads to targeted support to students, aids retention and provides a means to demonstrate regulatory compliance, such as with the OfS's regulatory framework. The college uses its Information Portal, Power BI and data generated via the college's Access and Participation Plan data dashboard to consider the learning experiences of students and monitor equality of access to higher education for underrepresented groups.

315. In addition, although specifically addressed more fully under criterion B2, the assessment team reviewed policy documents relating to Subject Assessment Panels and Award Assessment Boards 2023-24 to see how the college's systems collect and show data on progression and performance. The practices advocated in this document are robust and identify the oversight quality assurance roles of a Subject Assessment Panel, the importance of oversight by external examiners, comparability of standards across modules and the process for confirming grades and awards. Through this range of actions and responsibilities, the assessment team is confident that the college has the appropriate tools in place to review the standard of assessment in the subject, and ensure the maintenance of appropriate academic standards at subject level in modules and across centres, as appropriate. This includes discussion of the data provided on marks distribution for modules. The assessment team is also assured that the college can adequately:

- confirm or modify module marks
- discuss any problems with assessment
- make recommendations of referral for individual modules (to be forwarded to the Award Assessment Board, through the Chair of the Panel or nominee)
- receive information from the Panels or Committees of Investigation on proven examination and assessment offences
- receive the report from the Subject External Examiner(s) for the previous academic year, together with any written response or action plan, to ensure that all issues raised have been addressed.

The assessment team is satisfied that the college's current administrative support systems enable the monitoring of student progression and performance, present and future, providing timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs.

316. The college has plans to enhance its systems and services used to monitor student progression and performance, as outlined in the higher education strategic plan 2022-27. The college aims to move to a more tailored and bespoke system of support that will utilise a digital system containing graduate opportunities across the portfolio of higher education awards offered by the college. This new platform will enable activities to be recorded, such as work-based learning, placements, research practice and vocational activities. The strategic plan outlines that this platform is being designed to serve as a personal space where students will be able to reflect on their time, practice and activities. The college argues that it will aid and support students in their learning, while recognising that this record of interpersonal and soft skills effectively captures employability skills that employers demand in industry. It is

evident to the assessment team that the development and application of this new system is essential for the college to secure additional specific information relating to students on programmes, as well as progression across programmes. As this system still appears to be in design rather than in implementation, the assessment team recommends that the college implements a process for monitoring implementation, effectiveness and impact of this platform as it develops. Nevertheless, the college's investment towards a digital system to capture the wider student experiences including work-based learning and employability skills demonstrates commitment and clear intention to develop an improved administrative support system to monitor student progression and performance. Based on the evidence reviewed in the college's strategic plan, the assessment team is confident that this improved system will enhance its current administrative support systems that enable monitoring of student progression and performance, present and future, and will provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs.

317. To assess whether the college provides opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression, the assessment team considered the multiple opportunities that exist for students to engage in and be proactive across the college. The college's commitment to invest in students is demonstrated in the higher education strategic plan 2022-27 where the college's second strategic theme is entirely student-focused. For example, this theme states that by providing an excellent student learning experience, life skills and enhanced employability, prospects will be enriched for all college graduates. The vocational and professional nature of the college's programmes has resulted in the college building an impressive range of partnerships and links to industrial experts. This ensures that the skills necessary for employment are apparent during programmes of study involving teaching, learning and assessment. As shown under criterion C, the assessment team has reviewed evidence that demonstrates that many programmes are influenced and enhanced by the links the college has established with industry. This is demonstrated through the many industry experts who contribute to teaching and learning, such as a professor from the British Antarctic Survey who guest lectures about fish ecology, how populations are influenced by oceanographic processes, fisheries interactions, competition and predation on the FdSc Marine Biology. A further example is that an Engagement Manager at the Royal Cornwall Museum worked with Level 5 students on the FdA Art and Design Practice programme. The students made individual creative proposals and presentations, going on to exhibit their finished work in the Royal Cornwall Museum over the summer of 2023. These two examples are a small selection from many examples that the assessment team has reviewed. The college has been highly successful in drawing on industry to support programme development and delivery and as such, ensures that students experience provision that is contemporary and relevant to industry standards. The assessment team commend the college's inclusion of strategic aim six whereby there is reference to students as co-creators in their higher educational experience, and the importance of developing lifelong skills in autonomy, confidence and resilience.
318. To support skills development, students can be appointed as student governors on higher education committees. This opportunity enables students to serve for a year influencing practice and developing leadership skills. The college also encourages students to engage in governor training, to enhance their understanding of and effectiveness of the student voice. The assessment team reviewed the minutes from the Higher Education Academic Board from 5 February 2024, which demonstrated that a student representative attended and was

present for discussions regarding higher education policy and strategy and student support. This indicated to the assessment team that students take up the opportunities that are presented to them to develop their skills, such as academic, employment and future career management skills.

