Degree awarding powers (DAPs) assessment report for Norland College Limited

Assessment for variation of degree awarding powers

Provider legal name: Norland College Limited

Provider trading name: Norland College

UKPRN: 10008397

Assessment conducted: 8 May 2024 to 13 February 2025

Reference: OfS 2025.20

Enquiries to: regulation@officeforstudents.org.uk

Publication date: 25 March 2025

Contents

Executive summary

Type of assessment	Quality and standards assessment for variation of degree awarding powers
For	Norland College Limited

1. This report represents the conclusions of an assessment for a variation of degree awarding powers (DAPs) for Norland College Limited ('the college'). The college is seeking indefinite Taught 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 team conducted a desk-based assessment of the college's ability to meet the DAPs criteria. This report contains the advice and judgement of the team following its assessment.

3. The team concluded that Norland College Limited continues to meet the overarching and underpinning DAPs criteria. This report does not, however, represent any decision of the OfS to authorise these powers.

Table 1: Summary of findings against the DAPs criteria

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

Variation of degree awarding powers

The OfS may authorise a registered higher education provider to grant taught awards, or research awards, or both, under section 42 of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA).[1]

A provider that already holds degree awarding powers (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 by 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

The OfS will assess a provider before deciding whether to vary its powers. 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]

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[1] See GOV.UK, 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 that include academic experts appointed by the OfS. 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. Norland College Limited is a highly specialised higher education provider. It offers one degree programme in the area of early education and childcare, alongside a professional diploma called the Norland Diploma. Successful completion of both qualifications enables students to work as a Norland Nanny.[6]

5. Norland College Limited was awarded time-limited Taught DAPs by the Privy Council on 14 March 2019, for a period of six years. This DAPs authorisation is due to expire on 13 March 2025.

6. In accordance with the OfS's regulatory framework and Regulatory advice 17, Norland College Limited is eligible to be considered for indefinite Taught DAPs because it has held time-limited DAPs for a period of at least three years.

7. The OfS appointed an external assessment team on 8 May 2024 to undertake a desk-based DAPs variation assessment. The OfS asked the assessment team to give its advice about the

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[3] See GOV.UK, Higher Education and Research Act 2017, section 46.

[4] See GOV.UK, Higher Education and Research Act 2017, section 2.

[5] See OfS, Regulatory advice 17: Variation and revocation of degree awarding powers.

[6] See Why choose a Norland Nanny - Norland, Bath.

quality of and standards applied to higher education courses at the college and whether the college continues to meet the DAPs criteria.

8. The assessment team considered a range of information submitted by Norland College Limited in support of its application to vary its DAPs authorisation. This report does not represent any decision of the OfS in respect of whether the DAPs variation Norland College Limited is seeking should be authorised.

9. This report is provisionally scheduled for consideration by the OfS's QAC on 22 January 2025. QAC will formulate its advice to the OfS regarding quality and standards at Norland College Limited, having considered this report.

10. The OfS will have regard to this assessment report and QAC's advice when making a decision about whether to vary Norland College Limited'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.

Introduction and background

11. This report represents the conclusions of a desk-based degree awarding powers (DAPs) assessment for Norland College Limited, which is seeking indefinite Taught DAPs.

12. The OfS's QAC will consider the report and formulate its advice to the OfS regarding quality and standards at Norland College Limited. The OfS will have regard to the assessment report, and QAC's advice when making a decision about whether to vary Norland College Limited's DAPs authorisation on the basis requested.

13. The OfS will also consider its own risk assessment for Norland College Limited 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.

Context

14. Norland College Limited ('the college') is a private limited company, which was incorporated on 18 October 1923. On 31 July 2019, the college became a wholly owned subsidiary of the Norland Foundation, a registered charity whose principal object is the advancement of education, particularly in the early years. This structural change was made to formalise the not-for-profit operating model of the college.

15. The college provides a single full-time degree, namely BA (Hons) Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). In addition, the college offers its own professional diploma (the Norland Diploma), which students take alongside their academic studies. The combined duration of study is four years: for the first three years students are enrolled on both the BA and the Norland Diploma, and in the fourth year, they undertake paid and assessed employment as a Newly Qualified Nanny. Following successful completion of the BA and the Norland Diploma, graduates are able to work as a 'Norland Nanny'.

16. The college was awarded time-limited Taught DAPs by the Privy Council on 14 March 2019 for a period of six years. The time-limited Taught DAPs Order is due to expire on 13 March 2025.

17. In accordance with the OfS's regulatory framework and Regulatory advice 17, the college is eligible to be considered for indefinite Taught DAPs because it has held time-limited degree awarding powers for a period of at least three years.[7]

18. Overall, based on the latest available 'Size and shape of provision data dashboard', the college had a student population of 280 in 2022-23, all of whom were registered full-time on an undergraduate degree programme.[8]

19. According to previous information provided by the college to the OfS for regulatory purposes, the average monthly number of employees at the college was 85 (which equates to 66 staff on a full-time equivalent (FTE) basis) in the financial year ending 31 July 2023. Of these 85

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[7] See OfS, 'Regulatory advice 17: Variation and revocation of degree awarding powers', last updated July 2023.

[8] Available at Size and shape of provision data dashboard: Data dashboard - Office for Students.

employees, 49 (35 FTE) were classed as academic staff and 36 (31 FTE) were classed as non-academic staff, including 7 (7 FTE) senior managers and 22 (16 FTE) support staff.

20. In accordance with the OfS regulatory framework[9] and OfS Regulatory advice 17, the OfS undertook an initial eligibility and suitability assessment of the college.[10] It decided that a desk-based assessment of Norland College Limited should be undertaken to gather and test evidence. This is to inform a judgement about whether the college's DAPs have been exercised securely during the preceding years, and whether it continues to meet the DAPs criteria and has the ability to:

- provide, and maintain the provision of, higher education of an appropriate quality; and

- apply, and maintain the application of, appropriate standards to that higher education.

21. The OfS appointed an assessment team on 8 May 2024, which consisted of three academic expert assessors and a member of OfS staff in the following roles:

- Professor Helena Gillespie – committee chair and lead assessor

- Dr Kate Mawson – deputy committee chair and assessor

- Ms Julie Wilson – deputy committee chair and assessor

- Catriona Shatford – committee member and assessment coordinator.

22. The OfS asked the team to give its advice about the quality of and standards applied to higher education courses at the college and whether it continues to meet the DAPs criteria.

23. The assessment team considered a range of information submitted by the college in support of its application to vary its DAPs authorisation.

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[9] See The regulatory framework for higher education in England - Office for Students.

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

Assessment of DAPs criterion A: Academic governance

Criterion A1: Academic governance

Advice to the OfS

24. The assessment team's view is that Norland College Limited meets criterion A1: Academic governance because it meets sub-criteria A1.1, A1.2, and A1.3.

25. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows in summary that the college has effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. Academic governance, including aspects of the control and oversight of its higher education provision, is conducted in partnership with its students. As yet the college does not work with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities via validated or subcontracted provision. However, where the college works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, notably through accredited placements on the degree, its governance and management of such opportunities is strategic and robust.

26. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Sub-criterion A1.1

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

Advice to the OfS

27. The assessment team's view is that the college meets sub-criterion A1.1 because it has effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities, in line with its mission and the special nature of its higher education provision.

28. The assessments team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the provider has met the evidence requirements for A1.1 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Background

29. To inform the assessment team's consideration of the college's academic governance arrangements, the college provided the following contextual information regarding its management and governance structures.

30. Norland College Limited, a private limited company, is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Norland Foundation ('the Foundation'), a registered charity. The college is governed according to its Articles of Association, and a Shared Resources and Governance Agreement between the college and the Foundation sets out the powers and responsibilities of each

organisation, and the terms of their relationship. The agreement shows that the college has control of the majority of its functions, including management and governance arrangements, and outlines any matters that are reserved for the Foundation, such as amending its Articles or making changes to ownership or control of the college. These arrangements are legally binding, through a Deed of Undertaking signed by the Foundation.

31. The Board of Directors ('the board' or 'BoD') is the governing body of Norland College Limited. The terms of reference for this committee set out the constitution of the college and how decisions are made. The Board is responsible for the statutory oversight of the college to ensure it meets the standards of both a company limited by shares and of a higher education institution that has access to public funds. The college states that it has formally adopted the Higher Education Code of Governance, as published by the Committee of University Chairs in 2020.[11]

32. The Board, working with the Executive Group (and through delegated responsibility to the senior leadership team), approves the mission and strategic vision of the college, its objectives, business plans and key performance indicators, and ensures these meet the interests of students and stakeholders. It also ensures the college has in place the physical and human resources to meet the needs of its students, and for ensuring the enhancement of the learning experience and the maintenance of academic standards.

33. In accordance with its terms of reference, membership of the board must consist of independent members (no fewer than five), ex-officio members (currently the principal), and co-opted members (staff member and student member). Ex-officio and co-opted members do not hold voting rights. The Board can establish subcommittees to carry out some of its functions, and appoint members to these subcommittees. Current subcommittees of the board are:

- Finance Committee

- Audit Committee

- Nominations and Governance Committee

- Enterprise Committee

- Remuneration Committee

- Academic Board

- Executive Group.

34. The Academic Board is the academic authority of Norland College Limited. It operates under delegated responsibility from the Board of Directors, and is responsible for setting, maintaining and assuring the academic standards of the college and any awards that it makes. As set out in its terms of reference, the Academic Board has a comprehensive remit of all matters relating to academic governance, including approving the college's academic

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[11] See Governance - Norland, Bath and CUC, Publications - Committee of University Chairs.

regulations, policies and procedures, and maintaining oversight of the college's compliance with the OfS's conditions of registration.

35. Membership of the Academic Board is determined by the Board of Directors, and includes the college principal (Chair), a range of academic and professional services staff (for instance, department heads, student services manager, research fellow), an external adviser, and a student representative from each academic year. The Academic Board meets at least three times a year, and minutes of these meetings are shared with the Board of Directors. The Academic Board is also required to report regularly to the Board of Directors, and can provide advice and guidance to the Board on academic matters, and report concerns regarding financial pressures that may affect quality and standards at the college.

36. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Academic Board delegates some of its responsibilities to the following subcommittees:

- Awards/Progression Board

- Assessment Board of Examiners

- Programmes Committee

- Assessment Scrutiny Panel (which reports into the Programmes Committee)

- Research Ethics Committee.

37. The Programmes Committee is responsible for monitoring the teaching and learning experiences on the integrated degree and diploma programmes, including academic standards and the quality of students' learning experiences. This committee is chaired by the Head of Learning, Teaching and Research, and most of its members are also members of the Academic Board. The committee manages the day-to-day running of the college's programmes, and advises the Academic Board on matters related to the enhancement of academic standards and learning opportunities.

38. Academic Regulations set out the college's approach to setting and maintaining academic standards, and ensuring quality of the academic experience. The college states that these regulations 'have been informed by sector-recognised standards and with due regard for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and are informed by its expectations and practices', and apply to all taught provision on the college's degree programme.

39. The Academic Regulations underpin academic policymaking at the college, and policies and procedures have been produced to ensure academic decision making aligns with these regulations. Key documents include:

- Assessment and Feedback Policy

- Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy

- External Examining Policy

- Admissions Policy

- Academic Appeals Policy.

40. A comprehensive Code of Practice sets out the frameworks governing the development, delivery and assessment of learning, teaching and the student experience at the college. It is supplementary to the Academic Regulations and existing policies and procedures. The Code of Practice is intended as an information source and quality assurance guide, to facilitate clarity, consistency and coherency of practice across the academic team, and to support students' understanding and expectations with regards to regulations, policies and procedures.

41. As set out in the job description, the Principal has senior management responsibility for the day-to-day management of the college, and for ensuring that resources are used as described in the annual budgets approved by the board. The Principal is the Accountable Officer, and therefore has oversight of all matters relating to OfS regulation. The Principal reports to the Board of Directors, and is supported by the Executive Group in developing and implementing the college's strategy and plans.[12] The Vice Principal has overall responsibility for matters relating to admissions and academic quality and standards, and in relation to the quality assurance of the programme, is supported by a Quality and Regulations Manager and a Quality and Regulations Officer.

Reasoning

42. The assessment team considered whether the college's higher education mission and strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, published, understood and applied consistently, and how the college's academic policies support its higher education mission, aims and objectives. The college's mission, as published on its website, along with its associated academic policies is 'to provide exceptional, bespoke and research-informed early years higher education, practical training and consultancy, and cultivate outstanding graduates with lifelong career opportunities, professional support and continuous learning for all'.[13] This feeds into the college's strategic vision and aims and forms the strategic plan 2022-27. The themes of the strategic vision and aims, as set out by the college, are concerned with:

- the highest quality of educational provision and support for a diverse range of students to become nurturing, knowledgeable, skilled and resilient early years practitioners

- increasing access to lifelong career opportunities, continuing professional development and specialist services for the college's graduates and alumni

- being a leading progressive specialist higher education provider of early years education through reputation, expertise, research and consultancy.

43. In consideration of how the college's mission and strategic direction are applied, the assessment team reviewed the college's Learning and Teaching Policy, which states that 'All provision should align with the overall aims, objectives and mission of the college as described in the strategic plans.'

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[12] See Norland, EXECUTIVE-TERMS-OF-REFERENCE.pdf.

[13] See About Norland's heritage, ethos and vision - Norland, Bath.

44. As the college's academic authority, the Academic Board has overall responsibility for ensuring higher education provision aligns with the college's overall aims, objectives and mission, and the assessment team saw documented evidence of this in both policy and practice. For example, the Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy includes a template programme approval form, which asks the decision-maker (Chair of the Academic Board) to consider the extent to which the new course aligns with wider learning and teaching strategic aims. The assessment team reviewed a sample of Academic Board meeting minutes that the college provided to the OfS (minutes from seven meetings during 2022-2024). All of these contained examples of discussions relating to aspects of the college's higher education provision that were consistent with the strategic aims outlined in paragraph 42, such as improvements to course quality, student support services, and professional opportunities. This supports the assessment team's view that the college's academic policies are effectively applied and align with the aims and objectives of the college as described in their strategic plans.

45. To consider whether policies associated with the college's mission and strategic direction are coherent, published, understood and applied consistently, the assessment team viewed a number of policies selected from a comprehensive policy list covering academic, data protection, operational and student support related policies. Policies reviewed by the assessment team included:

- Widening Participation Strategy

- Widening Participation Policy

- Marking Policy

- Code of Practice (Academic)

- Feedback Processes document

- Student Disciplinary Procedure

- Student Attendance Policy

- Annual Programme Monitoring

- Data Protection Policy

- Learning and Teaching Policy.

46. College policies are readily available and accessible on the college website.[14]

47. To support policy coherence, the college maintains a Delegation Protocol and a policy review schedule, which together describe how policies are applied, including which activities apply to which policy or board and the lines of accountability. The assessment team examined a sample of academic policy documents, namely the Learning and Teaching Policy, the Assessment and Feedback Policy and the Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy and Procedure, and found evidence of coherence with one another and also with the

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[14] See Policies & Reports — Norland, Bath.

college's overall mission and strategic direction. For example, the application of reasonable adjustments and other support for neurodivergent students to enable them to access and succeed from their higher education experience.

48. The assessment team also found the policies they reviewed to be comprehensive, coherent and that they provided clarity and were appropriate in scope and range for a college of this size and provision.

49. The assessment team then considered the extent to which the college's academic policies are consistently applied in practice. The team reviewed the Learning and Teaching Policy, which clearly sets out the teaching methods to be used to achieve the college's higher education aims and objectives. These methods are consistent with those described in course definitive documents, such as programme specifications and module handbooks. This supports the assessment team's view that the college's academic policies are applied consistently.

50. In considering whether the college's higher education mission and strategic direction are understood by stakeholders, the assessment team reviewed training materials available to new staff. The team found that the Academic Induction Checklist ensures staff are made aware of academic policies and processes at an early stage, and that they are clear on how policies are applied in the higher education context. The assessment team also found that new directors are given a governance presentation as part of their induction, which supports directors in understanding the college's mission and strategic direction.

51. In terms of students' understanding, the college's mission and policies, which inform the strategy, are publicly available to students via the website and operationalised into the course handbooks. These are housed on the student dashboard (SharePoint). The assessment team viewed a recording of a workshop introducing students to the student dashboard where these documents were highlighted to the students. The assessment team also viewed the 'Welcome Back' presentation for the returning final year students which included an overview of policy developments, alignment of the curriculum to sector standards and Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) results. It's the assessment team's view therefore that accessibility to such information and policies support the students in understanding the college's strategic direction.

52. In view of the evidence reviewed, the assessment team concluded that the college's academic policies support its higher education mission, aims and objectives and the delivery of effective academic governance. Its higher education mission and strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, published, understood and applied consistently. Overall, the team's view was that the college's approach to developing and implementing its strategy and academic policies demonstrated effective governance.

53. The assessment team considered whether there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in the organisation in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision. As set out in the Background section, the Board of Directors is the governing body of the college, and holds overall responsibility for preserving academic standards in accordance with the Articles of Association. The Academic Board is the senior academic authority of the college, and holds delegated authority from the Board of Directors to establish and maintain the academic

standards of the college's higher education provision and for the enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. The Academic Board delegates some of its more operational functions to subcommittees, such as the Programmes Committee and the Assessment Board of Examiners, but most of the decision making remains with the Academic Board. For example, the Assessment Board of Examiners can make recommendations to the Academic Board on the effectiveness of assessment arrangements, but only the Academic Board can approve changes to assessment policies and procedures.

54. In consideration of clarity of function and responsibilities at all levels, the assessment team reviewed the college's Articles of Association, terms of reference for the Board of Directors and all its subcommittees, along with the schedules of business for the Board of Directors and the Programmes Committee. Across all documentation, the team found the function and responsibilities of each committee were clearly set out, aided by the use of a standard template for terms of reference, and operational information was also available, such as requirements for membership, meetings and the recording and reporting of committee actions. The schedules of business provided the team with a clear picture of which matters would be discussed at each meeting for the upcoming academic year (2023-24 in this case), with each item clearly linked to the relevant responsibility within the committee remit.

55. To further support the understanding of governance structures relating to the management of higher education provision, the college maintains an organisational chart and an Academic Board committee structure chart, which summarise roles and reporting lines between committees. The college also maintains a Delegation Protocol, which clearly sets out the decision-making abilities for each committee. It also maintains a compliance register, which sets out the person or committee responsible for ensuring the college remains compliant with the OfS's conditions of registration.

56. It is therefore the assessment team's view that the college has adequate arrangements in place to ensure clarity of function and responsibility at all levels in the organisation in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision.