319. The college states its intention to engage with students and other stakeholders to identify gaps in its current curriculum portfolio to enable it to develop degree level programmes that meet the needs of all stakeholders. In the action plan presented to the Higher Education Committee in February 2024, a number of entries are student-focused and provide opportunities for student engagement. For example, the action plan describes creating opportunities for student engagement in validation processes to ensure that the curriculum provision meets the needs of stakeholders, including students. The assessment team reviewed evidence of student engagement in validation processes but found this to be inconsistent. For example, in the Stage Two approval meeting for the FdSc Agriculture, there was no student present as part of panel considerations. While this does not pose a significant risk to the college meeting criterion D1, the assessment team recommends that the college considers student representation as part of programme validation processes. This is an area for development that the college has acknowledged in the action plan presented to the Higher Education Committee. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the college provides opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression.
320. It is clear to the assessment team that the college provides opportunities for all students to develop skills to make effective use of learning resources, including the safe and effective use of specialist facilities, and the use of digital and virtual environments. The impact of digital learning was evaluated in the college's submission for the TEF in 2023. The report from this submission, that was awarded silver, acknowledged that the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on curriculum design was to move more teaching online. Elements of digital teaching have been retained with the new provision under the college's time-limited foundation DAPs. For example, the programme specification for FdSc Agriculture at Stage Two refers within its programme aims to a need for awareness of the technological factors affecting agriculture. Its learning outcomes include developing the ability to secure the skills necessary to use a range of practical farm and laboratory equipment, tools and technology safely and appropriately. Within its modes of delivery, there is reference to online teaching, laboratory and field practical work. This demonstrates that the college is meeting its higher education strategy to utilise advances in technology to move learning beyond the classroom. Similarly, the programme specification within the approval documentation for the FdSc in Counselling, Psychology and Criminology refers to digital skills against learning outcomes where reference is to students needing to critically analyse research findings. The assessment team found that, under modes of delivery and assessment, students are required to engage in dyad and triad practical through work-related learning and practical classes to develop and enhance their skills in counselling. The assessment team view this as a strength of the college's reference to 'active classroom learning' styles where students report the enthusiasm of lecturers to be infectious and their breadth of knowledge inspiring (as noted by the TEF panel). The industry experience of lecturers and their applied knowledge of the material to professional contexts is a strength to the delivery of the college's curriculum, which is well balanced. It is clear from this evidence that students find it to be engaging and stretching.

321. Furthermore, in its self-assessment document, the college reports that they have partnered with Studiosity. From reviewing publicly available information on Studiosity's website, the assessment team saw that Studiosity offers students AI-generated formative feedback on student essay assessments. The college states that this resource is beneficial to students who require flexibility in their education, such as mature students. The assessment team acknowledges that there is a wider use of AI resources in the higher education sector but there is a risk to increasing student academic misconduct. However, the assessment team is satisfied that the college has appropriate measures in place for detecting plagiarism and academic misconduct as outlined under criterion B3 of this report. As Studiosity is a new resource at the college, the assessment team recommends that the college considers monitoring its use and effectiveness. Overall, the assessment team considers that the college 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 digital and virtual environments.
322. There is evidence to show that the college's approach is guided by a commitment to equity. In its Strategic Equity Plan 2022-25, the college is keen to contextualise its offer in the Southwest where there is affluence contrasted with high rates of poverty, inequality and unsecure work. Within this strategic equity plan, the college aims to create a training hub that 'recognises and celebrates differences, encourages diverse contributions' and creates a climate where its 'community feels able to be authentic'. The college's culture aims to be a culture of 'respect, openness, collaboration and creativity'. Although the assessment team has not seen evidence of the impact of this strategy on students as part of this assessment, the plan states that the college's approach is for all students to be able to thrive. It also aims to provide students with the opportunity to feed into their learning experiences and drive continuous improvement. This indicates that the college's approach is guided by a commitment to equity.
323. The college commits to valuing students and staff working in higher education and ensuring that higher education is an aspirational and achievable target for all. The college has delivery models that promote accessibility for students, staff and other stakeholders. For example, the college's commitment to equity is evident within curriculum implementation as included in the college's Higher Education Strategic Plan. The plan states that the college will 'ensure a consistently high quality approach when communicating all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment, so that students on art and design in Camborne, to zoology in Newquay, all receive the same robust, clear, and student-centred experience'. This indicates that the college's approach to teaching, learning and assessment is guided by a commitment to equity.
324. To assess whether the college delivers a positive academic experience to students from all backgrounds, and therefore considers the issue of equality with that of equity, the assessment team reviewed the college's higher education admissions policy and access and participation plan. The assessment team found that these documents promote diversity and are appropriate to the current size of the college's student cohort. The access and participation statement defines how the college focuses on enhancing access from students from low participation in higher education neighbourhoods and black, Asian and minority ethnic students. It reports that the college further focuses on progression of mature students and disabled students. In addition, the college's higher education admissions policy states that it is committed to equality of opportunity for all who study and train at the college. The