57. In terms of differentiation of function and responsibility between committees, this is generally clear, as set out in paragraphs 53-56; however, due to the small size of the college there are cases where individuals are members of multiple committees, particularly between the Academic Board and its subcommittees, so separation of function is less clear. In the self-assessment that the college submitted as part of its application for indefinite DAPs, it was acknowledged that this a challenge due to the college's small pool of staff. The college has taken steps to address this issue as part of the evolution of governance arrangements since it applied for DAPs, as described below:

- In 2017, a Learning and Teaching Committee was formed, with responsibility for the quality of learning and teaching on the college's programmes. The committee ran for one year, but it was dissolved at the end of the 2018 academic year, owing to too much unnecessary repetition across the various academic boards and committees. The college explains 'at the time, we thought it was important to try and replicate the systems of our then validating university; with maturity and pragmatism, we realised that this was not necessary as the remit of the Learning and Teaching Committee was being fulfilled by our Programmes Committee'.

- In 2019, a Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) was formed to provide an extra internal academic approval process following loss of oversight from the University of Gloucestershire. The QSC was a subcommittee of, and reported to, the Academic Board. It was responsible for developing, monitoring, and evaluating regulations, policies, and quality assurance and enhancement procedures, and making recommendations to the Academic Board. At the March 2022 meeting of the Academic Board, it was agreed to disband the QSC due to concerns regarding the crossover of membership between the Academic Board, Programmes Committee and QSC. Following this meeting, the remit of the QSC was divided between the Academic Board and Programmes Committee.

- In 2019-20 the college created the Quality, Standards and Registry (QSR) department, to provide some distance between the delivery of the programmes and the internal monitoring of quality and standards. A new post of Head of Learning, Teaching and Research was created to head up the academic team, comprising the lecturers, placement staff and research activity.

- In 2022, the college mapped all its governance activity to the principles of the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) Higher Education Code of Governance and the Independent Higher Education (IHE) Code of Governance. Through this activity, the college identified areas where its approach to academic governance aligned with the wider higher education sector, and also sought to understand areas where its approach might be different in accordance with the college's operating context.

58. These actions demonstrated to the assessment team that the college is committed to ensuring that academic governance structures and arrangements are adequate and effective. They also demonstrated to the team that the college has the self-criticality required to identify areas for improvement, and has appropriate arrangements in place to affect change.

59. Overall, it is the assessment team's view that the college has provided evidence that there is differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in the organisation in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision. Given the small size of the college, it is reasonable to expect some crossover of membership between committees, but the assessment team is satisfied that the college has robust arrangements in place to ensure the differentiation of function and responsibilities is well understood and applied consistently.

60. The assessment team considered how the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is clearly articulated and consistently applied. As stated in its terms of reference, the Academic Board is the senior academic authority subject to the responsibilities of the Board of Directors and the Principal. The Academic Board is responsible for all matters relating to standards and quality of learning and teaching. As discussed in paragraphs 34-36 and 53, and as per the committee structure, it delegates some of its responsibilities to subcommittees and these decisions are then reported back to the Academic Board. The college states that the schedule of business appended to the terms of reference details the process by which this is done. The assessment team was not able to view this schedule of business as it was not submitted as evidence; however, it was able to view the schedules of business for the Board of Directors and the Programmes Committee to gain an adequate understanding of

how the process worked in terms of the schedule being a timetable that indicates at which meeting reports need to be presented.

61. In consideration of whether the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is consistently applied, the assessment team noted from the terms of reference that the Academic Board met at least three times a year. Scrutiny of a sample of the minutes indicated to the assessment team that the function and responsibility of the Academic Board is consistently applied. According to the minutes for five meetings that took place in 2022-2024, matters considered by the Academic Board align to the function and responsibilities of the board, such as approving policies and procedures, review of academic regulations and compliance, and receiving reports from subcommittees to assure the quality of the students' academic experience and learning opportunities. The assessment team also noted that, where appropriate, actions were agreed with the purpose of ensuring the maintenance of and improvement of standards and quality.

62. In further consideration of how the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is clearly articulated, the assessment team found that the Delegation Protocol clearly articulates the lines of accountability to and from the Academic Board, as described in paragraphs 34-36 and the Background section of this report. This information is consistent with that shared with other stakeholders, through materials such as the Directors' induction presentation, the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Directors document, and the guidelines for student members of the college Board of Directors. The assessment team is therefore of the opinion that the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is clearly articulated and consistently applied by the college.

63. The assessment team considered whether there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership. The college states that due to its size and circumstances the proportion of academic leaders to other academic members of staff is relatively high: 7 of 28 (25 per cent). Leadership at the college includes:

   •   Principal

   •   Vice Principal

   •   Head of Learning, Teaching and Research

   •   Deputy Head of Learning and Teaching

   •   Programmes Manager

   •   principal lecturers.

64. In considering the depth and strength of academic leadership at the college, the assessment team had sight of the college's organisational structure chart, which identified leadership positions and reporting accountabilities. Profiles of the senior leadership team are readily available on the college's website.[15] The assessment team reviewed the CVs of the Principal, Vice Principal, Head of Learning, Teaching and Research, Deputy Head of Learning and Teaching, Programme Manager and principal lecturers. Information available in these CVs

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[15] See Team Members – Norland — Norland, Bath.

demonstrated to the assessment team that the college's academic leadership has appropriate levels of qualifications, industry, professional and academic skills, knowledge and experience related to leadership, quality, standards, teaching and learning, course and curriculum development.

65. The assessment team also noted from the CVs and the college's list of 'staff and student contributions to their practice' that academic and professional service staff are also engaged in continuing professional development and have experience as external examiners or advisers and publications in peer reviewed academic journals, authored books, invited chapters, keynotes at conferences and leading webinars. The team's view is that this demonstrates that the college has in place appropriate academic leadership to support its academic functions.

66. To consider whether the college develops, implements, and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff, students and external stakeholders, the assessment team reviewed the student submission and a number of documents. These were the minutes for three Academic Board meetings that took place in 2022-23, a board strategy planning document, the Programmes Committee terms of reference, minutes from four Programmes Committee meetings that took place in 2022-23 and the Delegation Protocol.

67. The assessment team found that, as demonstrated in the Programmes Committee and Academic Board minutes, by being members of the committee and boards, student representatives are involved in the development of the college's policies through collective agreement by its members of any policy or process creation or amendments. Examples of student-led policy and process development include:

   • In the minutes of 6 October 2023 Academic Board, active feedback from the student board member in response to an annual monitoring report. The student confirmed to the board that the student body viewed opportunities for students to engage through feedback mechanisms as an area of strength for the college.

   • In the minutes of 4 March 2022, the student deputy head of year group and board member suggested extended library opening hours during assessment weeks.

   • In the minutes of 16 June 2023, the student member approved of a proposed additional clause to the student terms and conditions and reaffirmed the student body's support for the change. The student also confirmed the student body response to an agenda item around feedback as being broadly positive.

68. In terms of staff involvement in policymaking, the college states that due to the college being small, a high proportion of academic and other staff are also members of the Academic Board and its subcommittees, and are therefore involved in the development and implementation of academic policies and procedures.

69. Collaboration with external stakeholders is also apparent, for example the development of marking guidelines was presented to the external examiner and students for feedback, which was then considered at the Academic Board. The assessment team also noted that feedback from the student focus group, as well as metrics, are considered in board strategy planning, and that student feedback is a regular item for review at programme committees both of which go towards informing policy.

70. The Delegation Protocol provides a framework for understanding by all stakeholders, including students, and a process for consistent application of policies and procedures within the college and how students and all stakeholders are consulted. The assessment team also found from the minutes of the Academic Board held on 18 November 2022 that feedback from external stakeholders, for example placement providers (families), is considered and taken on board regarding continuous improvement and therefore further enhancement and improvement of procedures.

71. In considering how the college communicates its policies and procedures with its staff and students and external stakeholders, the assessment team noted that college policies were readily available and accessible on their website.[16] The academic staff induction schedule and supporting materials also ensure effective communication of policies and process to staff. The college states that following each meeting of the Academic Board, an email is circulated to all current staff and students, informing them of any updates to or creation of policies and procedures approved by the Academic Board.

72. Furthermore, in considering whether the college develops its policies and procedures in collaboration with students, the assessment team saw evidence of this in the Academic Board minutes as described in paragraph 67 above. The assessment team also reviewed the student submission and found that students were able to speak confidently about their involvement in collaborating with the college to develop policies and procedures. The assessment team therefore concluded that the college communicates its policies and procedures with its staff and students and external stakeholders.

73. The assessment team considered whether the college will manage successfully the responsibilities that would be vested in it were it to be granted indefinite DAPs. The assessment team reviewed how the college had developed since it was awarded time-limited powers in 2019. The college states that the only structural change has been the establishment of the Norland Foundation as owner of the college, thus giving it charitable status. This means surpluses from its commercial activities are paid to the foundation and used for charitable purposes such as hardship funds, student grants, bursaries and research activities. The college states that the Norland Foundation also holds ring-fenced investments for the college's student protection plan, which safeguards current students' learning should the college have reason to cease activities or close a course. As described in the Background section, student interests and the relationship between the Norland Foundation and the college are secured via a Deed of Undertaking and a Shared Resources and Governance Agreement.

74. The evolution of academic governance arrangements at the college are discussed in paragraph 57. In terms of improvements made to improve the effectiveness of the Board of Directors, the college explained that it set up an External Advisory Board (EAB) in 2019 to provide additional externality and challenge to its decision making post-DAPs authorisation. However, in the subsequent years, the college was able to successfully recruit more external members to its Board, including those with a background in higher education, and the college found that these members provided the externality and challenge the Board was seeking, so it decided to disband the EAB in 2021. Following on from this development, the college decided to appoint external members to the Academic Board, Programmes Committee and

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[16] See Policies & Reports — Norland, Bath.

Research Ethics Committee. By reviewing the effectiveness of its own governance arrangements and making changes to improve the robustness of these arrangements, the college has demonstrated to the assessment team that takes seriously its responsibilities as a degree awarding body.

75. Examples of other changes the college has made to strengthen management and governance arrangements since it was awarded DAPs in 2019 include the updating of academic regulations, reviewing and updating terms of reference to boards and committees, and the creation of policies that safeguard the integrity of academic standards and student learning experience. For example, the college has created a fitness to study policy, new academic misconduct procedures, a Staff Student Liaison Committee, an Assessment Innovation Team for inclusive, fair and robust assessment, and a new Programme Approval Policy.

76. The assessment team also reviewed papers from the 2022 Board of Directors away day, where an in-depth Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis was undertaken, and strategy development sessions, where policy and process improvements, evaluation and monitoring were mapped and reviewed against the college's plan for indefinite DAPs and college departmental action plans when considering implementation.

77. The assessment team also took into consideration that, while not required for a small provider, the college has participated in the TEF process three times in 2018, 2019 and 2023, achieving Gold award each time. This further supports the team's view that the college takes its responsibilities seriously, as it is willing to open itself up to external scrutiny in order to maintain and enhance the quality of its higher education provision.

78. In consideration of the information set out above, it is the assessment team's view that the college has exercised its powers securely to date and that its academic governance is sufficiently robust and effective to enable it to continue to securely exercise its powers and manage successfully the responsibilities that would be vested in it were it to be granted indefinite DAPs.

79. The assessment team has concluded that the college meets criterion A1.1, as the evidence shows that the college has effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.

Sub-criterion A1.2

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

Advice to the OfS

80. The assessment team's view is that the college meets sub-criterion A1.2 because all aspects of its control and oversight of its higher education provision, is conducted in partnership with its students.

81. The assessments team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the college met the evidence requirements for A1.2 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

82. The assessment team considered the extent to which students collectively are engaged as partners in the governance and management of the college and its higher education provision. The assessment team reviewed the terms of reference for the Board of Directors, the Academic Board, the Programmes Committee and the Staff Student Liaison Committee. These terms of reference list the membership and members' responsibilities, including that of a student representative, and agenda items evidenced the requirement for the student representative to submit their report or feedback.

83. The Board of Directors, who meet at least three times a year, include a co-opted Head of Students member who is elected by the students in a similar way and function to a students' union president. The Head of Students presents a report to the board at every meeting.

84. The Academic Board, which meets three times a year includes a student member from each year group (also referred to as a 'set' by the college). Student membership holds the same formal status as staff. The Academic Board terms of reference details how the head, or deputy head, student from each year group, is in attendance for the approval of policies, procedures and processes concerning the higher education provision of the college.

85. Head of set students also have meetings with the principal to discuss what's going well and agree actions for improvement. The Programmes Committee, which meets four times a year, includes a student from each year group and one academic and one placement student engagement representative. Again, the student's formal membership status is the same as that of staff.

86. The Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) meets once every trimester and membership includes one student per year group, one academic and one placement student engagement representative. The terms of reference state that the purpose of the committee is to ensure that feedback from students is a central consideration of any current provision within the college. Any proposed changes, as relevant, should be considered by the student voice before any changes can be made. The college states that the SSLC contacts the student body to gather feedback from their peers in the format that best suits the cohort's needs, and this feedback informs developments across a range of areas, including course and module content, IT facilities and student support services. Peer feedback is then added to feedback request forms which are uploaded to the You Said/We Did file for all students to access via the student dashboard. The information from these forms is incorporated into end of module reviews which may in turn affect changes for the following academic year. This informs the assessment team's opinion that the college has appropriate arrangements in place to allow students to collectively engage in the governance and management of the college.

87. To test the effectiveness of student representative arrangements, the assessment team examined a sample of minutes of Academic Board meetings dated 4 March 2022, 16 June 2023 and 1 March 2024. The minutes showed consistent student attendance and engagement in which student representatives contributed to discussion and agreement around such matters as the charging for replacement identity cards, suggesting extending the

library opening hours during assessment weeks, agreeing proposed changes to students terms and conditions, and reporting back the student body response to actions arising from the student survey. The assessment team noted that student representatives are also involved in governance via engagement in meetings held outside of the board. For example, student representatives were consulted on proposed marking guidance and the SSLC and the Student Jury were invited to review the equality, diversity and inclusion policy in 2023.

88. To further test the effectiveness of these arrangements, the assessment team reviewed the student submission – a recording of a discussion between students about their experiences at the college, facilitated by a member of staff. In terms of working with the college in matters of academic governance, students spoke positively about their experiences, including:

- Contributing regularly to discussions about higher education provision as members of the SSLC

- Collaborating with the college to develop policies and procedures through their involvement in various meetings with staff, in which they can give feedback and contribute to decision making

- Reviewing the college's indefinite Taught DAPs submission and providing comment.

89. Based on the documentary evidence reviewed and the feedback of its students, the assessment team is of the opinion that the college has effective arrangements in place that allow its students collectively to engage in matters of management and governance.

90. The assessment team also considered individual engagement in academic governance. Student representatives request feedback from their peers using feedback request forms, which are uploaded to the You Said/We Did file for all students to complete via the student dashboard. The information from these forms is then incorporated into end of module reviews, which may affect changes for the following academic year. Students are also consulted through the college's anonymous Norland Annual Student Survey (NASS) and the external National Student Survey (NSS) and results are ultimately fed back and considered at the Academic Board. Students are also invited to take part in the staff recruitment process, by providing feedback on a candidate's performance at interview and hence their suitability for the role. In the assessment team's view, these arrangements provide individual students with the opportunity to engage effectively with the college in regards to its management and governance.

91. In consideration of how student representatives are supported to engage effectively and appropriately carry out their responsibilities, the college stated that the student member of the Board of Directors is given an induction by the Principal and Senior Administrator to the Board. This is supported by an induction presentation that sets out the student's role on the board. Student representatives also receive training by the Deputy Head of Learning and Teaching to help them engage more fully in discussions and decisions. Guidelines for Student Members of the Board of Directors explain to students how they can contribute to discussions, ask questions and raise concerns. The team also considered the terms of reference for this committee and found these clearly explain the roles and expectations of its members, including student representatives.

92. The assessment team also considered how the wider student body (outside of the formal student representatives) receive details and guidance regarding the process of how students are involved in the governance and management of the college, and how their voice can contribute to this process. A 'Welcome Back' presentation is given to returning students at the start of the academic year and the college's Student Engagement Policy, which is available on the college website and via the course handbook, explains to students how they can contribute to the management and governance of the college.

93. The 'Welcome Back' presentation provides students with an overview of the higher education sector, including key aspects of how students' interests are protected across the sector, such as through compliance with OfS conditions of registration and participation in the TEF. The presentation then sets out the various student feedback mechanisms used by the college to ensure students' interests are being met, such as module evaluation, student surveys and student representation on boards and committees, and also explains how this feedback contributes to policy and process development of the college. It's the assessment team's view that these arrangements are appropriate for a college of this size and provision, and students are supported to be able to engage effectively.

94. After reviewing the evidence, the assessment team concluded that students individually and collectively are engaged in the governance and management of the college and its higher education provision, and that students are supported to be able to engage effectively. This is demonstrated in the student membership of college committees and their status, which is the same as that of a member of staff. Evidence also shows students actively engage in the scrutiny of college business and academic decision making. Students are well supported to engage effectively through meaningful training and have exposure to the wider context of higher education such as the TEF and OfS regulation, which can further deepen and strengthen their engagement.

Sub-criterion A1.3

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

Advice to the OfS

95. The assessment team's view is that the college meets sub-criterion A1.3 because 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.

96. The assessments team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the college has met the evidence requirements for A1.3 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

97. The assessment team considered how the college works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities and whether such opportunities are based on a strategic approach, informed by the effective assessment of risk including the carrying out of due diligence. The assessment team also considered whether the learning opportunities are defined in a written legal agreement and are subject to the same robust oversight and governance as the rest of the organisation's provision.

98. In its self-assessment, submitted as part of its application for indefinite Taught DAPs, the college stated that it does not validate higher education provision at any other providers and it did not set out any plans to do this in the near future. However, as expected, given the highly specialised nature of the college's higher education provision along with the clearly defined career aspirations of most of its students, the college delivers accredited work-based placements and other work-based learning for students on the new BA (Hons) Early Childhood Education and Care degree, which was approved by the board in 2023.

99. In considering how the college works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities and whether such opportunities are based on a strategic approach, informed by the effective assessment of risk including the carrying out of due diligence, the assessment team noted that students enrolled on the new degree are required to undertake assessed placements in families and early years settings such as schools, nurseries, hospitals and newborn placements.

100. The assessment team found that placements are organised by the college, with the strategic exception of the newborn placements where students source their own placement but are supported by the college. The college states that in all cases it undertakes appropriate due diligence checks for the placements. Each placement provider is visited and assessed for appropriateness of learning and health and safety provision. The assessment team saw evidence of this through placement visit forms and the placement risk assessment forms.

101. The assessment team also saw evidence that placement learning is managed through the procedures outlined in the college's placement handbooks for both students and placement providers. The assessment team saw further evidence of governance thorough the placement policy which outlines all elements of the placement provision from required compliance through expectations and learning while on placement. In addition, further evidence was seen in a tripartite legal agreement of which, the student, the placement provider and the education provider all sign, which confirms each party adheres to and acknowledges the academic, health and safety and compliance requirements of the placement.

102. The assessment team saw evidence of monitoring of the placements. Students are visited by a member of the placement team while on placement and this is formally recorded via a placement visit form. The assessment team had sight of a comprehensive annual monitoring report and action plan for placements. These documents, in the assessment team's view, indicate a strategic intention and direction in how the college works with placement providers to deliver accredited work-based learning.

103. As well as offering the new degree set out above, the college is also phasing out a degree that it previously offered in 2023, and at the time of the assessment it had students still enrolled in year two and a final year. Students on this old degree are required to undertake

placements via the college's bespoke diploma. Placements are therefore not a new area of provision for the college and the assessment team had sight of robust procedures for placements undertaken on the diploma. These robust practices have continued to inform current arrangements, and have been appropriately embedded in the governance and management of the accredited placements in the new degree. Thus, the assessment team is of the opinion that, while the evidence above may relate to the new degree (ECEC), which had its first intake in September 2023, the assessment team has also had insight into the college's robust placement procedures and governance prior to September 2023. The assessment team therefore considers that the college, where it works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, 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.

104. The college has no plans to validate the degrees of other providers. However, the assessment team saw evidence that there are appropriate links with other providers in the sector in the area of early years learning and that links with other organisations were also effective.

105. Following review of the above evidence, it is the assessment team's view that, should the college propose to work with other organisations in the future, it would adopt a strategic approach to ensuring arrangements are robust and effective after due consideration of risk in line with the criteria. This is based on the assessment team's view of how the college currently approaches its management and governance, together with the evidence demonstrated in the management of its current placement provision.

Conclusions

106. The assessment team found that the college meets criterion A1 as it meets all the sub-criteria and has offered comprehensive and extensive evidence under the evidence requirements.

107. Through its strategic vision and mission, its committee structures, terms of reference, Delegation Protocol, and policies and procedures the college has effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities, in line with and appropriate to the special nature of its higher education provision. These mechanisms of governance were coherent, published, consistently applied and understood. There is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility within the college, which is clearly articulated and applied consistently, and appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership.

108. Students are individually and collectively engaged in the governance and management of the college and its higher education provision, and students are supported to be able to engage effectively. Student representatives are members of college committees, and their status is the same as that of a member of staff. Students also actively engage in the scrutiny of college business and decision making. They are well supported to engage effectively through meaningful training and have exposure to the wider context of higher education such as the TEF and the OfS, which can further deepen and strengthen their engagement.

109. The college has a robust approach to its management and governance and the management of its placement provision. Should the college propose to work with other organisations in the future, it's the assessment team's view that the college would adopt a strategic approach to

ensuring arrangements are robust and effective after due consideration of risk in line with the criteria.

110. The assessment team formed the overall view that the college's effective governance structures, together with its clear and appropriate lines of accountability, provide assurance that it is successfully managing the responsibilities under its current DAPs authorisation and will continue to do so in respect of any extension of this authorisation.

Assessment of DAPs criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks

Advice to the OfS

111. The assessment team's view is that Norland College Limited meets criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks because it meets sub-criteria B1.1 and B1.2.

112. The team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows, in summary, that the college has in place transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications. The college maintains a definitive record of its single programme for students and effective and appropriate governance of changes to the programme. Programme specifications, policies and other information provided to the assessment team constitute the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme and its monitoring and review. The assessment team has seen both certificates and transcripts that act as records of study to students and alumni.

113. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside other relevant information.

Sub-criterion B1.1

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

Advice to the OfS

114. The assessment team's view is that the college meets sub-criterion B1.1 because there is evidence to show that it has comprehensive academic frameworks, regulations and policies to govern the award of academic credit. The provider is unusual in the sector in that it offers a single degree in a highly specialised area. Nevertheless, it has a very comprehensive, clear and accessible framework for governance, built on during its time in partnership with another provider and since it was awarded time-limited DAPs. The academic regulations scrutinised by the assessment team make prominent reference to OfS sector-recognised standards and are approved by the Academic Board of Norland College.

Reasoning

115. The assessment team scrutinised the academic frameworks and regulations governing the college's higher education provision and found that these are appropriate for this provider and are implemented fully and consistently. The college's academic regulations offer clear information regarding the structure and definitions of courses, admissions, including entry requirements, and approach to accreditation of prior learning. In addition, the regulations set out the approach to assessment, marking and the award of credit, and how that leads to the classifications of degrees. The college states that its academic regulations 'have been

informed by sector-recognised standards and with due regard for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and are informed by its expectations and practices'.

116. The assessment team saw evidence that the implementation of these regulations is scrutinised by internal processes such as programme monitoring. The team also found that policies and procedures are subject to an annual report, which summarises the performance and student outcomes for the college alongside a comprehensive list detailing which policies and procedures have been updated during the academic year. This annual report includes a list of all policies that have been reviewed during the year as well as new policies that have been added. In addition the report, which was considered by the Academic Board, showed that a full range of academic governance information had been considered, including (but not limited to) NSS scores, student outcomes data, the provider's TEF outcome and a summary of admissions outcomes. This report demonstrates that data is used to monitor the appropriateness, implementation and consistency of the academic regulations and frameworks of the college.

117. To understand how these regulations and policies are applied in practice, the assessment team reviewed the two degree programme specifications (as discussed in paragraphs 146-148) and a sample of module specifications (four at Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Level 4, seven at FHEQ Level 5 and one at FHEQ Level 6) and handbooks (four at FHEQ Level 4, three at FHEQ Level 5 and two at FHEQ Level 6). The college uses standard templates for key documentation pertaining to its higher education provision, so the assessment team found that the specifications and handbooks they examined included pre-determined sections on, for example, credit values, learning outcomes, assessment methods and marking rubrics. The team found that the information provided was consistent with the relevant academic policies, and therefore supports the team's view that the college's academic frameworks are effectively applied in practice.

118. The assessment team concluded that there is evidence that since being awarded DAPs, the college has put in place academic frameworks and regulations governing its higher education provision and that they are appropriate to its current status and are implemented fully and consistently. Furthermore, the assessment team concluded that the evidence considered demonstrated that the Academic Board has appropriate oversight, and that governance of this comprehensive set of regulations, policies and procedures meets the needs of this criterion.

119. The assessment team considered the extent the academic frameworks and regulations are transparent as well as comprehensive. The assessment team saw evidence of regular and thorough staff training and staff are engaged in ongoing work to ensure that the academic regulations are embedded in their practice. This means that the academic frameworks are likely to be comprehensively understood by the staff. The academic regulations are published for students on the website. In addition, it is the view of the assessment team that information to students (such as module handbooks) are clear and appropriate and therefore transparent.

120. The assessment team concluded that there was sufficient evidence to show that the academic frameworks and regulations governing its higher education provision are appropriate to its current status and were implemented fully and consistently over the period of the last six years.

121. The college had created, at the time of the last review of its DAPs, a set of academic regulations that evolved from its previous validated relationship. The assessment team heard from the college that the Academic Board has oversight of the college's academic frameworks and regulations. The terms of reference for the board, in the team's view, set out an appropriate remit for the board in terms of its oversight. For example, the terms of reference set out that the Academic Board has oversight of the conditions of registration for the provider and that it monitors the compliance with relevant terms of references for its subcommittees. In addition, the assessment team saw evidence that the college had made regular updates and changes to its academic frameworks and regulations since temporary DAPs were granted, to ensure they remain up to date, and reflect up to date practices across the sector. For example, the introduction of a creation of a placement policy and a cause for concern procedure. For these reasons, it is the view of the assessment team that the college has appropriate academic frameworks and regulations for the granting of its own higher education qualifications.

122. At the time of the assessment, the college was in transition between an old and a new version of its degree. Both specifications were presented to the assessment team and there is a clear process for the programme design of the new degree, which is discussed in more detail in the 'design and approval of programmes' section of criterion B3. The regulations and policies for the new degree were available to students and other stakeholders and presented clearly. In the view of the assessment team, and external examiners who have worked with the provider, the implementation of regulations, policies and frameworks is consistent and appropriate for this provider.

123. 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.

Sub-criterion B1.2

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

Advice to the OfS

124. The assessment team's view is that Norland College Limited meets sub-criterion B1.2 because it 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.

125. The assessments team's view is based on its review of evidence showing that the college meets the evidence requirements for B1.2 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

126. Norland College offers one degree programme, namely the BA (Hons) in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), which was launched in September 2023. Prior to this, the college offered BA (Hons) Early Years Development and Learning (EYDL), which was awarded by the University of Gloucestershire up until Norland College received time-limited DAPs authorisation in 2019, at which point the college became the awarding body for the course. The EYDL degree is being 'taught-out' and the final cohort of students are expected to graduate in 2025.

127. The BA (Hons) ECEC programme specification for 2023-24 is published on the college's website, along with the programme specification for the Norland Diploma and a Degree and Diploma Course Map.[17] The ECEC programme specification includes key information on programme structure and learning outcomes, details on the study level and number of credits awarded per module, and how and when students will be assessed throughout the course. Additionally, there is a section on changes made to the programme since the last (re)validation point (noting that this is a new programme), along with a document control table that sets out when the current version was approved and when it will next be reviewed by the Academic Board. In the view of the assessment team, this programme specification constitutes a clear and definitive record of the qualification awarded by the college.

128. For completeness, the assessment team also reviewed the 2019-20 programme specification for the BA (Hons) EYDL. The structure and content of this document is similar to that of the programme specification for the newer degree, and although it is less detailed and clear than the newer programme specification, this demonstrates that the college has experience of both maintaining, and making improvements to, a clear and definitive record of the programme it delivers.

129. In considering the college's overall approach to approving and maintaining definitive and up to date records of any qualifications and programmes it awards, the assessment team reviewed the college's Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy and Procedure. This document sets out the programme design and development processes for the following changes:

- Housekeeping changes

- Minor modifications

- Major modifications

- New programmes.

130. The policy includes detail on internal and external approval processes, requirements for consultation and communication with students and applicants during these processes, and external reference points to consider when designing programmes, such as OfS sector-recognised standards. Templates for designing or updating programmes, included as annexes in the policy document, are used by staff to ensure correct processes are followed and provide a comprehensive record of changes.

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[17] See Early Childhood Education and Care degree BA (Hons) - Norland, Bath.

131. The assessment team also examined the college's Course Definitive Documents Policy, which states that 'A course definitive record is a description of the essential framework of a course, its curriculum structure and the way that it is assessed. The relevant regulations in the Assessment Regulations, Course Handbook, Module Handbooks and Programme Specification, supplemented by the relevant assessment procedures, form the course definitive record. The definitive record of a course can only be changed through due process'. The policy goes on to explain that the college will keep archived records of these documents for no less than 40 years. The assessment team saw screenshot evidence that the college shares course definitive documents with students via SharePoint, which suggests that record-keeping is transparent and consistent. This supports the view that the college maintains definitive records of the programmes it delivers to its students, which constitute the basis of their delivery and assessment.

132. To understand more about how course definitive records inform programme monitoring and review, the assessment team reviewed the college's Annual Programme Monitoring Policy, which states that the Programme Committee is responsible for the evaluation, review and enhancement of the quality and standards of individual modules and units, and day-to-day monitoring of the overall programme. As outlined in the policy, unit or module reviews and annual programme monitoring reports consider feedback from a range of stakeholders and are considered by the Programme Committee, and then any agreed improvements to the course are delivered via the programme action plan, and course definitive documents (such as module handbooks, programme specifications) are updated accordingly.

133. To examine these arrangements further, the assessment team reviewed a selection of module handbooks, four of which were for modules on the EDYL degree (Levels 5 and 6), and three which were for modules on the new ECEC degree (Level 4). These handbooks included key information such as module content, learning outcomes, assessment methods, and details on module evaluation – specifically, what the feedback was from the previous delivery of the module, and any changes that were made to the current iteration of the module as a result of the review.

134. The team then scrutinised a selection of module reviews, four of which were for modules on the EDYL degree (Levels 5 and 6), and one of which was for a module on the new ECEC degree (Level 4). The team found that the standard items included in module reviews were consistent with those set out in the module handbooks, such as module content and assessment methods, and therefore it is clear that the college uses course definitive documents (module handbooks, in this case) to inform programme monitoring and review.

135. With regards to providing students and alumni with records of study, the college's Course Definitive Documents Policy states that 'students will be given a certificate and complete transcript of their achievement on completion of their studies' and goes on to confirm that the college 'will maintain a secure archive of student achievement for an unlimited period'. The assessment team reviewed the anonymised certificates and transcripts of two students who completed the EYDL degree in June 2022, one who had graduated with honours and the other who had achieved the 'fallback' award of an ordinary degree. The team then compared these records of study with the 2019-20 programme specification for the EYDL degree and found that key programme information, such as modules taken and credits awarded, were consistent between the two documents. This supports the assessment team's view that the

college maintains definitive records of the programmes it offers, which are used as a basis for providing students and alumni with a comprehensive record of their studies.

Conclusions

136. The assessment team considered the evidence provided by the college, and concluded that the college meets criterion B1.

137. The assessment team concluded that the college's Academic Board and subcommittees, together with its academic frameworks and regulations, are transparent, comprehensive and appropriate for the purpose of governing the provision of its higher education as it relates to the award of academic credit and qualifications at this specialist provider. The college has also reviewed and updated its academic frameworks, policies and regulations to respond to changing internal and external needs, and to ensure continued alignment with the college's mission to provide elite training in the highly specialised area of childcare.

138. The assessment team further concluded that the college's policies and procedures are fit for purpose and appropriate to its current status as an institution with DAPs. The evidence examined confirmed to the assessment team that the college applied processes fully and consistently.

139. The assessment team is satisfied that the college has a well-developed and consistent approach to maintaining a definitive record of the programmes that it delivers. The team also established that the college has robust processes for monitoring and review, as it has clear, detailed systems and methods which operate at both the level of the programme and its modules and units. The assessment team also concluded that the college maintains accurate records of study to be issued to students and alumni.

Criterion B2: Academic standards

Advice to the OfS

140. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion B2: Academic standards, because it meets sub-criteria B2.1 and B2.2.

141. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the college has clear, consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications. Additionally, the college demonstrates that its courses and qualifications meet the threshold academic standards described in the sector-recognised standards and the FHEQ, and that the standards it sets and maintains are reliable over time and comparable to those set by other UK degree awarding bodies.

142. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside other relevant information.

Sub-criterion B2.1

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

Advice to the OfS

143. The assessment team's view is that the college meets sub-criterion B2.1 because it has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications.

144. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements listed below for this sub-criterion, alongside any other relevant information gathered from the college's virtual learning environment (VLE) and submitted documents.

Reasoning

145. To assess the college's overall approach to setting and maintaining academic standards, the assessment team considered the academic regulations, alongside its associated policies, such as the 'Assessment and Feedback Policy', the 'Marking Policy' and the 'Academic Appeals Policy'. The team found that the academic regulations clearly set out the academic standards for the college's higher education provision (as discussed in criterion B1), and the supporting policies set out relevant guidance and expectations to ensure academic standards are met. For example, the 'Assessment and Feedback Policy' lists the key principles the college adheres to regarding assessment design, standards and feedback, then sets out how these practices enable students to demonstrate they have the knowledge and skills required to meet the relevant FHEQ level qualification descriptor.

146. To establish whether the college's higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ, the assessment team reviewed the programme specifications for the college's BA (Hons) ECEC and the discontinued BA (Hons) EYDL which the college continues to 'teach-out'. These documents confirmed that the courses are aligned to relevant academic and professional standards, including the FHEQ, and consistent with the requirements of the college's academic regulations.

147. The assessment team also found that the college has mapped the course structure to clearly demonstrate the volume of student work, including a detailed course map that sets out learning outcomes, word counts, and assessment deadlines, while accounting for placement schedules. This mapping shows a strong alignment with the FHEQ, ensuring that the volume and complexity of student effort are appropriate for the level of qualification. While the co-teaching of the diploma adds to the demands on students, this is a distinctive feature of the college's specialist provision, which also offers the degree as a standalone option.

148. The assessment team also found that the information provided in the college's programme specifications clearly aligns with the UK Quality Code's requirements for FHEQ Level 6 qualifications and, where appropriate, maps onto Level 4 and 5 qualifications if a student

leaves before the end of the Level 6 bachelors' degree.[18] For example, the learning outcomes described in the UK Quality Code – relating to knowledge and understanding, cognitive skills, practical skills, transferable skills and professional competences – are clearly set out in the programme specifications and are consistent with the relevant FHEQ level descriptors set out in the UK Quality Code.

149. The assessment team also considered the role and operation of the college's Academic Board in ensuring that qualifications are offered at the relevant levels of the FHEQ. As outlined in the college's terms of reference, the Academic Board is responsible for setting, maintaining and assuring the college's academic standards and any awards that it makes. The board ensures standards are met through the design, approval and implementation of its academic regulations, which apply to all taught provision at FHEQ Level 4 and above.

150. While the Academic Board has overall responsibility for the setting and maintaining of standards, it has delegated some of its functions to the Programmes Committee, such as the day-to-day monitoring of academic standards at programme and module level. Regular module reviews, annual monitoring reports and programme action plans provide the committee with oversight of quality assurance arrangements at programme and module level, and any developments or issues are reported to the Academic Board that can authorise changes to policies or practices if required.

151. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the college's higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ, as evidenced by the alignment between the college's academic regulations and programme specifications with the relevant FHEQ level descriptors.

152. The assessment team found that the college's approach to setting academic standards incorporates relevant external reference points, independent expertise, and student input, ensuring alignment with sector frameworks and professional standards. For example, annual External Examiner Reports between 2020-21 and 2022-23 provide evidence of the college ensuring external scrutiny of its higher education provision, and confirm that the college's qualifications align with sector standards. The reports also confirm that the college engages in (and in some cases exceeds) good practice, with one report stating: 'I have served as external examiner across a wide range of institutions and I can confirm that the quality, extent and rigour of the assessment processes... are beyond what I have seen anywhere else.'

153. The college also demonstrates a commitment to incorporating student voice through structured processes and ongoing evaluation. Module evaluations, which feed into programme committees, consider student performance and achievement, ensuring that feedback directly informs course improvements. While an April 2023 NSS report cited mixed responses about the effectiveness of student voice, a subsequent validation report in June 2023 confirmed that students felt their voices were being heard.

154. The design and assessment of placements within the new degree qualification, mapped to the Graduate Practitioner Competencies, reflect input from students, alongside external stakeholders, to ensure relevance and alignment with professional standards. End-user feedback from employers, including Newly Qualified Nannies, further informs course content

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[18] See QAA, Qualifications Frameworks.

and assessment. These measures collectively ensure that students' perspectives contribute meaningfully to academic and professional outcomes while maintaining alignment with threshold standards.

155. Overall, the assessment team concluded that the college sets and maintains academic standards in alignment with national benchmarks, with clear evidence from policies, processes, and student work to support this judgement.