college supports disadvantaged students by providing initial assessments which outline potential areas for improvement in literacy and numeracy. Students are further supported by a student support officer if they need to develop further skills.

325. In its self-assessment document, the college outlines interventions that are available to promote equity for students. This support includes higher education-specific bursaries, designed to aid students from low income backgrounds and areas of low participation in higher education, thus aiming to prevent financial hardship being a barrier to student participation. Additionally, funding in the form of an accommodation bursary is available to students. The accommodation bursary recognises the need to support students during a volatile and uncertain housing market in a cost-of-living crisis. Off-site accommodation officers work with local landlords and their contribution provides accommodation in lieu of bespoke halls of residence at the college. The assessment team therefore considered that the college's approach is guided by a commitment to equity.

Conclusions

326. The assessment team is satisfied that the college has in place monitoring and evaluation arrangements and resources that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.
327. The college demonstrates that it remains student-focused and has strategies in place to encourage student engagement throughout governance processes at strategic and operational levels. The college's student graduate is described in the Higher Education Strategic Plan 2022-27 as a student who has developed autonomy, confidence and resilience skills for employability or further studies through engagement in their student experience. The college offers opportunities for students to develop key academic and professional skills, for example as student governors, and it is clear that the college has processes in place to support student development, such as through training. The college monitors the impact and influence of its practices through reviews, such as in the review by the Higher Education Committee. It is also evident that comprehensive and appropriate resources exist to provide information, advice and guidance to all students, including those with additional learning needs, to further their personal and professional skills.
328. Although this does not pose a significant risk to the college meeting criterion D1.1, the assessment team has highlighted areas for development. The assessment team recommends that the college considers monitoring the digital platform being introduced to capture aspects of the student experiences across qualifications, student representation as part of programme validation processes and monitoring implementation, student engagement and impact for the new partnership with Studiosity. However, the evidence reviewed by the assessment team has shown that these are areas where the college has already acknowledged it needs further improvement as part of its internal review processes.
329. From the evidence reviewed, the assessment team is confident that the college has, or is working to demonstrate, robust processes for quality assurance and enhancement and that it has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The dedicated focus on higher education and creating a culture of evidence-based practices to disseminate to students; along with the successful integration of industry based experts across all programmes

reviewed, provides confidence to the assessment team that the college has the appropriate mechanisms in place to extend to bachelors' DAPs.

330. As set out in paragraph 17 of this report, the college has only recently begun offering provision under its own time-limited foundation DAPs in the 2022-23 academic year. However, the team's assessment has also drawn on the work undertaken by the college to prepare for its own programmes. The assessment team is satisfied from the evidence reviewed that the college has exercised its powers securely, and has an approach that will be suitable for extending to bachelors' DAPs and meets criterion D1.

Assessment of DAPs criterion E: Evaluation of performance

Criterion E1: Evaluation of performance

Advice to the OfS

331. The assessment team's view is that the college meets the requirements for criterion E1: Evaluation of performance.
332. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the evidence, which shows in summary that the college takes effective action to assess its own performance. The college can identify strengths and weaknesses and responds to this in order to aid its further development.
333. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence for this criterion alongside other relevant information.

Criterion E1

E1: 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

334. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion E1 because there is evidence that shows that the college takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further strengths.
335. The assessment team's view is based on the review of evidence which shows that the college meets the evidence requirements for E1.