156. As discussed in paragraphs 149-150, the college has structures and policies in place to ensure consistency in academic standards across all qualifications, and the assessment team found the college maintains a spreadsheet of all its FHEQ Level 4 to 6 modules mapped against the Quality Assurance Agency's subject benchmarks for early childhood studies.[19] Additionally, the college maintains a spreadsheet of course modules mapped against the Early Childhood Studies Degree Network Graduate Practitioner Competencies.[20] In the assessment team's view, these are appropriate points of external reference, and enable the college to comply with national frameworks for the setting and maintaining of academic standards.

157. The assessment team concluded that the college meets criterion B2.1 as the evidence shows that it has clear mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications and these are consistently applied. The assessment team was also satisfied that the college takes appropriate account of relevant external points of reference, and external and independent points of expertise, including students.

Sub-criterion B2.2

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

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

Advice to the OfS

158. The assessment team's view is that the college meets sub-criterion B2.2. This is because the college has demonstrated its ability to design and deliver courses that meet the threshold academic standards set out in the FHEQ, and that the standards it sets and maintains are reliable over time and comparable to those of other UK degree awarding bodies.

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[19] See QAA, Subject Benchmark Statements.

[20] See Graduate Practitioner Compencies | ECSDN.

159. The assessment team's view is based on its review of documents and evidence, which shows that the college has met the evidence requirements for B2.2.

Reasoning

160. The college demonstrates that its courses and qualifications meet threshold academic standards as described in the FHEQ. The programme design and development policy explicitly requires alignment with external standards, such as SEEC level descriptors, and ongoing changes are monitored to ensure compliance.[21] External benchmarking and validation processes include oversight by external examiners, with confirmation of reliability and comparability of standards provided in the external examiner report and supported by the 2018 Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) report on the college's application for Taught DAPs.[22]

161. The college has robust programme approval policies and procedures that ensure academic standards meet and exceed sector expectations. The Programme Design, Development, and Approval Policy provides a rigorous framework for course development, aligning with national benchmarks. Processes such as programme and module reviews (delivered by the Programmes Committee) and the evaluation of assessment briefs and rubrics against sector standards (delivered by the Assessment Scrutiny Panel), support consistency in decision making with regards to setting and maintaining academic standards when designing or modifying programmes or modules.

162. The assessment team also reviewed External Examiner Reports on the BA (Hons) EYDL programme from academic years 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23. These reports validate that the college's standards are comparable to other UK degree awarding bodies and consistently maintained over time.

163. It is therefore the assessment team's view that the college's programme approval arrangements are robust, applied consistently, and ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.

164. To consider whether credit and qualifications are awarded only where relevant learning outcomes have been demonstrated through assessment, the assessment team reviewed External examiner reports for the BA (Hons) EYDL programme from academic years 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23. The team found that all reports highlight a high level of scrutiny applied at assessment boards to maintain academic integrity.

165. The terms of reference for the BA (Hons) Assessment Board of Examiners states that the board is responsible for the conduct of assessment of candidates in accordance with the academic regulations of the college. This further demonstrated to the assessment team the college's commitment to securing the integrity of assessments through its broad membership and robust procedures.

166. The assessment team scrutinised a sample of two module handbooks at each level of study (i.e. six in total). These documents clearly outline the learning outcomes for each module and

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[21] See SEEC Resources - Dropbox.

[22] See QAA, Application for Taught Degree Awarding Powers: Norland College, November 2018.

the methods used to assess student performance. The programme specification for BA (Hons) EYDL confirmed to the assessment team that programme assessments are thorough and aligned with both UK threshold standards and the college's own academic standards. Regular reviews of assessments by the Assessment Board of Examiners ensure that students meet the required criteria for achievement, reinforcing the credibility and integrity of the qualifications awarded.

167. The assessment team also reviewed a selection of student work, specifically marked written assignments for a random sample via the VLE. This sample included work at Levels 4, 5 and 6 and represented a range of marks. Samples included both high passes and fails, illustrating how academic standards are consistently applied. These were seen via specific samples and also through accessing the college's VLE.

168. The college's Moderation Policy sets out the principles of moderation and the approach to the standardisation and moderation of student work. This includes guidance to staff on when moderation activity should take place, at what point external examiners may be involved, and the options for internal moderation processes – such as cohort sampling or double-marking of an entire cohort. The Head of Learning, Teaching and Research reports to the Academic Board via the annual programme review with regards to the effectiveness of the internal moderation process. The assessment team considered this to be a robust and fair process for ensuring that credit and qualifications are only approved where relevant learning outcomes have been achieved.

169. Achievements and learning outcomes for work-based learning (i.e. placements), constituting 40 per cent of the degree programme, have been mapped directly to the Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies, which enables staff to measure how students meet and exceed expected professional benchmarks.[23] In the view of the assessment team, the student work that they examined has been marked accurately in line with the standards set out by the college in line with the college's Marking Policy.

170. In each year of study, students take a Practice in the Early Years module, and module specifications clearly articulate how learning outcomes are met, and this is reinforced by student work and feedback. The evidence reviewed included compelling evidence of student dissertations, highlighting research quality and academic progression. The inclusion of external peers, industry professionals, and student representatives on the module review panels provides assurance of comprehensive and inclusive oversight. The annual module review covers actions from the previous year's review, and a description of the module including learning outcomes and a review of support and resources for the year in question. The review also carries out an analysis of student attainment in comparison to previous years as well as feedback on the module from students, staff and external examiners.

171. The assessment team found that the college has consistently applied programme approval, monitoring, and review arrangements that explicitly address the achievement of UK threshold academic standards and the maintenance of its own academic standards. The Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy and Procedure outlines a structured framework for evaluating new programmes and ensuring they align with national standards. The policy is comprehensive in its review stages and asks directly whether staff have '...assured yourself

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[23] See Graduate Practitioner Compencies | ECSDN.

that the changes to the module/assessment/programme: a) reflects the expectations of the UK Quality Code, b) is set at the appropriate FHEQ level c) takes account of subject benchmark statements d) reflects the requirements of the "full and relevant criteria" for Early Years qualifications?'

172. The assessment team examined the June 2023 validation report for the new BA (Hons) ECEC degree, which was launched in September 2023. This assessment of the proposed arrangements for the new degree was conducted by the college's validation panel, which is comprised of internal and external members. The report found that the college adequately ensured that UK threshold standards were met on the programme, and that the college's own standards were consistently upheld throughout all programmes. Additionally, the team found that the programme specification for this degree provides evidence of clear learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are aligned with sector-recognised standards, emphasising the college's commitment to maintaining high quality education.

173. The college conducts regular programme and module reviews, as demonstrated in the meeting minutes of the relevant committees, such the Academic Board meeting on 6 October 2023 and the Assessment Board of Examiners meeting on 21 June 2022, both of which confirm that ongoing monitoring processes are in place to assess programme effectiveness and compliance with academic standards. These arrangements are discussed in more detail under criterion B3. The terms of reference for the Assessment Board of Examiners states that the board must meet three times a year, and annual schedules of business set out which policies and processes must be reviewed at each meeting. The assessment team considered that these governance arrangements are appropriate for a college of this size and shape.

174. Module reviews, such as the review of a Level 6 module in 2023-24 ('Dimensions of Leadership'), highlight the college's ongoing evaluation and refinement of course content. The transition from the EYDL degree to the ECEC degree exemplifies a robust approach to maintaining academic standards, and the response to programme revalidation, demonstrates clear and effective strategies for upholding high quality academic experiences and successful student outcomes. Module outcomes and assessment criteria align with sector-recognised standards, ensuring rigorous and transparent academic expectations.

175. It is therefore the assessment team's view that the college has in place adequate and effective arrangements for programme approval, monitoring and review, and that they are 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.

176. The assessment team considered whether the college utilises appropriate external and independent expertise in establishing and maintaining threshold academic standards and ensuring comparability with other providers of equivalent level qualifications. The team found that this is primarily realised through the inclusion of external experts in academic governance structures (as discussed in criterion A1) and external involvement in the design, approval, monitoring and review of its higher education provision.

177. The involvement of external examiners is demonstrated in the External Examiner Reports for the BA (Hons) EYDL programme from academic years 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23, which provide independent evaluations of the college's academic standards, and confirm alignment

with sector norms and UK threshold standards. The college works with one external assessor, who is a principal lecturer for Early Years and Childhood at another higher education provider. In the assessment team's view, these arrangements are appropriate for a college of this size.

178. In reviewing the college's June 2023 validation report for the BA (Hons) ECEC course, the assessment team found that the validation panel included three subject experts from other higher education providers, including the chair of the panel, and a professional quality and standards expert. It is the assessment team's view that these arrangements provide appropriate external input into the design and approval of programmes, and enable the college to establish academic standards that meet sector thresholds.

179. Additionally, the Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy and Procedure outlines how the college integrates feedback from external experts (such as those described in paragraphs 177-178) into its programme development processes, to ensure that its qualifications remain robust and comparable.

180. The assessment team also reviewed the minutes from Academic Board meetings that took place throughout 2022 to 2024, and found these reflected ongoing discussions regarding the integration of external input into programme development, reinforcing the college's commitment to maintaining academic standards in line with best practices across the sector.

181. The evidence demonstrated to the assessment team that the college's approach to establishing and maintaining threshold academic standards makes use of appropriate external expertise, while recognising that the highly specialised nature of its higher education provision means there are limited options to compare its academic standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications.

Conclusions

182. The assessment team concluded that the college offers qualifications that align with the relevant levels of the FHEQ, and that it has processes and mechanisms in place that enable the setting and maintenance of standards. Since it was awarded time-limited Taught DAPs in 2019, the college has effectively established and consistently applied robust mechanisms for ensuring that its academic standards align with UK threshold requirements. The team is confident in the college's ongoing commitment to maintaining these standards, as evidenced by the college's comprehensive policies and procedures, active involvement of external expertise, and a systematic approach to programme approval and review.

Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience

Advice to the OfS

183. The assessment team's view is that Norland College Limited meets criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience, because it meets sub-criterion B3.1.

184. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the college is able to design and deliver its course 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.

185. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Sub-criterion B3.1

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

Advice to the OfS

186. The assessment team's view is that Norland College Limited meets sub-criterion B3.1, because the assessment team saw evidence that it designs and delivers its courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience for the students in this small and unique learning environment. Teaching, learning and assessment opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured.

187. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence detailed below that shows the college has met the evidence requirements for B3.1.

Reasoning

The design and approval of programmes

188. In its application for indefinite Taught DAPs, the college explains that it has designed and developed its own first-degree programme since gaining time-limited Taught DAPs in 2019. This programme, the BA (Hons) ECEC, was approved in June 2023 and had its first intake in September 2023. This replaces the BA (Hons) EYDL that was designed under the college's previous arrangements with University of Gloucestershire. The assessment team also noted that this new course will be revalidated in five years and that it is the only degree programme the college runs at present. The college states that it is developing a masters' programme, which it intends to run in the future.

189. With regards to the EYDL degree, the college states that this programme was previously validated by the University of Gloucestershire, and when Norland College gained its time-limited Taught DAPs in 2019, the college became the degree awarding body for this programme. Following the introduction of the new ECEC degree in September 2023, all new students were enrolled on this course, and the final cohort of students on the EDYL degree are expected to graduate in summer 2025.

190. In order to understand the extent to which the college operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes, the assessment team reviewed the college's Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy and Procedure, which provides a structured and detailed framework for programme design, development, and the maintenance of academic standards. This policy outlines processes for minor and major modifications, housekeeping changes, new programme design, and stakeholder consultation.

Evidence of the implementation of these processes was demonstrated in the Norland Validation Report 2023, where panel members' comments confirmed the application of these procedures.

191. Further evidence came from the college's development of its ECEC degree since gaining time-limited Taught DAPs in 2019. The programme, approved in June 2023, had its first intake in September 2023 and as above, replaced the EYDL degree. This transition process was documented in a programme validation report in 2019 and in the minutes of the October 2023 Academic Board.

192. The assessment team examined specific records to test the processes in action. For instance, documentation related to minor modifications for the teach-out degree, such as the Minor Modifications from June 2023 document, and the minutes of the Programmes Committee, 9 June 2023, provided evidence of the involvement of students, staff and external examiners in programme development. The minutes of the Programme Committee demonstrated that the committee considered modifications in detail and that actions and those responsible for the actions were logged and reviewed at the committee. For example, it was noted that the changes the committee approved needed to be reflected in the module handbook.

193. Module reviews, including the 2023-2024 module reviews for both the ECEC degree and the EYDL degree, showed thorough evaluations incorporating achievement data, external examiner feedback, and contextual analysis.

194. Key evidence of stakeholder engagement was found in the Student Consultation – Marking Guidance and External Examiner Feedback – Marking Guidance, which demonstrated how student and external examiner input informed the development of assessment criteria. Records from programme development teams, such as the Writing Group Kickoff Presentation and Programme Rewrite Groups, indicated a systematic and collaborative approach to course design, supported by a wide membership of academic and industry professionals. This included former students, a family who provide placements for the college, a member of staff at an early years provider and an academic staff member in the field of early years education. Staff expertise in programme development was verified through the review of CVs, including those for the Principal, Vice Principal, Head of Quality and Standards and Registrar, Head of Learning, Teaching and Research, Deputy Head of Learning and Teaching, Programmes Manager, and principal lecturers.

195. The Academic Board's role in overseeing programme approval was documented in the terms of reference of the Academic Board and the team saw evidence of this in practice in related meeting minutes, including minutes of the Academic Board from March 2022. This oversight ensured that programme approval processes were implemented and monitored effectively.

196. The assessment team concluded that Norland College demonstrates a robust and effective system for the continuous improvement, development, and approval of course design. The processes in place actively involve a wide range of stakeholders, including staff, students, and external examiners, ensuring that course development is collaborative and responsive to feedback. This specialist college leverages its strong pedagogical foundation and industry expertise to design and deliver programmes that align with learning, skills, and graduate outcome requirements. The evidence reviewed indicates that the college is well-positioned to

continue developing high quality courses that meet the needs of its students and maintain rigorous academic standards.

197. To understand how relevant staff at Norland College are informed and supported in relation to their roles and responsibilities, the assessment team reviewed several key documents. The Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy and Procedure provides a comprehensive framework for programme development. It outlines the college's procedures in programme design and staff responsibilities. For example, it sets out what constitutes a minor or major modification, then explains to staff which aspects of the process they need to follow depending on the change proposed – this includes requirements for consulting and communicating changes with students, timings for approval, and which board or committee is responsible for approving the change. Relevant templates were included as annexes to the policy, such as modification proposal forms, which include checklists to ensure staff have addressed all relevant parts of the process (e.g. 'Have current continuing students been consulted and offered the opportunity to comment on the changes?') before submitting the form for consideration by the board or committee. The policy did not appear to be accessible via the college's website, but the college informed the team it was accessible to all staff via the college's SharePoint site.

198. The assessment team also reviewed the Induction Checklist, which highlights the expectations of course and module leaders, as outlined by the Head of Learning and Teaching and Line Manager. In the view of the team, this checklist provides new staff with crucial information about where they can find policy documents and how they should approach their roles in course design and delivery. Furthermore, the team saw detail of a presentation on updates to academic regulations given to college staff in September 2023, which demonstrated how ongoing guidance and support are provided to staff, particularly in relation to the delivery of qualifications.

199. In addition, the Code of Practice was reviewed, and the assessment team found that it provides clear and comprehensive guidance for staff on the development and approval of programmes. It specifies the processes involved and the roles of staff members in these procedures, making it an essential document for informing staff of their responsibilities, for example how staff can understand the expected student study commitment and an explanation of staff contact hours.

200. The minutes of the Programmes Committee and the Minor Modifications documents from June 2023 provided further evidence that staff are regularly updated on modifications to academic provision and are informed of their roles in these processes, such as updating module handbooks.

201. Finally, the team also considered detail of the Writing Group Kickoff Presentation, which outlined the structure and content of writing group meetings, indicating that these groups are well-organised and supported. The writing group was a range of staff members, senior staff and students who contributed to the writing of the new programme. This presentation, along with the review of committee minutes and staff induction materials, provides evidence of the guidance and support offered to staff in relation to programme design, development, and approval.

202. In reviewing whether responsibility for approving new programme proposals is clearly assigned and whether actions following validation are effectively monitored, the assessment team reviewed several key documents as described below. The Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy and Procedure outlines the process for validating new programmes, specifying the composition of the validation panel. This panel includes external experts, internal staff, current and past students, and employers where applicable. The panel's duties include critically examining the proposed programme, providing feedback, making recommendations, and determining whether the programme should be approved. Once approval is granted, including any required recommendations, the proposal proceeds to ratification by the Academic Board.

203. To assess whether the validation process is robustly implemented, and actions are carefully monitored, the assessment team reviewed several documents related to the BA (Hons) ECEC programme. The 2023 Norland Validation Report provided detailed records of the validation event, documenting how the new programme was scrutinised by the panel. This report contained details of panel members, including suitable external expertise and a reference to the Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies (ECGPCs). In addition it is clear that the panel discussed an appropriate range of subjects in their scrutiny of the course, including curriculum design and student support. The panel also noted good practice and made recommendations for further action for the team. This indicated to the assessment team that the validation process is robustly implemented.

204. The assessment team also reviewed the Validation Response, which detailed the college's actions in response to the panel's feedback, including how ECGPCs were made more visible and coherent across the programme. For example, the team found that mapping of graduate competencies ensured that these competencies were referenced throughout course materials and assessment criteria, reinforcing the integration of key professional competencies in the programme.

205. Additionally, the assessment team examined the minutes from the November 2023 Academic Board, which documented the Academic Board's oversight of the approval process and the involvement of external expertise in the evaluation of the new programme. A Module Review for one of the Level 5 modules ('Promoting Health and Well Being') further illustrated the ongoing monitoring of the programme, providing transparent analysis of student performance and external examiner feedback, along with a summary of subsequent actions taken to address any issues raised.

206. In the team's view, these documents collectively demonstrate that Norland College follows a clear, well-documented process for programme approval, involving appropriate external expertise and ensuring that actions resulting from validation are carefully monitored and implemented.

207. The college offers a single BA (Hons) in ECEC and currently has a degree on teach-out, the BA (Hons) in EYDL, which is set to expire in summer 2025. To understand how the coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained, the assessment team reviewed several key documents, including the BA Hons ECEC Specification, the Optional Modules Review Form, the Degree and Diploma Course Map, and the SSLC Committee Training Workshop 2021.

208. The course specification for the BA Hons ECEC outlines the structure of the degree, clearly identifying the modules available and providing clarification on which optional modules are part of the degree programme. This specification, together with the Degree and Diploma Course Map, demonstrated to the team that although the college offers a combination of degree and diploma elements, the structure of the degree programme remains cohesive. The Degree and Diploma Course Map listed all the modules, both degree and diploma, with a focus on maintaining coherence across these components. The course specification document confirms that students select from a list of optional modules that are clearly defined within the degree structure.