Reasoning

336. To date, the college has demonstrated a strong commitment to meeting and exceeding standards set by the OfS by employing comprehensive monitoring and quality assurance processes, in regard to its current time-limited foundation DAPs and its wider educational portfolio. Specific mechanisms to monitor its time-limited foundation DAPs involve detailed tracking and review of continuation, completion and progression outcomes across all study levels and modes, which enables the college to monitor its performance closely and act swiftly where needed. The Director of Governance leads the process of producing the college search and governance report, incorporating input from senior leaders, programme managers and external stakeholders to ensure annual alignment with strategic priorities. This report is systematically channelled through the college's governance structure and then presented to the Board of Governors for review and approval, ensuring accountability, strategic oversight and informed decision-making. The report highlights key priorities such as improving progression from Level 3 to higher education, achieving a TEF gold rating as a 2024 goal and expanding the higher degree apprenticeship offer. These priorities highlight the college's commitment to enhancing performance, driving growth and fostering a culture of continuous

improvement in its higher education provision. Built on a continuous improvement cycle, the college uses outcome data to refine its academic and support services, making evidence-based adjustments to improve student outcomes and address any areas below OfS thresholds, as demonstrated in the subsequent paragraphs.

337. The assessment team considered how these mechanisms work in practice and reviewed the minutes from the Higher Education Committee meeting held on 23 November 2023. The minutes for the discussion demonstrated that the committee monitors the college's progress in regard to its DAPs and OfS quality benchmarks such as TEF, and sets actions for improvements. For example, the minutes demonstrated that the college needs to work on its record-keeping of initiatives and data so that they have better resources for future TEF submissions. The committee acknowledged that the Higher Education Academic Board has an important role to play in this and this is an action to be followed up.
338. The assessment team also looked at the July 2024 student outcomes data dashboard on the OfS website. Based on the July 2024 dashboards, the college is above threshold for all overall aggregate indicators, except for three progression indicators: apprenticeship, all undergraduates; full-time, first degree; and full-time, PGCE. The college's overall indicators are generally above the OfS's threshold. While a small number are below, the assessment team do not think these are a concern due to the low level of statistical confidence associated with these.
339. The college's commitment to self-assessment and external benchmarking is also reinforced through its approach to NSS results. By benchmarking against sector standards, the college identifies strengths and areas for improvement, disseminating best practices across departments to foster enhancements. NSS results show that the college performs above benchmark in areas in regard to 'teaching on my course', 'learning opportunities', 'learning resources' and 'student voice'. This demonstrates strengths in teaching quality, resource accessibility and responsiveness to student feedback. However, results in areas in regard to 'assessment and feedback', 'academic support', and 'organisation and management' fall slightly below benchmark, signalling areas that the college should focus on for targeted improvements.
340. The consideration of NSS data is within the remit of the Higher Education Committee. The Director of Student Experience leads on the review of NSS data, which is used to monitor and enhance the student experience. By reviewing the findings from NSS data and the college's internal student perception questionnaire, the Higher Education Committee ensures that programme committee meetings are effectively aligned with the type and style of data collected in the surveys. Programme committee meetings are a platform for analysing learner feedback, which enables staff and stakeholders to monitor the student and staff experience, understand learner voice on each higher education programme and establish key student data reporting. Additionally, NSS is discussed in programme review meetings involving the Higher Education Quality Support Officer, Programme Manager, Student Representatives, Higher Education Student Governor and External Examiner. Programme review meetings are collaborative engagements that ensure a comprehensive review of student feedback and that this is then used to inform programme delivery. It is clear to the assessment team that this approach fosters a responsive and student-centred approach to enhancing the learning experience. It is also clear from the minutes of the Higher Education Committee that these insights empower the college to take timely, effective action, such as refining assessment

practices, enhancing academic support and optimising organisational processes to elevate the student experience. The assessment team is satisfied that the college takes effective action to assess its own performance and uses student data to identify weaknesses and develop its strengths.

341. To test whether critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the higher education provision at the college and that action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review, the assessment team reviewed the TEF panel statement 2023 and the TEF provider submission document. This evidence demonstrated a consistent track record in delivering higher education across diverse subject areas, as highlighted by the recent attainment of a TEF silver award. This evidence shows that the college's well established partnerships with higher education institutions have been instrumental in providing validated programmes over several decades and these well established relationships have proven to be highly beneficial, offering substantial support to the college. The college has also stated that it remains committed to maintaining and furthering these collaborations.
342. The assessment team also examined the TEF provider submission, the college group search and governance document and a sample of partnership letters and schedules. The college group search and governance report, produced by the director of governance, outlines key strategic priorities to enhance the college's own performance including a focus on progression from Level 3 and new students. It also outlines its aspiration to achieve TEF gold as a key priority for 2024 and emphasises exploring new growth opportunities within the higher degree apprenticeship offer. The assessment team considered how this operates in practice and examined the minutes from the executive leadership team meeting dated 12 December 2023. This provided clear evidence of performance assessments and demonstrated how actions to improve the quality of education are being implemented. For example, the minutes highlight ongoing efforts to raise mental health awareness within the college and continued progress in developing and refining artificial intelligence policies related to academic integrity.
343. The assessment team further examined the review and improvement day (RAID) document. The RAID is a cornerstone of the college's quality cycle, uniting key stakeholders such as staff and student governors, the vice principal of data, funding and compliance, the group deputy principal of curriculum and quality, the clerk of governors, the director of student experience and the principal's personal assistant. This collaborative team conducts in-depth evaluations of curriculum and student experience, leading to actionable insights that inform the operating plan and risk register. RAID outcomes focus on enhancing student outcomes, optimising resources and support, increasing engagement and improving both academic and assessment experiences to drive ongoing improvements across the college. The assessment team looked at the RAID document, which systematically evaluates curriculum and student experience by analysing academic performance data, assessment outcomes, resources, support services, engagement levels and retention and completion rates. The assessment team found that the college is committed to self-assessment by identifying actionable insights that feed into the operational plan. For example, insights from the risk register are incorporated into RAID discussions, where critical actions are identified and integrated into the operational plan, reinforcing a unified approach to continuous improvement. The assessment team is confident that this is evidence of good practice and a structured and robust approach to evaluating and improving the student experience. It shows that the college

not only systematically reviews key performance data but also effectively translates findings into strategic actions that drive measurable improvements across its operations. This is an effective example of how critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the college's higher education provision and where action is taken in response to matters raised through internal monitoring and review.

344. The assessment team also examined the college's risk register, which details the description and direction of risks compared to the previous business year and its impact on each strategic aim. It also outlines risk mitigation strategies and required actions and explains how the college monitors and assesses risks during the implementation of its strategic plan. For example, the risk register considered at the time of assessment demonstrated that the college is not progressing rapidly enough in improving English and maths achievement rates. This shortfall impacts learners' ability to advance, as they fail to meet the required standards in these essential subjects. In response, the college appointed specialist teaching staff, leading to attainment levels surpassing the national average. However, given that national averages remain low, learner progression continues to be hindered. To address this, the college has initiated a targeted action plan focused on improving functional skills and refining data tracking to drive further improvements. This demonstrates the college's ability to be self-critical through internal review.
345. The college actively engages students in its ongoing self-assessment process to ensure that their perspectives are integral to the college's continuous improvement efforts. In addition to appointing student governors to the governing board, the college involves students in regular feedback sessions, focus groups and surveys. The RAID exemplifies the college's commitment to incorporating student voices into its self-assessment process. It is clear to the assessment team that these avenues allow students to voice their opinions on various aspects of their educational experience, from curriculum quality to campus facilities and support services. The insights gathered from these student contributions are incorporated into the college's self-assessment reports, helping to identify strengths and areas for development. By embedding student input into the self-assessment process, the assessment team is satisfied that the college ensures that its strategies and actions are closely aligned with the needs and expectations of its learners.
346. The Higher Education Academic Board plays a crucial role in ensuring that all aspects of higher education governance, management and administration align with the board of governors' academic and financial responsibilities and build on the college's commitment to quality and student-centred decision-making. By upholding the college's adherence to the FHEQ, the Higher Education Academic Board maintains high academic standards and quality across higher education provision. It oversees programme quality, aligns programmes with learning objectives and works to achieve high levels of student satisfaction. Additionally, the Higher Education Academic Board enhances the student experience by ensuring effective support, qualified teaching staff and alignment with current research and scholarly activities, in accordance with foundation DAPs and external partner regulations. To test that these functions operate in practice, the assessment team examined the minutes from the Higher Education Academic Board meeting in February 2024. The minutes demonstrated that the board reviews risks in relation to higher education including in relation to DAPs. The minutes also reflected that the board undertakes critical self-assessment of the college's higher education provision, and that action is taken in response to matters raised through internal and external monitoring and review. The assessment team also examined the minutes from

the Higher Education Committee from November 2023, which showed that there is a standing agenda item to review higher education-related risks on the college's risk register and associated actions. This demonstrated to the assessment team that there is a clear process in place for managing risks and this is monitored by the Higher Education Committee.