209. The assessment team also found that the coherence of the programme is further ensured by the requirement that students choose two out of four, five-credit optional modules each year. These optional modules were designed to share at least one common learning outcome, ensuring that even within the flexibility offered by optional modules, the overall learning objectives of the degree are met. In the view of the team, this structure allows for a diverse learning experience while maintaining a cohesive academic pathway for students.

210. To assess the impact of optional modules on the overall coherence of the programme, the team reviewed the Optional Modules Review Forms, which are completed by students and then reviewed by the student liaison manager. These forms provide a feedback loop, allowing for adjustments based on student input to ensure that the modules continue to align with the broader programme goals. Furthermore, the assessment team examined student feedback from the first run of the optional modules in the summer of 2024, which was included in the Optional Modules Review Forms. This feedback confirmed that students felt the optional modules contributed positively to their academic experience, reinforcing the coherence of the programme as a whole. Students noted that the optional modules provided a diverse range of deeply interesting subjects, allowing them to explore areas of personal interest while still remaining connected to their broader studies. One student commented, 'Having the ability to choose which areas I would like to study improves my academic experience as I have the opportunity to study modules that are most relevant to my interests'. In the view of the team, this flexibility helps students to deepen their understanding in specific areas while maintaining the coherence of the overall degree.

211. Further feedback from students commented that the optional modules were noted to be well-integrated with other areas of study, and facilitated opportunities for collaboration and interaction with peers from different areas of study. The team considered this collaborative aspect further supports the coherence of the programme by fostering cross-disciplinary discussions that enrich the students' academic experiences.

212. Finally, the assessment team noted that the assessment methods used for both compulsory and optional modules were consistent, ensuring comparability and fairness, while also offering diversity in assessment types across the course. In the view of the team, this approach helps maintain the overall integrity and coherence of the degree programme, making sure that all elements, whether core or optional, contribute effectively to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

213. To evaluate whether close links are maintained between learning support services and the organisation's programme planning and approval arrangements, the assessment team reviewed several key documents. The Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy

and Procedure outlines the processes for course approvals, including the approval of modifications to existing courses. The policy specifies that both minor and major course modifications require approval from the Academic Board. The terms of reference for the Academic Board revealed that the Student Services and Wellbeing Manager is a member of the Academic Board, ensuring that learning support services are directly involved in programme planning and approval processes. This integration allows support services to contribute to decisions about course design and modifications, ensuring that student welfare and support needs are effectively considered. The minutes of Academic Board meetings held in October 2023 and March 2022 further confirm the active involvement of the support services team in these discussions, particularly with respect to how student services are embedded into new programme development.

214. The assessment team also reviewed the New Programme Approval Report 2019, which requires learning support services to provide details about how new programmes will meet the support needs of students. The team noted that this report reflected a balanced approach, with a thorough consideration of student support services and how these are aligned with the overall programme design. Minutes of Academic Board held in October 2023 note that staff 'commended the services provided by Norland around helping students with their mental health and noted that this would be fed back to the Board of Directors (BoD).' Also from this document, a minute reflects that 'a major amendment to the policy had been the creation of the Senior Tutor role for the 2023-24 year. This change has been implemented to expand student support and provide oversight of the tutors from a student support perspective.'

215. Additionally, the assessment team observed the contribution of the support services, particularly the student support officer, in the Writing Group Kickoff Presentation. This presentation highlighted the integration of support services in the development of new programmes, ensuring that student welfare considerations are embedded into the design of the curriculum. The Student Services Annual Monitoring Report and the Student Support Action Plan further illustrated the ongoing collaboration between learning support services and programme planning.

216. In conclusion, the evidence reviewed confirms that the college maintains close and effective links between learning support services and the programme planning and approval processes. This collaboration ensures that student welfare and support needs are fully integrated into the design and ongoing development of the college's academic programmes.

Learning and teaching

217. The assessment team viewed the documents described below, which demonstrate a clear and consistent approach to learning and teaching that aligns with its stated academic objectives. The Learning and Teaching Policy, which the college has opted to write with reference to the UK Quality Code Core Practice for Quality, articulates a strategic framework for teaching, focusing on academic objectives that promote high standards of learning and student development. The policy highlights the college's commitment to providing high quality education that prepares students for professional roles, specifically in early childhood education and care, aligning with the college's mission to develop reflective and skilled practitioners. While the policy itself is well-focused on these academic goals, the assessment team noted that additional detail on the pedagogical approach may be helpful to enhance staff understanding of the college's academic approach to teaching and learning. The aims of

the college are to ensure curriculum alignment, independent learning, feedback literacy and significant use of the VLE. The policy requests that 'There should be congruence between the themes of the strategic plans and Departmental aims and objectives.' The team considers a focus on pedagogic approach in the plans and the Learning and Teaching Policy could be beneficial for the college.

218. The Assessment Policy supports the college's overall teaching strategy by ensuring that assessment practices are aligned with academic objectives and help drive student learning. The assessment team also viewed the BA ECEC and Norland Diploma Course Map, which illustrated how course structures were designed to meet academic aims, and the minutes from the BoD meeting on December 6, 2023, which reflect strategic planning discussions such as consideration of the strategic plan dashboard and the full range of related enhancement plans.

219. Additional evidence of the implementation of this strategic approach was observed in the VLE access and in the module specifications provided**.** For example, the module specification for 'Literature Review showed evidence of a clear and consistent approach to teaching and learning as it brings together several aspects of the student's skills in a module focused on writing a literature review. This module enables students to apply their academic writing skills in a more independent context, which is appropriate for the level of study as this is a module in the final year of the degree. The content and quality of resources available on the VLE demonstrate a thoughtful and cohesive approach to supporting teaching and learning. For example, the resources included slide decks with information about the theory behind aspects of the curriculum such as personal, social and emotional development in young children. The assessment team also saw evidence of expected additional reading and relevant videos, especially in relation to the practical aspects of the training such as nappy changing. The level and quality of created work, as seen through evidence provided of student assignments, further reflect the effectiveness of the college's teaching strategies in helping students achieve the academic objectives outlined in their programmes. The team also considered work-based project evidence and found this to also exemplify teaching and learning consistent with course aims and objectives.

220. Overall, the college articulates a strategic approach to learning and teaching that is well supported by policies and evidence of effective implementation. This approach is consistent with the college's stated academic objectives, fostering a comprehensive learning environment where students can achieve high standards of academic and professional development.

221. The assessment team accessed the VLE in addition to the documentary evidence described below, to determine whether Norland College maintains learning environments that are safe, accessible, and reliable, and that promote dignity, courtesy, and respect among students. The Learning and Teaching Policy sets out the college's commitment to creating inclusive environments that uphold these values. It outlines the principles for fostering a learning culture where all students feel respected, valued, and supported in their academic journeys.

222. In terms of the physical learning environment of the college, the assessment team looked to student feedback, NSS data and the TEF panel statement for the provider for evidence as the assessment team did not make a visit to the provider. The assessment team noted that in the student feedback as part of the rolling 'you said, we did' the students did have questions

about how the spaces owned by the college were being used and there was evidence that there was consideration for issues like study space, wellbeing spaces and student accommodation.

223. The assessment team also considered the NSS data from the TEF dashboard and the TEF panel statement. Although the data showed that the college is within its benchmark for the 'learning resources' questions, the TEF panel statement rated 'Learning resources' as a very high quality feature, noting that:

- digital resources, including a VLE, a student dashboard with curricular and extracurricular information, and equipment such as computerised life size dolls and virtual babies

- specialist learning spaces such as a mock-up nursery to replicate real life situations and access to the surrounding natural environment to maximise learning

- library facilities (endorsed by the student submission) with physical and digital resources, offering support sessions and guidance.

224. The assessment team considered the evidence and concluded that the college maintains physical and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use.

225. The college's Annual Monitoring Report for 2022-23 evaluates the effectiveness of the support systems in place, highlighting the college's proactive approach to ensuring that students receive the support they need to succeed. This report confirms that the college's learning environment, including the support services, is regularly assessed and adjusted to ensure it meets the evolving needs of all students.

226. The Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy further reinforces the college's commitment to fostering an environment where dignity, courtesy and respect are central to student interactions. This is covered in detail under criterion D.

227. The feedback from the NSS reflects high levels of student satisfaction with the learning environments at Norland College, with students praising the college for its supportive and respectful atmosphere. The Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Procedure ensures that students requiring additional support, whether for physical, mental, or learning disabilities, are provided with the necessary accommodations to succeed.

228. Additionally, the Fitness to Practise Policy and Procedure enforces standards for maintaining a respectful and professional atmosphere, which is essential for fostering dignity and respect within the academic setting. Feedback from student submissions also praised the team's approach to holistic support, particularly with the implementation of processes like completing all records online. The Student Support Action Plans and log of actions arising from education team meetings highlight the college's ongoing efforts to improve library spaces, resource availability, and tutor accessibility, all of which contribute to the development of an accessible and supportive learning environment.

229. Based on these evaluations, the assessment team concluded that the college successfully cultivates a conducive learning environment that prioritises student welfare and academic

success, ensuring that all physical, virtual, and social spaces are safe, accessible, and promote respect and dignity.

230. The assessment team reviewed the college's documentation and VLE and found that while there is good evidence of online resource and significant use of online systems and packages to support independent learning both while in college and on work placement, the college does not run distance learning courses. In order to assess the extent to which students are supported when studying at a distance on placement, the assessment team considered the support and processes set out in the placement handbook for students and families. This handbook set out an approach for, where needed, one to one, personalised and responsive support for students while on their placement, with additional guidance on the placement visit. In addition, students raised questions about their placements, such as where and how to file the relevant paperwork, as part of the ongoing 'you said, we did' process, and there is evidence that concerns and questions were responded to. The assessment team concluded from this evidence that although the college does not run any distance learning courses, that when students are studying at a distance because they are on placement, robust arrangements exist for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to those students are effective.

231. The assessment team considered the extent to which every student at the college is enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development. The assessment team considered that the Personal Tutoring Policy provides a foundation for personalised academic support, ensuring that students have regular opportunities to discuss their progress and receive tailored advice. In the view of the team, this policy fosters meaningful interactions between students and their tutors, creating a supportive environment for tracking and enhancing academic performance. The college sets high expectations and recognises that the transition to higher education is often a period of great change and development. The Personal Tutoring Policy goes on to say that 'The personal tutor system plays a vital part in [supporting] this by providing opportunities for supportive partnerships between staff and students, which encourage students to take ownership of their studies, and access support and understanding for individual needs.'

232. In addition, the assessment team considered the Improving Progress Policy and Procedure, which emphasises the importance of a holistic approach to improvement through monitoring student progress and providing constructive feedback to support academic development. By outlining clear strategies for addressing challenges and celebrating achievements, this policy underlines the college's commitment to fostering student engagement through a clear outline of the roles and expectations, as well as support in appendix 1 for ensuring tutorials are two-way processes. For example, the policy and procedure sets out how students who are at risk of failing to make progress are identified and offered advice, assistance and support. This process is overseen by the senior personal tutor and the quality and regulations manager. The team considered this an example of good practice and likely to provide effective support routes for students.

233. In order to have management oversight of student support, the 2022-23 Annual Monitoring Report, considered by the Academic Board, evaluates the effectiveness of these initiatives, demonstrating that they successfully promote student engagement and progression. This report reflects a proactive approach to assessing and refining the tools and policies that support students in monitoring their progress. The report monitors the reasons students seek

support and details a year-on-year action plan which covers issues such as types of assessments, student sense of belonging and staff mental health awareness. The assessment team concluded that this is good evidence of the monitoring of how the college makes provision for holistic student wellbeing.

234. The assessment team saw a screenshot of the college's Student Gateway, which highlights the digital resources available for students to track their academic performance. The system, powered by Ellucian, allows students to access their marks and view detailed information about their performance in each module, facilitating a clear and accessible means of progress tracking.

235. The 2023 NSS results provide additional evidence of student satisfaction regarding their ability to monitor their learning. Feedback indicates that students feel supported in understanding their progress and are empowered to take ownership of their academic development.

236. Finally, the Marking Guidance and Marking Quick Guide clarify assessment criteria and expectations for markers in order to provide feedback that enhances students' feedback literacy. The team also considered samples of marking, example use of Turnitin and sample assessments and moderation evidence, and found these all to corroborate effective use of these policies to enable every student to monitor their progress and further their academic development. The assessment team concluded that this set of tools is likely to enable students to be able to track and monitor their progress effectively.

237. In conclusion, the team considers that the college provides a robust framework of personalised support, digital tools, and clear guidance that enables students to monitor their progress and advance their academic development effectively.

Assessment

238. The assessment team reviewed the documentary evidence described below along with VLE content and determined the college operates valid and reliable assessment processes that enable students to demonstrate their achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The Assessment and Feedback Policy provides a comprehensive framework for assessment, ensuring transparency, validity, and reliability. The policy outlines principles for feedback and assessment practices designed to support students in meeting academic expectations. Similarly, the Marking Policy sets out detailed procedures for marking, including the use of rubrics and colour-coded feedback categories, which are implemented consistently across modules. The review of assessed student work, accessed via the VLE, confirmed the effective application of these policies. The team found that the colour coding approach was evident in the assessment samples that were reviewed and the relevant coversheet was used on student work.

239. The Module Handbooks were also reviewed and found by the team to provide students with clear guidance on assessment processes, including how assessments align with module learning outcomes. These handbooks include rubrics and detailed information on how students can achieve their desired grades. Additionally, they map the weekly scheme of work to learning outcomes, ensuring that students understand the pathway to achieving their assessments.

240. The programme specification for the BA (Hons) ECEC highlighted the variety of summative assessment types within the programme, which the team found to be appropriate for the credit value of the modules. Evidence of formative assessment opportunities was also observed in the module handbooks. Students have access to their assessment results via the Student Gateway, allowing them to track their progress and credits earned.

241. The 2023-24 Module Review from the previous degree programme illustrated innovative approaches, such as allowing students to devise assessment criteria, which were praised by students. The assessment team noted that students were well supported in this process, as demonstrated by the 2023 Devising Assessment Criteria and Mock Viva Guidance, which provided detailed guidance on creating assessment criteria. This practice was also being carried forward into the new degree programme.

242. The team considered the slide deck for the 'Welcome Back' presentation of September 2023 (delivered to returning students) and found this allowed students to showcase and promote their dissertation topics, demonstrating autonomy in selecting research areas to meet learning outcomes. Furthermore, the Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Procedure ensures that students with disabilities or neurodivergent needs are supported equitably, enabling them to achieve learning outcomes. In the view of the team, this policy is communicated effectively through various channels, including the Module Handbooks, as well as the Welcome Guide, and the Norland BA and Diploma Handbook.

243. The assessment of accredited placement learning within the new BA with Honours in ECEC was examined by the team through Module Handbooks. In the view of the team, these handbooks demonstrate that placement assessments are carefully mapped to Graduate Practitioner Competencies, allowing students to achieve intended learning outcomes through placements, appraisals, and associated assignments. The assessment team also reviewed the Assessment Deadline Map for 2023-24 and placement timetable in the Welcome Guide, noting that the college minimises assessment deadlines during placement periods to avoid conflicts with student responsibilities.

244. The Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) Policy outlines the process for recognising prior learning, which is overseen by the Academic Board through annual reports. While the APL process was not explicitly highlighted for prospective students on the college website, it is mentioned in the admissions policy, accessible on the 'how to apply' page. The college's application for indefinite Taught DAPs reported no APL applications to date, but the assessment team considered the content of the policy would be likely to ensure equitable recognition of prior learning.

245. In conclusion, the assessment team found that Norland College provides students with robust opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of intended learning outcomes. The college's valid and reliable assessment processes, including those for recognising prior learning, are thoroughly documented, consistently applied, and supportive of student success.

246. To evaluate how staff and students at the college engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of academic judgements, the assessment team reviewed documentary evidence including Module Handbooks for 2023-24, the Personal Tutoring Policy, the Improving Progress Policy and Procedure, and the Personal Tutoring and Tutee Guidance, as well as accessing the VLE.

247. The Module Handbooks outlined opportunities for formative feedback, allowing students to have up to 10 per cent of their assignment reviewed by a lecturer before submission. The Personal Tutoring Policy ensures that each student is assigned a personal tutor for academic and pastoral support, providing structured opportunities for dialogue about academic progress. The Improving Progress Policy and Procedure describes how senior personal tutors work with personal tutors to monitor student progress and implement tailored interventions where necessary. The Personal Tutoring and Tutee Guidance, developed with input from the SSLC, further clarifies expectations for tutoring at different academic levels, emphasising discussions about student progress.

248. To assess practical application, the assessment team reviewed the college's VLE. The VLE allows students to book one-on-one meetings with any of the 16 education team members or contact tutors directly via email. The student submission provided as part of the DAPs application confirmed that the first lecture of each module includes discussions of content, assessment criteria, and rubrics. Students praised lecturers and student support staff for their accessibility, noting that lecturers routinely remain available for questions after class, offer study sessions, and provide feedback on assignments.

249. The assessment team also considered evidence of students' involvement in devising assessment criteria. The 2023-24 Module Review highlighted students' appreciation for this activity. The 2023 presentation on Devising Assessment Criteria and Mock Viva showed that students received detailed, structured guidance on developing their own assessment criteria. This approach, praised in the 2023-24 Module Review, has been extended to a module in the new degree programme. The assessment team noted that student co-creation is considered good practice in the sector and can help current and future students access learning by using language and concepts that they understand. The college appears to take a supportive and effective approach to this.

250. A report to the Academic Board on the results of the Norland student survey 2023 reflected student satisfaction with the effectiveness of marking and feedback. Additionally, the Sample Placement Visit Reports demonstrated ongoing dialogue between staff and students regarding practical learning and the achievement of Graduate Practitioner Competencies.

251. The assessment team examined the Marking Guidance, the Marking Quick Guide, and the Student Consultation on Marking Guidance, which the team deemed effective in fostering a shared understanding of assessment standards and found the approaches to marking to be applied continually across students' academic work.

252. Based on the reviewed documents and evidence, the assessment team concluded that the college successfully facilitates meaningful dialogue between staff and students to promote a shared understanding of the principles underpinning academic judgements.

253. To evaluate how the college ensures students have opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice, the assessment team reviewed the documentary evidence described below and also accessed the VLE.

254. The assessment team accessed a random sample of ten student submissions via the VLE. The assessment team noted how the colour coding method, described earlier, to categorise

feedback is applied by tutors during assessment and students can clearly see what the colour coding means to understand their assessment feedback. The Marking Guidance, which is available to students, also fully explains the colour coding method. In summary:

- Green: Clear points, incidents of strong practice or original ideas

- Yellow: A question to demonstrate a need for more information

- Blue: Errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar

- Purple: Referencing errors

- Pink: Significant errors such as information errors or academic breaches.

255. The 2022-23 BA External Examiner Report endorsed this method as an effective tool for helping students cultivate good academic practices.