347. The assessment team also found evidence that the college implements and improves its monitoring and review arrangements in regard to its provision under its own time-limited foundation DAPs. There is evidence of the college positively and appropriately engaging in programme monitoring with the University of Plymouth. This is seen in three institutional programme monitoring and review documents for the University of Plymouth. For example, the assessment team reviewed three partner subject reviews and found that the college undertook a thorough evaluation of its programmes in 2022-23 academic year. This review included an analysis of threshold standard indicators, student perception questionnaire and NSS results, and the identification of key areas for enhancement. Specific improvements were targeted, such as increasing student satisfaction with assessment feedback and addressing curriculum gaps to better align with industry needs. This evidence highlights the college's mature approach to quality review processes, demonstrating that its procedures are robust, systematic and effectively support continuous improvement across its higher education provision. This is an effective example of how critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the college's higher education provision and where action is taken in response to matters raised through external monitoring and review.
348. Since being granted time-limited foundation DAPs, the college's higher education operations team has bolstered its processes, monitoring and scrutiny mechanisms to address identified shortcomings. There are established procedures for identifying and monitoring issues, notably through the operation of the Higher Education Committee, which is responsible for overseeing the strategic development, review, enhancement, governance and management of higher education across the college. A comprehensive analysis of all strategic aims is detailed in the college's risk register. This document covers areas such as education quality, staffing, reputation, financial sustainability and infrastructure and provides a structured framework for assigning and executing actions related to the scrutiny and monitoring of its higher education provision.
349. To assess whether the college has clear mechanisms for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of the college's academic provision, the assessment team reviewed the risk register dated November 2023. This stated that the college conducted a previous assessment in September 2023 and so the assessment team is confident that the college undertakes a regular risk review. It is clear that the college uses this document to appropriately assess risk and follow up any actions. For example, the risk register highlighted inconsistencies in the quality of education across the college, particularly in the delivery process across land-based campuses, which was deemed overly complex. The college recognised that maintaining consistency and compliance in educational quality is essential to ensuring a positive experience and progress for all learners. To mitigate these risks, the risk register stated that the college enhanced several processes such as using Power BI reporting to predict student outcomes, closely monitoring in-year performance indicators to identify concerns within curriculum areas and implementing a robust quality cycle to detect and address system weaknesses. Additionally, quality processes have been thoroughly reviewed, with improvements made to the college's reporting process and an extension of the programme review period to ensure thorough evaluation and improvement. The assessment

team is therefore satisfied that the risk register is used in practice to appropriately monitor the college's academic provision.

350. The Higher Education Committee also plays a crucial role in overseeing the college's access and participation plan and tracking performance against it. The assessment team examined the college's access and participation plan, which also includes monitoring of the college's progress against this delivery plan. To ensure effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation, the college established an access and participation plan working group that includes staff from all phases of the student lifecycle, such as the director of higher education, student support staff, academic staff, a student representative or student governor and a governor. The working group is also responsible for identifying and assessing risks where the plan's objectives may not be met and for reporting these concerns to relevant boards and committees. This shows that the college operates effective mechanisms for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision. For example, the assessment team reviewed the access and participation plan and noted that despite increased entry rates in the Southwest, participation in the college's region is behind other areas, even with significant investment in higher education infrastructure and outreach efforts. The college's self-evaluation acknowledges that current approaches, both individual and collaborative, are not delivering results quickly enough. In response, the access and participation plan outlines new working methods, the integration of evidence-based practices and a strategic reallocation of resources to support the college's ambitious five-year plan. The implementation of the access and participation plan is closely monitored by a dedicated working group responsible for overseeing its execution and evaluation. This group comprises key stakeholders from across the student lifecycle, including the director of higher education, professional services and student support staff, academic staff, student representatives, a student governor, a governor, as well as representatives from industry.
351. The college's access participation plan 2020-21 to 2024-25 also outlines the college's evidence-based approach to assessment of performance and provides examples of compliance with the OfS B conditions of registration with respect to student outcomes. It also provides details of the college's management and governance approach in relation to the OfS E conditions. The access and participation plan shows that the college draws upon three data sources in their self-assessment including the OfS access and participation data dashboard, TEF metrics and internal data, for example the college's own risk register.
352. The college also has improved its management information system for monitoring learner progress and the impact of interventions, which is reflected in the college's risk register. The assessment team looked at the college's management information systems, which are being enhanced to better monitor and evaluate access and participation targets. These enhancements include improving data capture accuracy, expanding data fields to supplement external sources and increasing reporting functionality. The college plans annual reviews to ensure these systems meet evolving requirements.
353. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that this evidence shows that the college has clear mechanisms in place for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision.
354. To test whether ideas and expertise from within and outside the college are drawn into its arrangement for programme design, approval, delivery and review, the assessment team