256. The assessment team reviewed the Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Guidance provided to students and noted its thoroughness. Through further review of the student submissions on the VLE it confirmed that students are required to acknowledge familiarity with the guidance by completing an AI use declaration included on their assessment cover sheet. The student submission made as part of the DAPs application mentioned continued year group meetings that addressed academic practices, including AI. The AI at Norland Presentation given to staff further detailed the ongoing dialogue with staff and students, including consultations with students regarding AI policy and use. Additionally, the team reviewed a March 2024 email from the Quality and Regulations Manager to all students and staff providing them with information on new and updated policies; this included a link to the academic misconduct procedure and updates on AI policy, demonstrating how students were kept informed.

257. The assessment team reviewed module handbooks, all of which included instructions on academic referencing and a link to 'Cite Them Rite', which is an online platform designed to advise students on how to reference correctly across eight referencing styles. The team considered the slide deck from an Academic Referencing Presentation given to students and found this provided evidence of workshops where students practiced proper referencing conventions, further reinforcing their understanding of academic integrity.

258. To support students' understanding of Graduate Practitioner Competencies, the college offers drop-in sessions and weekly meetings with the placement team, where students can talk to a Placement Officer about how to gather evidence so they can demonstrate they meet the GPCs. Library and student services also hosted sessions to address academic writing and referencing practices, as evidenced by an email sent to students informing them of the format and availability of drop-in sessions. These sessions were supplemented by resources provided through the Library Induction and the Library Virtual Noticeboard, which confirmed the availability of opportunities for students to learn about and practice good academic practices.

259. Based on this evidence, the assessment team concluded that Norland College provides students with ample opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice.

260. To understand how Norland College operates processes for preventing, identifying, investigating, and responding to unacceptable academic practice, the assessment team reviewed several key documents. These included the Academic Regulations 2023-24 and the Student Academic Misconduct Procedure, which provide a detailed framework for addressing various types of academic misconduct such as plagiarism, self-plagiarism, unauthorised collusion, contract cheating, and any actions intended to gain an unfair academic advantage. The team noted that the Student Academic Misconduct Procedure clearly specifies the types of misconduct and the appropriate courses of action. Additionally, the Norland BA and Diploma Handbook supports this framework by providing thorough details and relevant links to the academic misconduct procedure.

261. The assessment team also observed that the introduction of new technologies, such as AI, has prompted the college to address what constitutes acceptable academic practice. This shift was evident in the AI at Norland Presentation, which outlined the college's response to AI and its incorporation into academic practices. Notably, the college has purchased an AI Turnitin detector to aid in identifying AI-generated content. The Student Academic Misconduct Procedure and the AI guidance document are being refined as part of a phased approach to managing AI at the college.

262. In addition to its procedural framework, the college fosters a supportive environment where students are encouraged to engage in dialogue and learn about academic integrity. The team reviewed the Library Induction Presentation 2023-24, Library Virtual Noticeboard, and the email sent to students informing them of the format and availability of drop-in sessions, and found these all highlight resources and support available to students to help them understand academic practices and avoid misconduct.

263. The assessment team also reviewed the Marking Policy, which outlines the use of colour-coded feedback, particularly the use of purple and red colours to highlight errors of attribution or breaches of academic regulations. The team found that this system was actively used in practice, as evidenced by a random sample of student work submitted via the VLE. The assessment team confirmed that students submit their work through the Turnitin Similarity Reporting Tool, which helps identify potential academic misconduct. Moreover, the assignment submissions include a declaration where students confirm their use of AI tools, as required by the college.

264. To further understand the application of these processes in practice, the assessment team reviewed ten random samples of work submitted through Turnitin for one student cohort, via the VLE. This review confirmed that the college has clear and effective processes for identifying and addressing unacceptable academic practice as this was reflected in the approach to marking and feedback.

265. The team also examined the paperwork related to suspected academic misconduct meetings with students, including the Academic Misconduct Meeting held on 18 January 2024. These documents illustrated a robust and transparent process for investigating and responding to instances of academic misconduct. Furthermore, the terms of reference for the Assessment Board of Examiners reinforces these processes by ensuring that assessment boards approve and make recommendations in line with the relevant academic regulations.

266. Based on the documents reviewed, the assessment team concluded that the college has effective processes in place to prevent, identify, investigate, and respond to unacceptable academic practice. The combination of clear policies, technological tools, and a supportive academic environment ensures that students are held to high standards of academic integrity.

267. To understand if the processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process, the assessment team reviewed several key documents, including the Marking Policy and the Moderation Policy. The team found that these policies clearly outline the overall approach to marking students' work and provide comprehensive guidance on the procedures to be followed. The policies are supported by an easy-to-follow assessment flowchart, which reinforces the clarity of the marking and moderation processes.

268. The team further examined the 2022-23 External Examiner Report, where the external examiner highlighted the clear marking criteria and rigorous moderation processes, such as those discussed under criterion B2.

269. The assessment team also reviewed the Marking Guidance and Marking Quick Guide, which further reinforce the consistency of the marking process across the college. These supplementary documents ensure that all staff involved in the assessment process have a shared understanding of the marking standards and expectations. Additionally, the Norland BA and Diploma Handbook articulates the marking process to students, ensuring transparency and consistency in how assessments are marked.

270. The team observed that the marking process is regularly reinforced to students, as evidenced in the 'Welcome Back' presentation, where students are reminded of the Marking Policy and its importance in their academic journeys.

271. The assessment team also confirmed that the marking and moderation processes are clearly articulated to staff. This was evidenced by the Academic Induction Checklist, which covers key areas such as academic misconduct, assessment, moderation, and marking. The checklist ensures that all staff members are aware of the policies and procedures. Furthermore, the team accessed the college website, and found this provides easy access to these policies, making them readily available for both staff and students. A document describing collaborative working arrangements further demonstrated how placement officers and lecturers collaborate to understand each other's roles in assessing student performance, reinforcing the consistent application of marking and moderation procedures during placements. For example, the team saw evidence of placement officers asking for key messages from teaching to continue to communicate these with students while on placement, with details such as which placement paperwork can contribute towards evidence of the Graduate Practitioner Competencies.

272. To test the consistency of marking and moderation practices, the assessment team reviewed a range of assessed student work from samples from Levels 4 to 6, including work-based learning, covering a variety of marks. The team also reviewed the Module Marks Moderation Form to assess the effectiveness of the moderation process. The samples were randomly selected from the VLE, which enabled the team to observe how assessments are marked and moderated across the college. The assessment team concluded that the processes for

marking and moderation are consistently operated and effectively managed, ensuring fairness and transparency.

273. Based on the review of these documents and the evidence provided, the assessment team considers that the college operates clear, consistent, and reliable marking and moderation processes, which are articulated to both staff and students.

External examining

274. The assessment team found that the college makes scrupulous use of external examiners including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work. The External Examining Policy sets out the purpose of external examiners at the college, which includes:

- the maintenance of marking standards

- checking that assessment processes have academic integrity

- comment on good practice and innovation in teaching and learning.

275. In addition, the policy sets out the duties of an external examiner, which include the requirement to attend briefings and training, quality assure the assessment processes and attend the awards and progression board. The external examiners can also raise serious concerns about the academic work of the college if necessary. The team considered the content of the policy is likely to ensure that the involvement of external examiners is both comprehensive and transparent.

276. The team also considered an induction meeting for external examiners. The notes from this meeting provided clear documentation on the process of onboarding and orienting external examiners to the college's expectations.

277. The External Examiner Report Form provides a template that the team considers will lead to a clear record of the feedback and observations made by the external examiners, confirming their active role in the moderation of student work. The assessment team also reviewed a completed External Examiner Report from the BA (Hons) in EYDL, which the assessment team concluded was in line with wider sector practices. These reports include detailed feedback on the use of the full range of marks and provide insights into how the college has responded to previous years' feedback from external examiners. The report also had a section for conclusions and recommendations.

278. Based on the review of these documents, the assessment team is of the opinion that the college makes scrupulous use of external examiners, including in the moderation of assessments and the review of student work. In the team's view the college's practices will ensure that external examiners play a central role in maintaining the quality and consistency of assessments.

279. The college gives full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations from external examiners as confirmed by the External Examiner Reports provided to the assessment team. The assessment team saw evidence that the response to external examiners is detailed and takes into account areas where improvement could be made, areas of good practice and the extent to which the external examiners' comments have been acted

on. It is clear from the response that feedback has influenced action planning and strategic thinking in the development of the course.

280. The assessment team reviewed the External Examiner Reports and noted that these reports highlight both areas for improvement and examples of good practice. The college's response to these reports is detailed in the college's response to External Examiner Reports, where specific actions taken to address recommendations are outlined, including 'developing consistency in staff and student understanding of assessment of "Levels" across L4,5,6.' The assessment team observed that the college's responses include addressing areas for improvement and incorporating external examiner feedback into action planning and strategic decisions such as ensuring a 'focus on dialogue with students during tutorials before submission to support students with understanding their areas of strength and those for development', and scheduling of assessment so that group work can occur for all students. A further action was noted to ensure 'a timetabled opportunity for new EE [external examiners] to meet with students during induction'. These responses demonstrate a serious and considered approach to using external examiner feedback to influence course development.

Academic appeals and student complaints

281. The assessment team reviewed Norland College's Academic Appeals Policy, which provides a clear framework for managing student appeals related to the quality of their academic experience. This is based on the Office for the Independent Adjudicator good practice guide, amongst other frameworks. The assessment team considered that the policy appeared comprehensive, and is likely to ensure that all appeals are handled with integrity, transparency, and in a timely manner. In addition, the assessment team saw evidence that students are allowed resubmissions and retakes. The Student Complaints Procedure is set out in module handbooks and in a standalone complaints policy document, and the team considered this procedure sets out accessible avenues to voice grievances, which would be likely to foster an environment of trust and open communication if operated as set out.

282. The college provided examples of how it has handled complaints and appeals in practice, and the actions resulting from there. The team considered a 2023 Student Appeal Case, a Resolution Report and the college's Action Plan in Response to Student Feedback. The documents illustrated how the college responded to concerns, and the actions taken to enhance its practices. The team considered that responses to complaints appear to be timely and within published guidelines, and this was evidenced by the document provided that included a breakdown of all complaints and resolutions between 2019-2024. The Academic Appeals Policy also outlines specific timelines for addressing complaints, and is likely to continue to ensure that responses are timely and aligned with students' expectations for resolution.

283. With regards to actions taken following an academic appeal or student complaint, the assessment reviewed the college's Academic Appeal Process, a sample student appeal case, a Resolution Report and an Action Plan in Response to Student Feedback, all of which supported the team's view that the college has effective processes in place for taking appropriate action following an appeal or complaint. These documents reinforce how the college uses feedback to make actionable improvements to student support.

284. On an individual level it can be seen from records of complaint handling that the college takes complaints seriously and adheres to its own policies. The academic misconduct examples provided appeared to the team to demonstrate both courtesy and robustness, with fair sanctions being applied according to policy. An example of a Complaint Informal Resolution Form provides further evidence of adherence to policy, acting where required and supporting students to make academic progress.

Conclusions

285. In conclusion, the assessment team was satisfied that the evidence reviewed in relation to criterion B3.1 demonstrated how the college met this criterion and its evidence requirements. The college has carefully considered the nature of its degree programme, leading to the current iteration of the programme over the past six years. The assessment team saw evidence that the college has progressed and improved the quality of the academic experience over the last few years, especially with the design and implementation of the new degree programme. Although the assessment team did not conduct an on-site visit, it found that the online learning environment was safe, accessible, and reliable. Policies governing teaching and learning were found to align effectively with the college's academic objectives, underpinning successful teaching, learning, and assessment practices. The teaching approaches were deemed appropriate for the subject and student body, with positive feedback from students regarding assessment, marking and feedback. The college has also implemented robust strategies for promoting academic integrity and managing appeals and complaints in an effective manner.

286. The evidence considered demonstrated to the team that the college has exercised its powers successfully over the period it has held DAPs, in order to design and deliver a high quality academic experience for its students.

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

287. The assessment team's view is that Norland College Limited meets criterion C1: the role of academic and professional staff because it meets sub-criterion C1.1.

288. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the evidence, which shows in summary that Norland College has appropriate numbers of staff who are trained to teach its students. Staff are well-qualified and have varied and good quality opportunities to support their professional development in this highly specialised area, both in terms of academic and professional practice. Early career staff have access to coaching and the provider holds an annual conference. Staff job descriptions are appropriate and recruitment practices transparent.

289. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Sub-criterion C1.1

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

Advice to the OfS

290. The assessment team was satisfied that the college meets sub-criterion C1.1. This is because there was evidence that, in the context of this small and specialist provider, there are appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students, and that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning and in the assessment of student work is appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the level(s) and subject(s) of the qualification being awarded.

291. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence. This shows that the college has met the evidence requirements for C1.1.

Reasoning

292. In evaluating whether staff have relevant learning, teaching and assessment practices and the extent to which these practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship, the assessment team first considered the college's Strategic Plan 2022-27, which states that 'Norland will work with staff to nurture and develop the professionalism, wellbeing and expertise of all staff, driving cohesive and progressive change, building leadership capability, diversity and ensuring professional respect.'

293. The college's Learning, Teaching and Research Enhancement Plan 2023-24 sets out the plans to achieve each strategic aim and key performance indicators. The section of this plan that covers the staff expertise strategic aim (as described in the above paragraph) appears to be underdeveloped in comparison to other sections of the plan, so it was difficult for the assessment team to draw a clear conclusion with regards to the college's strategic approach to ensuring that staff have relevant and well-informed learning, teaching and assessment practices.

294. However, the college's Learning and Teaching Policy states that 'teaching is informed by pedagogy' and that staff are expected to engage in 'independent research'. This evidence suggests that educational scholarship is built into the teaching and learning approach of the college.

295. It is not clear from the Staff Development Review Policy what the college's overall approach is to staff development, but the policy commits to supporting staff 'to undertake continuous professional development to ensure [their] skills and knowledge stay up to date and relevant with [their] chosen profession and role'. This, alongside the further evidence considered on staff development as set out below, indicated to the assessment team that the college recognises the importance of ensuring that staff have relevant and well-informed learning, teaching and assessment practices, and examples of courses that are mandated for staff are listed in the provider's submission.

296. The assessment team reviewed evidence of scholarship and reflective discussions at team meetings. The assessment team also reviewed evidence of how early career lecturers are supported. In addition, the assessment team noted evidence that there is a comprehensive programme of core training for all staff, which includes data protection, health and safety and diversity courses.

297. The 2023 TEF panel statement for the student outcomes 'feature of excellence 3' (research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement) noted that the small staff team engage in research and scholarship and this is supported by the Research Strategy of the college, and an example of an individual Research and Scholarly Activity Plan. Evidence submitted to the assessment team demonstrated that the staff evaluate their practice effectively, for example the Education team meetings have a recurring agenda item 'reflection in practice' and the action log details activities that have taken place, such as staff reflective 'peer triads' (a coaching approach in small groups). These consider pedagogic practice such as the learning atmosphere in classrooms. The assessment team saw the 'peer triad' presentations, and considered they demonstrated a rich and purposeful engagement in peer observation and learning that has produced useful outcomes for this small academic team working in partnership with each other to develop their practice. This is a good example of where the college makes effective use of its size and context in order to meet the DAPs criteria.

298. The assessment team considered the academic and professional expertise of staff through consideration of professional development opportunities at the college. Pedagogical development takes place in a number of contexts, including the annual conference of the college. In its DAPs application, the college states that it makes a significant financial investment in the professional development of this small academic team, including the funding of higher degrees such as masters' degrees and doctorates. In addition, there is

training in areas such as mental health awareness and the funding for staff to attend international conferences.

299. The assessment team was provided with a wide range of CVs of college staff, including for the college's senior leadership, managers and principal lecturers, all of which detailed the academic background and relevant professional expertise of the postholder – both in terms of experience gained in previous roles and the continuing professional development undertaken in their current role. The assessment team considered that this evidence shows the college is committed to recruiting well-qualified staff, and building on their expertise in ways which enable them to have the academic and professional expertise needed for the college's context. In summary, the team saw evidence of the academic and professional expertise at the college, combined with the learning and development opportunities offered, and considered that the college has the appropriate academic and professional expertise given its small and specialist nature.

300. The assessment team reviewed the extent to which staff actively engage with pedagogical development and academic research in the context of early childhood education and care.

301. The team considered the individual achievements in this area that are detailed in the senior leaders', managers', and principal lecturers' CVs seen by the assessment team. Teaching staff have a varied and interesting range of backgrounds, primarily academic and professional roles within the subject area of early years and education, but also training and experience in areas such as food, film and fashion – particularly for those teaching on the Norland professional diploma. Professional services staff also have significant experience both inside and outside the sector. The college invests time in staff training to ensure that this diverse experience is used to impact pedagogical development, and this approach is detailed in the Staff Development Review Policy. This policy sets out the essential training, developmental training and personal development requirements for staff and is likely to enable staff to engage in pedagogical and discipline-related career development.

302. Examples of the impact of this policy are seen in the professional development events such as the peer triads presentation seen by the assessment team, the development observation of learning and teaching, and in the evidence of external roles held by the college staff. In considering this evidence, the assessment team's view was that the college creates the conditions under which staff engage actively in their pedagogic development and development of their discipline knowledge.

303. Active staff engagement with current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline is evidenced in the Norland Research Strategy. The assessment team was satisfied that such knowledge and understanding is being used directly inform and enhance their teaching. This strategy also provided evidence of active engagement with research and advanced scholarship in the context of the specialist area of this college. The introduction to the strategy says, 'Norland is committed to research that is relevant and appropriate to the field of early childhood care and education and professional practice, to children and their families, to relevant key stakeholders, and the wider community.' The strategy goes on to set out the approach to research and related key performance indicators (KPIs) for the college in this area, which involve all staff having a research plan that is regularly reviewed.

304. Within the college's March 2024 report on staff external activities (academic and professional contributions), the assessment team found examples of staff actively engaging in pedagogical development and research relevant to their academic discipline, which is then used to inform higher education developments at the college.

305. Two members of staff recently undertook a Fellowship programme at the University of Massachusetts, which has directly contributed to the enrichment of both the undergraduate degree and the Alumni CPD (continuing professional development) programme, helping to ensure Norland's provision remains cutting-edge.

306. An example of how staff research and scholarship are fed directly into students' learning is the development of self-regulation modules in the new degree which incorporate the Principal's and one of the principal lecturer's expertise in emotion coaching, infant mental health and self-regulation.

307. In the opinion of the assessment team, this strategy and the commitment it contains is strong evidence of current research and advanced scholarship when viewed alongside a book proposal by a teaching member of staff and a Research and Scholarly Activity Plan. Evidence of this engagement in scholarship and discipline knowledge is manifested in the programme specification for the new ECEC degree, which reflects current topics in childcare such as safeguarding (addressed early in the programme) and children's identity (taught later in the programme). The assessment team concluded that current research and advanced scholarship directly informed and enhanced teaching in this way.

308. The assessment team considered the opportunities that staff have to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice. As well as the conference, the assessment team noted that the college funds training and development for staff, including supporting staff to study for higher degrees. In addition, the evidence of peer observation provided to the assessment team alongside the policy governing the observation of teaching and learning give the assessment team confidence that the college enables staff to engage in reflection and evaluation of their teaching, learning and assessment.

309. The college is also committed to developing a research environment and culture, including the provision of professional development opportunities and a system for gaining ethical clearance for projects and produces an in-house journal, the Norland Educare Journal. This journal is evidence that staff are able to enhance their scholarship through creating work that is published online and available to the wider academic community, without necessarily having to rely on formal academic journal publication. This is an important step, especially for early researchers and those who have taken a practice-based route into higher education teaching.

310. 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, for example, through becoming external examiners, validation panel members or external reviewers. The assessment team saw evidence in the list of Norland staff externality roles that, at the time of the assessment, six of the academic staff hold external examining roles in various other sector providers. The range of these roles is, in the opinion of the assessment team, likely to give those staff access to a wide variety of experiences. In addition, the assessment team saw evidence that staff are also engaged in

other sector activities, for example on periodic review panels at other providers. They are also members of sector committees and bodies. The team considered these experiences are likely to support curriculum development and assessment design at the college.

311. The assessment team considered how the college ensures that academic staff have the necessary expertise in providing feedback on assessment that is timely, constructive and developmental. The college's Assessment and Feedback Policy states that students should be provided with assessment feedback that is 'timely' and 'promotes learning, encourages critical reflection and facilitates development'. Together, the college's Marking Policy and Marking Guidance provide guidance to staff on when and how feedback should be given, how written feedback should be structured, and examples of good practice. Feedback from an external examiner regarding updates to the Marking Guidance is broadly positive, indicating that guidance is fit for purpose.

312. The college states that academic staff are supported to develop their expertise in providing effective assessment feedback through ongoing, internal professional development. For example, 'Reflecting on practice' is a standing agenda item at Education team meetings, which allows staff to share knowledge regarding developments in sector-wide academic practice, including assessment and feedback. Staff who are new to academia are supported to develop their assessment and feedback skills through the college's new Early Career Lecturer Programme, which offers peer mentoring and supervision, and the opportunity to shadow more experienced lecturers in order to 'gain insight into the diverse ways in which formative assessment can be used to ensure timely, constructive and developmental feedback'. Additionally, all marking and feedback by early career lecturers is second marked by more experienced academic staff to ensure consistency and accuracy.

313. In considering the effectiveness of the college's arrangements for ensuring staff have the necessary expertise to produce assessment feedback, the assessment team reviewed External Examiner Reports from academic years 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23. While all three reports relate to a course that is currently being taught-out, the external examiner's comments regarding the quality of feedback provided to students remain relevant, as they are indicative of wider staff expertise and are not course-specific. A range of comments in the reports suggest that staff have the necessary expertise to provide assessment feedback that is timely, constructive and developmental, such as:

- 'Norland tutors provide exceptionally detailed, supportive and challenging comments on student scripts, supported by an excellent system of colour coding which helps students to identify different kinds of comments'

- 'Summary feedback is very clearly linked to learning outcomes and provides clear explanation for mark given'

- In relation to student formative feedback which is available before summative deadlines 'This is good to see'.

314. Students' views on the timeliness and quality of assessment feedback they receive is discussed in more detail under DAPs criterion B3.1, but here the assessment team reviewed student response data relating to assessment and feedback, both for final year students as captured in the NSS 2023 and for non-final year students via the Norland Annual Student

Survey (NASS) 2023.[24] The data shows that students from both surveys were satisfied with the timeliness of feedback received, whereas students' views on the quality of assessment feedback they received was more varied. In response to the NSS 2024 question 'how often does feedback help you to improve your work?', 86.2 per cent of final year students gave a positive answer, while in response to the NASS 2023 question 'how useful is the feedback in helping you improve your work?', 74 per cent of non-final year students gave a positive answer. Despite the variation in data (and wording of questions) between surveys, the results show that students overall are satisfied with the quality of assessment feedback received, so therefore the assessment team formed the view that the college has in place effective arrangements for ensuring that their staff have the necessary expertise to provide feedback that is timely, constructive and developmental.

315. The assessment team saw a range of evidence that staff have the appropriate experience of curriculum development and assessment design in the context of this small and specialist provider. Because this provider has only one course, opportunities for curriculum development and design are limited, but related training for staff is well-managed and developmental, and the assessment team saw evidence of induction training as well as planning for early career development. This early career development planning document included a review and needs assessment across relevant topics, such as 'lecturing style/delivery', 'marking and assessment' and 'review of teaching and learning' – these are appropriate areas of professional development for an early career academic. In addition the provider submission sets out that staff have opportunities to engage in policy development and assessment innovation.

316. All staff at the college are required to engage in an annual review which is aimed at enabling staff to 'undertake continuous professional development to ensure your skills and knowledge stay up to date and relevant with your chosen profession and role'. The outcomes of this process result in staff accessing essential or developmental training as well as personal development opportunities. Staff knowledge and understanding of regulations, policies and procedures are also kept up to date by the Quality and Standards team at the college who run an annual update presentation. The assessment team saw one example of this presentation, which covered assessment policy, marking and the approach to extenuating circumstances.

317. It is the view of the assessment team that the college has strong engagement with the activities of providers of higher education in other organisations through involvement as external examiners and other types of engagement with sector bodies. The team is of the opinion that, given the size and speciality of this provider, their reach is extensive. At the time of the assessment, six of the eleven academic staff held external roles at other institutions and the assessment team also saw evidence of engagement with course reviews at other providers and other activities through sector bodies.

318. In the assessment team's view, the college also plays a significant role in influencing scholarship and research in its specialist area of provision and in the sphere of early years education more widely. The college's Research Strategy, which is aimed both at impacting the practice of the college and in disseminating the findings of their research in the sector,

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[24] See National Student Survey data: provider-level dashboard - Office for Students.

provides a framework for the academic staff at the college to participate in sector conferences and publications in a structured and appropriate way.

319. The assessment team concluded that Norland College Limited has made a rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach all students at this small and specialist provider. It describes itself as 'teaching intensive', and as such employs staff who have a range of academic and professional backgrounds. The college employs 13 staff who have an academic role, and a similar number of professional services staff. The college has in the region of 100 students per 'set' (year group). The assessment team saw a full range of CVs of the staff at the college. These were CVs for professional services staff, for example the programme manager, and for senior leaders, for example the college principal, as well as for principal lecturers.

320. The assessment team concluded that a combination of the previous experience of the staff and the thorough approach to personal and professional development (outlined above in paragraphs 298-302) means that the college is able to confidently know and understand the skills of their staff. In addition, the assessment team considered the range and number of academic and professional services staff in the context of this small and specialist provider. Considering this range of evidence, the assessment team concluded that the college makes a rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach its students and has the appropriate staff-student ratios.

321. In considering the description of recruitment practices, the assessment team considered that the college's approach to recruitment is likely to ensure that staff are recruited on the basis of their qualifications, experience and suitability for the role, as well as their fit within the Norland community. The assessment team scrutinised various person specifications for different job roles at the college, and found that these are appropriate for the college and their academic mission. The evidence provided about recruitment practices, such as shortlisting documentation and an interview feedback sheet, assured the assessment team that the college has appropriate staff recruitment practices.

Conclusions

322. The assessment team's view is based on the review of evidence, which shows that the college has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students. In addition the college has appropriately qualified staff who are well supported. The assessment team considered the evidence requirements for C1 over the preceding six years in which the college has held DAPs. During the assessment, a range of information about recruitment, staff support training and development, and the impact of this on teaching and scholarship at the college was presented. This evidence demonstrates that the college has operated its DAPs securely over the last three years, particularly in its approach to staffing and supporting staff expertise.

323. It is the view of the assessment team that Norland College Limited has the ability to ensure that the college is properly staffed and that the staff are able to engage in appropriate professional development. This conclusion was drawn from evidence presented such as staff CVs, scholarly outputs and evidence of a rigorous approach to the regular review of staff development.

Assessment of DAPs criterion D: Environment for supporting students

Criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement

Advice to the OfS

324. The assessment team's view is that the college meets criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement, because it meets the requirements for this criterion.

325. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the college has in place arrangements and resources that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential, and these are monitored and evaluated by the college.

326. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Sub-criterion D1.1

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

Advice to the OfS

327. The assessment team's view is that the college meets sub-criterion D1.1 because it has arrangements and resources in place which enable students to develop their academic personal and professional potential, and these are monitored and evaluated.

328. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the college has met the evidence requirements for D1.1.

Reasoning

329. The assessment team considered how 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. For this the assessment team analysed documentation relating to:

- The college's strategic plan and how it is operationalised

- Student support in line with wellbeing, widening participation, disability, neurodiversity and competency development

- Student evaluation and feedback mechanisms

- Benchmarking against recognised standards

- Resource evaluation and monitoring.

330. The college states in its Strategic Plan 2022-27 that it will 'provide the highest quality of educational provision, supporting a diverse range of students to become nurturing, knowledgeable, skilled and resilient early years practitioners'. The assessment team also noted that the aims for achieving the strategic vision are set out in the college's Quality, Standards and Registry Enhancement Plan 2023-24. For example, integration of the Early Childhood Studies Degree Network (ECSDN) Graduate Practitioner Competencies (GPCs) into the degree and work placements, as well as increasing applicants from underrepresented groups by five per cent.[25]

331. As stated on the college's website, the ECSDN GPCs are mapped onto the QAA's benchmark statement for early childhood studies. The college's Learning, Teaching and Research Enhancement Plan 2023-24 also actions the mapping of the GPCs within module specifications and module handbooks, thus enabling student achievement that aligns to the strategic aim of providing education to develop knowledgeable and skilled early years practitioners.

332. The college's Learning, Teaching and Research Enhancement Plan 2023-24 has actionable tasks, which ensures there is a student journey map in relation to student voice, student support and personal tutoring, and that this builds on data to refine mental health and wellbeing support. The team found that the enhancement plans list detailed and clear actions against these aims, together with progress updates and success measures. The plans are prepared by the senior leadership team and operationalised into annual objectives led by the head of each department and reported to the BoD via a strategic plan dashboard, which summarises progress throughout the year and can also be monitored.

333. The assessment team considered the approach the college takes to enable student development for a diverse body of students by looking at this in line with support around wellbeing, widening participation, disability, neurodiversity and competency development. The assessment team noted the creation of the senior personal tutor role who oversees regular monitoring of students' academic progress and welfare through a structured process of reporting. The assessment team reviewed the senior personal tutor role description, the Personal Tutoring Policy, the Personal Tutor and Tutee Guide and saw clear structure and guidance that sets out the approach to personal tutoring for students. This included clarification of roles and responsibilities on both sides – staff and students. The team considered this is likely to provide a valuable support mechanism for students.

334. The assessment team saw evidence of an operational approach to student support in the form of the Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Procedure, which details the process and types of adjustments available to students with disabilities and neurodivergent students. Such students can also be supported through a Personal Development Plan, which guides the student through identified learning objectives, the actions required to achieve the objectives, success criteria, and support available.

335. Wellbeing events, such as a wellbeing festival, and other support mechanisms, for example a buddy scheme and peer to peer support groups, are available to all students and the team saw these detailed in a student welcome email prior to enrolment.

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[25] See Graduate Practitioner Compencies | ECSDN.

336. The college has a statutory duty to ensure that people looking after children are suitable to fulfil the requirements of their roles.[26] As set out in the 'Fitness to Practise Policy and Procedure', 'students are required to undertake external placements and therefore Norland has a duty to both the student and to the public to ensure that any risk of harm is minimised'. In accordance with this policy, every new student completes an occupational health form as part of their enrolment, so that their fitness to practise can be assessed and relevant support put in place if required.

337. The assessment team observed that in the student submission (an audio recording of a group discussion), the students talked about high satisfaction rates and positive feedback for student support, thus confirming that they feel well-supported. This was also seen in the student comments on the college's indefinite Taught DAPs submission, where students again confirmed that they felt well-supported.

338. Students' views on the comprehensiveness of the college's arrangements to support them to develop and succeed in their studies are reflected in the college's data on student outcomes, as published on the OfS's student outcomes data dashboard.[27] The data shows that both continuation and completion rates for the college's students are considerably above benchmark, which supports the assessment team's view that students are well supported throughout their studies. The team also noted that the college's TEF 2023 panel statement cited a high level of support inside and outside of the teaching time, which further demonstrates the college's commitment to student support.

339. In considering the above, it is therefore the view of the assessment team that the college's approach to enabling student development for a diverse body of students is strategic and operational.

340. The assessment team considered how the college evaluates how it enables student development and achievement for its diverse body of students. As discussed in detail under criterion E1, the college has clear mechanisms for evaluating its own performance as it relates to the provision of higher education, and management and governance arrangements more broadly. The Academic Board has oversight of all policies and practices relating to the monitoring and review of academic provision, including programme action plans. The Programmes Committee, a subcommittee of the Academic Board, monitors actions plans, student feedback and student outcomes data (including analysis of the data as it pertains to student characteristics, such as gender and ethnicity). It reports back to the Academic Board on matters relating to the programme, including student development and achievement.

341. The assessment team noted that the college uses a variety of feedback mechanisms to ensure all students have the opportunity to provide feedback on their academic experience. Such mechanisms include:

- 'You said, we did', rolling feedback

- Module reviews

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[26] See Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework - GOV.UK.

[27] See Student outcomes data dashboard - Office for Students.

- Student jury - made up of students who represent minority groups at the college and who ensure that any proposed changes to the college's provision do not adversely impact these groups

- Annual student survey – NASS

- Staff-student liaison committee.

342. Student feedback is logged on a central spreadsheet, accessible to students via the college's SharePoint. Here students can view responses to their feedback and any actions. Students can also see the status of the actions, whether complete or still in progress.

343. The assessment team considered how the college utilises benchmarking to national standards to enable strategic and operational academic development for a diverse body of students. The assessment team saw evidence in the module reviews of how the module helps students meet the sector-recognised standards as set by the OfS. For example, the assessment team noted in the Level 4 module review that it sampled that a mandatory written discussion is required as to how the sector standards descriptor for a higher education qualification at Level 4 is met. Likewise, the assessment team saw in the annual monitoring reviews benchmarking of degree classifications and achievements to national standards.

344. The assessment team saw evidence that resources are evaluated and monitored by the BoD in terms of clarity of information or availability of finances, future planning and risk assessment. The assessment team saw in recorded board feedback that the board cited student development as being 'well supported' and being 'outstanding'. It's the assessment team's view that, having reviewed the college's draft budget and forecast for 2024-25 and 2025-26, and the minutes of discussions at an Academic Board meeting in November 2022, that the college has appropriately considered its resource budget, forecasts and spending relating to enabling student development, which is in line with this size of provision.

345. Considering the above, the team identified there is good practice in the college's operationalisation of the strategic plan, student support, student evaluation and feedback mechanisms, including its benchmarking against recognised standards and resource evaluation and monitoring. It is therefore the opinion of the assessment team 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.

346. The assessment team considered how students are advised about, and inducted into their study programmes in an effective way and account is taken of different students' choices and needs. For this the assessment team analysed documentation relating to:

- External course promotion

- Student induction activities

- Study choice flexibility.

347. The assessment team reviewed the college's website, noting that there is detailed and clear information about the course, the college and the application process, with the college

admissions team contact details visible and easy to locate.[28] The college promotes campus open days where prospective students can sign up to and attend online information sessions (for example, 'Norland Unwrapped: a day in the life of a Norland student'). The assessment team viewed one of the online information sessions available to prospective students, which was also situated on its website.[29] This session consisted of students from each academic year talking about life at the college, followed by audience questions answered directly by the students. The assessment team considered this an effective resource for prospective students and as a point of reference for current students as they progress through the first, second and final year of their degree.

348. In considering the approach the college takes to advising students about, and inducting them into, their study programmes, and whether account is taken of different students' choices and needs, the assessment team analysed induction activities and other support that the college offers to new students.

349. The assessment team reviewed the student buddy system noting that new students are linked with a trained student buddy. The assessment team also reviewed the welcome week programme, noting that this covered an appropriate variety of induction and settling in activities, which considered the diverse student body. For example, a fresher's fair consisting of varying activities to accommodate different students' needs and the communication of the different types of student support available to support their individual needs. To confirm if students felt well-advised and properly inducted, the assessment team reviewed the welcome week feedback which was submitted by student attendees. The assessment team found this to be positive overall.

350. In considering how different students' choices and needs are taken into account during their academic studies, the assessment team noted that while there is only one degree programme offered, with a limited number of optional modules available (as discussed under criterion B3), the college has an optionality in assessments paper. This paper explains how students can be given a choice of two or more assessment methods that allow them to demonstrate the module learning outcomes. It also explains how this can be implemented in the module through the college's major or minor modifications process. Students also have freedom to choose their work-based project or dissertation subject. The assessment team noted that the college emphasises the importance of this as a critical factor in the student's educational development as a nanny. This was confirmed to the assessment team upon viewing a 'Welcome Back' presentation to the year group in which students talked with pride about their area of study for their project.

351. In consideration of the college's external course promotion, student induction activities and enabling of study choice flexibility, the assessment team is of the view that students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way and account is taken of different students' choices and needs.

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[28] See Applying to Norland - Norland, Bath.

[29] See Norland | Watch our open events to discover more about Norland.

352. The assessment team considered how the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services is monitored, and the extent to which any resource needs arising are considered. For this the assessment team reviewed the following documentation:

- Annual monitoring report for student support 2022-23

- The NSS 2023 results[30] and subsequent action plans

- The student submission for the college's application for indefinite DAPs

- 2023 validation report for BA (Hons) ECEC.

353. The assessment team reviewed the 2022-23 annual monitoring report for student support, which is received for scrutiny by the Programmes Committee, and operationalised into the Student Support Action Plan for 2023-24. The assessment team saw that the annual monitoring report showed a detailed analysis of the students' use of the college's support services and discussed the data in detail, including identifying areas of strength and areas for development. It showed that academic and mental health support were the most requested areas where students sought support. Students also referred to the need for this type of support in the 2023 NSS free text feedback and it was noted by the assessment team that this feedback fed into the Student Support Action Plan as an area to be actioned. Further scrutiny of the action plan by the assessment team showed it was comprehensive, and improvement plans were consistent with student feedback received via the NSS. It also included actions, such as establishing a one stop shop for support, and staff training to further neurodiversity knowledge. The latter action was in direct response to the NSS free text feedback.

354. The assessment team saw many areas requiring improvement, as identified in the action plan, being resolved. For example, a waiting list for study support was identified and was resolved by increasing the number of counsellors for students. The associated costs for this were approved by the BoD, as seen by the assessment team in the document relating to the college's budget for 2023-24. The assessment team is therefore confident that support and counselling is monitored, and any resource needs arising are considered and implemented.