reviewed the college's response to the assessment team's further evidence request. This evidence documents contributions from industry experts to teaching over the past 12 months. For example, a police dog handler provided a live session with a dog at the Newquay campus for the FdSc Animal Behaviour and Welfare programme's animal training module, suggesting that external expertise from outside the organisation is utilised in teaching to enhance the student experience. The college also actively incorporates internal and external expertise to shape its programmes, enriching student learning with industry-relevant insights. For example, in the BSc Applied Marine Zoology programme at Newquay, an expert from the Marine Biological Association, who has authored multiple guidebooks, conducted a plankton identification workshop for Level 6 students. Similarly, in the FdSc and BSc Agriculture programmes at Duchy Stoke, a diverse range of guest speakers from the agricultural sector contributed to the curriculum, covering topics from cattle breeding to ruminant nutrition. In the FdSc Veterinary Nursing programme, guest lecturers included specialists in canine massage therapy and hydrotherapy, while practical sessions were led by someone currently active in veterinary practice. This ensures that students benefit from up to date professional skills and knowledge. The assessment team is satisfied that this evidence shows that the college uses external expertise across a range of programmes.

355. The assessment team assessed the evidence of industry-aligned spaces and its impact. For example, at the Newquay campus, FdSc Surf Science students spent a week at a factory with the option to build a unique surfboard alongside a professional. The assessment team assessed the evidence supporting an inclusive curriculum and found that the Duchy Stoke campus delivers student-centred programmes using collaborative approaches. These programmes, shaped by ideas from within and outside the organisation, emphasise small group work, peer-led learning and the incorporation of student learning and assessment. The curriculum also includes diverse delivery modes and engagement with industry guest speakers from various cultural and social backgrounds, reflecting global and diverse perspectives. For example, all graduates at Duchy Stoke campus on the FdSc Agriculture and BSc (Hons) Agriculture programmes find employment within the industry as well as returning to family farms.
356. Each year the college appoints two student governors to represent higher education on the governing board. The student governors play a vital role in enhancing the student experience by contributing valuable insights on various aspects of college life, including areas highlighted in the RAID. As reflected in the RAID minutes, this platform enables them to influence curriculum development, improve student support services and strengthen student engagement by analysing essential metrics, such as academic performance, assessment outcomes, available resources, support services, engagement levels and retention and completion rates. This student voice is particularly utilised in programme design and review processes, ensuring that curricula remain relevant and responsive to student needs. The assessment team found that this systematic approach to providing assessment feedback supports student growth and encourages continuous dialogue between students and faculty, further integrating student perspectives into curriculum development. Additionally, the college's student engagement strategy for 2021-2022 and higher education careers guidance case studies demonstrate that student feedback is essential in refining academic content and support services, directly impacting programme design and review.
357. The college effectively incorporates external expertise into its curriculum design, approval, and development processes by involving external examiners throughout its programme

design, delivery and review stages. External examiners contribute valuable insights and feedback, ensuring that the curriculum aligns with national standards and remains relevant to industry and academic developments. Their reports are integrated into the higher education quality cycle, with formal responses to their feedback documented annually, as highlighted in the higher education quality cycle 2023-24. This process, reinforced by the guidance and nomination form for the appointment of external examiners policy, ensures that the college continually draws on external expertise to enhance both curriculum content and the assessment process, as evidenced by external examiners' reports and their scrutiny of student work. Additional details on how external examiners contribute to assessment processes can be found above under criterion B3. Furthermore, the college has strengthened its engagement with external examiners, fostering a productive relationship that reflects careful consideration and appropriate responses to their feedback.

358. The assessment team is therefore satisfied on the evidence reviewed that the college effectively leverages both internal and external expertise to enhance its programme design, teaching and student learning and assessment practices. By maintaining strong connections with industry professionals, employer advisory boards and research institutions, the college ensures that its curriculum remains ambitious, dynamic and purpose-driven as well as aligned with the latest industry demands. These collaborations inform the development of high quality, industry-led programmes, particularly in the land-based sector, ensuring that students acquire the practical and industry-specific skills needed for current and future employment. This approach reflects the college's commitment to providing students with the best possible opportunities for successful graduate outcomes. The assessment team is confident that the college successfully integrates ideas and expertise from both internal and external sources into its processes for programme design, approval, delivery, and review, ensuring a comprehensive approach to maintaining and enhancing educational quality.
359. Overall, the assessment team found that the college meets criterion E1 as the evidence demonstrates that the college takes effective action to assess its own performance. The college is able to identify strengths and weaknesses and responds to these to aid its further development in regard to its current time-limited foundation DAPs to date. The assessment team has confidence that these approaches are appropriate and will be enhanced to support the potential extension to bachelors' DAPs.

Conclusions

360. The assessment team concluded that the college takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths. The college critically reviews its own performance and has in place robust mechanisms for disseminating good practice. It is clear from the evidence reviewed that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the college's higher education provision and action is taken in response to matters raised through external monitoring and review. Furthermore, clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of the college's academic provision. Ideas and expertise from within and outside the college are drawn into the arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review. The assessment team is confident that these mechanisms are appropriate for its current provision under its time-limited foundation DAPs and will also be suitable and are mature for indefinite foundation DAPs and extension to bachelors' DAPs.

361. As set out in paragraph 17 of this report, the college has only begun offering provision under its own time-limited foundation DAPs in the 2022-23 academic year. However, the team's assessment has also drawn on the work undertaken by the college to prepare for its own programmes. The assessment team is satisfied from the evidence reviewed that the college has exercised its powers securely, has an approach that will be suitable for extending to bachelors' DAPs and meets criterion E1.

Assessment of overarching criterion for the authorisation for 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

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

Reasoning

364. It is evident to the assessment team that the college is self-critical because of its commitment to ongoing self-evaluation. This is seen through its openness to receiving and acting on feedback from external stakeholders including industry experts, other partnerships and external examiners, as well as from students. In addition, effective governance structures ensure that all aspects of provision are consistently reviewed.
365. The assessment team is satisfied that the college is a self-critical, cohesive academic community because there is evidence to show that despite a period of transformative change for the college, including in its leadership and award of time-limited foundation DAPs in 2018, the college has retained its culture of being that of a learning community, with the quality of its teaching, learning and assessment being enhanced through active engagement with industry experts. Evidence was provided to the assessment team of multiple examples whereby industry experts contributed towards teaching, learning and assessment. For example, in the FdSc Agriculture, in the livestock modules guest speakers from across the agricultural sector have contributed to student learning, the crop modules are primarily delivered by a local Southwest qualified agronomist and farmer, and all business modules involve assignments arranged by industry. This is to be commended and adds value to students in terms of employability.
366. It is clear that the college has a commitment to the thorough assurance of standards, which protects the consistency of the college's assessment processes. Within some qualifications, assessment has been linked to industry, where again this adds employability value to students. Comprehensive examples for this can be found in the programme specification for the FdSc Agriculture and in the listing of industry experts. For example, students at Level 4 participate in a marketing exercise with a dairy company, calculating gross profit margins using analysis and profitability data and, in doing so, gain enhanced employability insights. Standards relating to the college's assessment process are further assured by the scrupulous use of external examiners.

367. In determining whether the college's quality systems are effective, the assessment team considered programme design, implementation and review, how external expertise is used and how quality systems are reviewed by the college. From the evidence reviewed, the assessment team is confident that robust quality systems and processes have been exercised securely since time-limited foundation DAPs were awarded. The college started to deliver Level 4 and 5 programmes under its own time-limited foundation DAPs in the 2022-23 academic year. This is later than when the college gained its DAPs in 2018. However, evidence seen by the assessment team demonstrates comprehensive programme development from initial areas of interest linked to market needs through to programme approval. This is supported by robust governance structures to manage higher education provision effectively in an organisation that has and continues to embrace transformative change.
368. From the evidence reviewed, the assessment team is confident that the college's processes are mature enough to expand to bachelors' DAPs. It is clear that the college maintains strong links with partner higher education institutions and with industry. These links have supported the college to develop robust strategic processes and policies in readiness for delivering its own Level 6 programmes. For example, the draft regulatory academic framework that the college has prepared in readiness for an extension to bachelors' DAPs shows that it has taken a strategic approach to ensure there is a consistent approach in regard to students' academic progress and to strengthen the college's response to regulatory requirements (further details are set out under criterion B2). This is particularly important as the college wants to maintain its relationships with its university partners if it is successful in extending to bachelors' DAPs. This demonstrated to the assessment team that the college is committed to the assurance of standards and this is supported by effective quality systems.

Conclusions

369. In conclusion, the assessment team is satisfied that the college meets the requirements of the overarching DAPs criterion. The evidence reviewed shows that the college has a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems.
370. As set out in paragraph 17 of this report, the college has only recently begun offering provision under its own time-limited foundation DAPs in the 2022-23 academic year. However, the team's assessment has also drawn on the work undertaken by the college to prepare for its own programmes. The assessment team is satisfied from the evidence reviewed that the college has exercised its powers securely, has an approach that will be suitable for extending to bachelors' DAPs and meets the overarching criterion.

List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning
DAPs	Degree awarding powers
FHEQ	Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications
HERA	Higher Education and Research Act 2017
NSS	National Student Survey
OfS	Office for Students
QAC	[OfS's] Quality Assessment Committee
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
RAID	Review and improvement day
TCCG	The Cornwall College Group
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework



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