355. In consideration of the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services, the assessment team reviewed the student submission. In the submission the students talk about being well supported by their lecturers as well as support staff, with the mention of staff being easily accessible. The students describe an environment in which they are nurtured and feel a sense of belonging. This was also confirmed by the validation panel for the new BA (Hons) ECEC course, who commended the college on 'the depth of consideration for the individual student journey including the quality of the provision of student support services and the sense of belonging to the Norland family'.

356. The assessment team, upon review of the 2023 NSS results, noted that question 26 – 'How well communicated was information about your university/college's mental wellbeing support services?' – received a positive response from 88.5 per cent of the college's students who took part in the survey. This was 17.1 percentage points above sector benchmark, which

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[30] See National Student Survey data - Office for Students.

indicated to the assessment team that the college has an effective approach to informing students of mental health support available at the college.

357. As discussed in paragraphs 329-339, when assessing the effectiveness of the college's overall approach to supporting students and staff, the assessment team took into consideration a range of documentary evidence, including the annual monitoring report for student support, the NSS results and action plans, the student submission, and minutes of the validation panel. The assessment team considered that the feedback given by students and the validation panel on the sense of belonging created at the college were particularly noteworthy. The assessment team is of the view that the supportive and nurturing approach at the college is in part due to the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services.

358. The assessment team considered how the college's administrative support systems enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs. For this the assessment team analysed documentation relating to:

- module reviews, annual monitoring reports and reports to the Academic Board

- local tracking systems

- student record systems

- data protection policies

- qualification and study transcripts.

359. The college states that student satisfaction, continuation and achievement are effectively measured internally for all students so that they can be supported, and trends can be monitored. This, the college states, is done through module reviews and annual monitoring reports, as well as being set out in the annual report from the Head of Learning, Teaching and Research to the Academic Board. In consideration of this, the assessment team noted that performance and progression information is formally contained within the three module reviews available for BA (Hons) ECEC degree, and in the 2022-23 annual monitoring reviews for the BA (Hons) EYDL degree, which detail full achievement and performance data and analysis.

360. In addition, the assessment team reviewed the trackers that monitor student progression at the local level, including the administrative system of recording retakes and resubmissions across both degree programmes and an example of the Module Marks Moderation Form, which supports the monitoring of student progression. The assessment team considered these systems to be effective and fit for purpose.

361. Shortly before its initial DAPs assessment in 2018, the college invested in a new student records system (SRS), which recorded assessment grades, retention, progression and achievement data, and meetings with students with actions agreed. However, in its self-assessment the college set out that it found it was less effective for regulatory reporting purposes and therefore, in 2022, it changed to a new SRS, which provides the data for

effective monitoring of student progression and performance. The college considers this also provides good information for academic management needs.

362. The college believes these improvements are reflected in an increase in NSS scores from 2018 to 2023 for question 17, 'How well-organised is your course?' The 2023 data shows a positive response of 87 per cent to this question, which is 21 percentage points above national benchmark.[31] In the assessment team's view, this data may reflect, to some extent, the effect of investment in the new SRS.

363. The assessment team examined the Student Records and Visas Action Plan 2023-24 and found the areas identified as issues or areas of enhancement were appropriately highlighted, and demonstrated the college's ability to recognise and action potential critical factors affecting the functioning of the systems and to mitigate risks. For example, the plan includes actions to work with a third-party supplier to further strengthen the accuracy of data input and recording, such as inputting assessment grades.

364. In consideration of administrative support systems in terms of non-academic needs, the assessment team note that financial performance data is made available to the BoD in an appropriate and timely manner, allowing the board to carry out its duty of facilitating budget management. In addition, the college's Data Protection Policy states that it has in place technical and organisational measures to ensure the confidentiality, availability and integrity of personal data.[32] It also sets out clear lines of responsibility for information security, namely the Principal, the Head of Human Resources, Resources and Compliance, and the Vice Principal.

365. Therefore, after considering the documentary evidence reviewed and set out above, the assessment team is of the view that the college's administrative support systems enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs.

366. The assessment team considered how the college provides opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression, for example academic, employment and future career management skills. The assessment team considered this from the perspective of the arrangements and resources that the college has in place and the environment for supporting students. The assessment team therefore analysed documentation relating to:

- Accredited placements and professional skills development

- Academic progression in line with sector standards and student ability to track progression.

367. The BA (Hons) ECEC has embedded accredited placements, with the aim of fostering relevant skills and professional development. To support the specialist nature of its provision, the college has a commercial in-house employment agency with a staff team experienced in this specialist area of early childhood education and care. Their main function is to support

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[31] See National Student Survey data - Office for Students.

[32] Available at Policies & Reports — Norland, Bath.

the 'Newly Qualified Nanny' (NQN) placement year, which is part of the college's specialist professional diploma, and to secure graduates and alumni with employment.

368. The assessment team reviewed the programme specification for the BA (Hons) ECEC, noting that it evidences incremental development of professional skills in line with the type of placements set. The module handbooks and placement handbook for this course, as reviewed by the assessment team, explained how the students could develop academic and future career related skills through the placements. This professional and skills development is mapped and aligned to the graduate practitioner competences and fully explained in the placement handbook.

369. The college also delivers a professional diploma – the Norland Diploma – which, although is not credit bearing, runs alongside the degree and all students automatically enrol on the diploma when they enrol onto the degree. For this reason, the assessment team considered relevant elements of the diploma as integral when examining how the college provides opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression. The assessment team noted that the diploma teaches employability skills, which support students' professional development during and post-graduation.

370. Upon successful completion of the BA (Hons) ECEC, students attain NQN status, and then undertake their first full-time probationary nanny position employed by a family. The aim of this placement year is to enable the NQN to gain confidence and experience as a full-time nanny while being supported by the college and their employer. The placement year is the final module of the Norland Diploma and, upon successful completion, the NQN is able to refer to themselves as a 'Norland Nanny' or a 'Norlander', and can access employment opportunities via the college's in-house employment agency.[33]

371. Alumni (i.e. Norlanders) are also given access to a CPD programme run by the college, which provides them with opportunities to further develop their skills. Examples of training from the 2023-24 programme include paediatric first aid, a maternity practitioner course, and a newborn refresher session. This supports the assessment team's view that the college provides opportunities for all students to develop their skills – including those who have graduated.

372. To evaluate how the college provides opportunities for its current students to develop employment and future career management skills, the assessment team reviewed the college's programme of industry guest speakers, noting that this covered a variety of sessions from managing a chain of nurseries to theories of play. The assessment team reviewed the timetable for the employment weeks undertaken by students in 2023, which includes practical training sessions and prepares final year students on the BA (Hons) ECEC degree for their NQN placement year.

373. The assessment team also reviewed the TEF 2023 outcome in which the college achieved a Gold rating, noting that the TEF panel considered the college's 'Approaches to student success' (feature SO1 under the student outcomes aspect) to be of outstanding quality. The outcome also stated that the in-house employment agency ensures students are employed, noting that 100 per cent of students fulfil their career intentions. The TEF panel statement

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[33] See Employ a Newly Qualified Nanny (NQN) - Norland, Bath.

also includes the panel's view that preparation for employment is fully integrated into the degree, for example through placements.

374. Based on the evidence reviewed, it is the view of the assessment team that the college has effective arrangements in place that enable its students to develop the specialist professional skills required for their progression into successful employment.

375. In consideration of how the college provides opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic progression, the assessment team reviewed the programme specifications for BA (Hons) EYDL and BA (Hons) ECEC, both of which clearly articulate to students how learning outcomes are met, and the scaffolding approach the college uses to build learning across FHEQ Levels 4, 5 and 6. The assessment team then reviewed materials at module level, including a sample Level 4 module handbook and a document prepared by the college which sets out the intended learning outcomes at each level for the module relating to professionalism. The team found that these documents were consistent with the programme specifications and clearly evidenced how students progress academically each year.

376. The assessment team examined a screenshot of the college's student dashboard, which highlights the digital resources available for students to track their academic performance. The system, powered by Ellucian, allows students to access their marks and view detailed information about their performance in each module, facilitating a clear and accessible means of tracking progress.

377. The college also provides opportunities for students to develop skills that would enable them to progress onto further study or research. As part of the college's push to develop a research culture, as evidenced in its research conference programme 2023 it is starting to embed research within its teaching and learning environment in order to stretch students' academic potential and enable them to successfully pursue a career in academia.

378. To test the effectiveness of the academic, personal and professional progression opportunities that the college provides for all students, the assessment team reviewed student satisfaction scores in the NSS 2023 to question three – 'how often is the course intellectually stimulating?' and question nine 'how well has your course developed your knowledge and skills that you think you will need for your future?' Satisfaction scores were 91 and 95 per cent respectively, thus confirming to the assessment team that high scores in these areas, which relate to skills development, demonstrate that meaningful opportunities to develop and progression have been made available to the students.

379. In consideration of the above, in particular noting the good practice in the accredited placements and professional skills development, as well as academic progression in line with sector standards and student ability to track progression, the assessment team is of the view that the college provides opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression.

380. The assessment team considered how 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 the use of digital and virtual environments. The

college offers on-campus and online learning resources and has a VLE, although teaching delivery is face to face. The assessment team therefore analysed documentation relating to:

- The use of specialist facilities

- Policies and procedures relating to health and safety and fitness to practice

- Placements

- Library resources

- The VLE

- The student dashboard

- Learning resource budgets.

381. Detail on how the college supports the use of specialist facilities is set out under Criterion B3. The assessment team also considered the student experience data from the TEF dashboard and the TEF panel statement.[34] The data showed that the college is within its benchmark for the 'learning resources' questions, with the TEF panel statement rating 'learning resources' as a very high quality feature, noting that the college offers 'specialist learning spaces such as a mock-up nursery to replicate real life situations and access to the surrounding natural environment to maximise learning'.

382. The assessment team also reviewed the Health and Safety Annual Report 2022-23, which discusses a range of content including allergies, risk assessments, accident reporting, training, and the announcement of a three-year contract with an external consultancy company that specialises in corporate safety, to allow the college to get specialist advice on safety matters. As outlined in the schedule of business for the quality and standards department and the fitness to practice policy and procedure, students who are likely to have regular contact with children (including those living or working on the premises) must pass suitable safety checks, such as a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

383. The learning that takes place while a student is out on accredited placement was considered in the context of a specialist facility. As discussed under Criterion A1, the assessment team has reviewed placement health and safety compliance documentation and requirements, as well as due diligence documentation. The team is satisfied that the college has robust processes in place to provide a safe environment for students while on placement, whether they be in a family setting or an early years setting, such as schools, nurseries, hospitals and newborn placements. The assessment team saw evidence of this through placement visit forms, the placement risk assessment forms, placement handbooks for both students and placement providers, and the placement policy. The team also considered a tripartite legal agreement that the student, the placement provider and the education provider sign, which confirms each party adheres to and acknowledges the academic, health and safety and compliance requirements of the placement. It's the assessment team's view that this allows students to develop skills to make safe and effective use of specialist facilities.

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[34] See TEF data dashboard - Office for Students.

384. The college states that the library is physically open seven days a week, during term time, to enable students to access study space and learning resources outside of teaching hours. These hours are communicated regularly to students via email, displayed on the Library Virtual Noticeboard and digital noticeboards, as well as in printed form in the library, lecture rooms and common areas. Changes to opening times and provision, such as arrangements outside term time, are communicated to staff and students via email. The assessment team reviewed IT guidance for students on how to upload files of differing formats to SharePoint and a printing guide, which supports students in accessing and utilising virtual resources. The team also reviewed the Library Induction Presentation, which comprehensively details how to utilise the library as a virtual and digital resource, hence maximising effective student use.

385. In addition, the college states that all students have access to the online learning platform Moodle, also generically referred to as the VLE. It's through the VLE that students can access lecture materials and recordings as well as submit assignments and receive feedback. The assessment team viewed documentation which evidenced that students receive Moodle training during welcome week. The assessment team had access to the college's VLE and found it to be appropriately utilised as a virtual learning environment for the students. The assessment team also had sight of screen shots of the student dashboard, which is a central point of access to areas such as the VLE, timetable, student support and the library. The assessment team considered this dashboard as integral to helping the students make effective use of their learning resources in an organised and optimised way. The assessment team reviewed a video recording of an IT systems demonstration, which was a workshop induction for students, introducing them to learning resource systems such as the SharePoint, Office 365, email, the student dashboard and the VLE.

386. The assessment team observed that students rated learning resources highly in the 2023 NSS. In theme six, 'learning resources', the college scored 91.6 per cent, which was 5.6 percentage points higher than national benchmarking. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the library and the VLE are appropriately and effectively utilised in enabling the environment for student development and achievement.

387. In consideration of the above evidence regarding specialist facilities, relevant policies and procedures, placements, the library, the VLE and the student dashboard, it is the assessment team's opinion that the college provides opportunities for all students to develop skills to make effective use of the learning resources provided.

388. The assessment team considered how the college's approach is guided by a commitment to equity. For this the assessment team reviewed and analysed the:

- Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy

- Widening Participation Policy

- Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) Policy

- Bursary Policy

- Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Procedure

- 2023-24 Action Plan for Student Engagement and Widening Participation

- Minutes from the March and November 2023 Anti-Discrimination Innovation team meetings

- Personal Tutoring and Tutee Guidance.

389. The assessment team reviewed these documents and found them to be detailed, comprehensive in their coverage, and designed to ensure fair treatment and opportunities for all students, staff and external partners irrespective of any of their protected characteristics. For example, the Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy describes how the college is 'committed to providing equal access to its education and training services and will make every reasonable effort to provide an environment in which everyone, regardless of their background, can study and work to the best of their ability'. Furthermore, the Widening Participation Policy is committed to ensuring that learning and career opportunities are available to all by helping prospective and current students overcome barriers that would ordinarily prevent them from studying at the college.

390. The assessment team saw similar examples of commitment to equity in the college's APL Policy, which recognises that learning may take place in a wide variety of settings, including conventional taught courses, online learning, learning outside courses, professional and employment experience, personal and leisure experience, and self-directed study. The APL policy states that it facilitates the formal recognition of learning gained elsewhere, and where appropriate, provides for credit to be attached to that learning. This therefore demonstrated to the assessment team that there is fair access to opportunities, which enables all students to develop and achieve.

391. The assessment team noted that the college's Bursary Policy exists to support widening participation and improve students' access and participation. The policy states that new students can apply for a Norland Emily Ward Bursary. There are 21 awards available per year for varying fixed amounts. Again, this demonstrated to the assessment team fair access to opportunities, which enables all students to develop and achieve.

392. The assessment team reviewed the Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Procedure, which sets out the process of how a student can secure reasonable adjustments as well as the responsibilities of student services in supporting the student. Examples of the types of reasonable adjustments are also given, such as those relating to, but not limited to, autism spectrum disorder, medical conditions, mental health conditions, specific learning difficulties. It's the assessments team view that this policy is fair and enables an equitable environment in which students can develop and achieve, irrespective of their protected characteristics.

393. The assessment team considered how widening participation is implemented in practice. The assessment team noted that the Widening Participation Policy objectives link through to the Widening Participation Strategy, which includes encouraging applications from the following groups:

- Lower socio-economic groups

- Male applicants

- Students of ethnicities not typically represented within the college

- Mature applicants

- Applicants declaring disabilities

- Those taking a vocational or work-based route into higher education

- Carers

- Care leavers

- Members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

394. The policy sets out the college's intent to raise aspirations to help students overcome barriers to higher education through bursaries and participation in the Student Jury, whose membership is required to reflect the diversity of the student body, such as those listed above, and who are consulted to consider the impact of changes on student minority groups.

395. The Widening Participation Policy and Widening Participation Strategy in turn link through to action plans, for example the 2023-24 Action Plan for Student Engagement and Widening Participation, which aims to monitor widening participation trends and to promote the Widening Participation Strategy across the campus under the ownership of the college's Anti-Discrimination Innovation Team (ADIT). It's the assessment team's view that the college has sound processes to implement widening participation in practice.

396. In considering the effectiveness of the college's commitment to equity, the assessment team noted that the Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy is implemented through a variety of mechanisms, such as personal tutoring, which aim to provide a stable and structured environment in which all students can thrive and achieve. The function and implementation of the personal tutoring system is detailed in the Personal Tutoring and Tutee Guidance, available to both students and staff.

397. The assessment team saw further evidence of equity in practice in the minutes of ADIT meetings that took place in March and November 2023, where discussions around inclusive practice and widening participation actions were reviewed. The assessment team saw that equality, diversity and inclusion data on staff and students is comprehensively collected in an annual report, which in turn is presented to the BoD, as a baseline for future targets and action plans, while the Academic Board is responsible for the relevancy, accuracy and appropriateness of these policies. The assessment team is therefore of the view that commitment to equity is firmly established within the culture of the college.

398. In consideration of the above evidence, the assessment team is of the opinion that the college's approach is guided by a commitment to equity. The assessment team is satisfied that this is evidenced in the detailed and comprehensive policies that ensure the college's commitment to equity, and in the various operational documents which demonstrate how the college has implemented these policies to a robust level, which enables an environment that supports all students.

Conclusions

399. The assessment team concluded that Norland College Limited has appropriate arrangements and resources that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential, and these are monitored and evaluated by the college.

400. The college's strategic approach to enabling student development and achievement is clearly articulated, operationalised and evaluated in its strategic plan, its student support processes, student feedback mechanisms, benchmarking and resource evaluation monitoring. The college has demonstrated that its facilities, resources, and support activities maximise students' chances of developing their potential to achieve the qualification they are seeking. Given the evidence considered, the team considers the college has securely exercised its DAPs in this area since its powers were awarded in 2019.

401. The college's approach is guided by a commitment to equity, which is established and embedded through comprehensive and detailed policies covering the broad spectrum of equity, diversity and inclusion. These policies are operationalised to a robust level. This enables an environment that supports all students irrespective of background, circumstances or protected characteristics.

402. It is therefore the assessment team's view that the college meets criterion D1.

Assessment of DAPs criterion E: Evaluation of performance

Criterion E1: Evaluation of performance

Advice to the OfS

403. The assessment team's view is that Norland College Limited meets criterion E1: Evaluation of performance because it meets the requirements for this criterion.

404. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the evidence, which shows in summary that the college is an organisation that, since it was granted DAPs, takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths.

405. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence for this criterion alongside other relevant information.

Sub-criterion E1.1

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

Reasoning

406. To determine whether the college takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths, the assessment team reviewed a range of evidence, including the following:

- the college's DAPs self-assessment document

- governance effectiveness reviews – internal and external

- Annual Programme Monitoring Policy and reports

- module reviews

- minutes from Board of Directors, Academic Board and Programmes Committee meetings

- action plans.

407. Responsibility for the evaluation of performance at the college is set out within its governing structures. At the most senior level, the Board of Directors is responsible for setting the mission and strategic vision of the college, its objectives, business plans and key performance indicators. In accordance with its terms of reference, the board must 'ensure processes are in place to monitor and evaluate the performance and effectiveness of Norland against the plans and approved key performance indicators, which should be, where possible

and appropriate, benchmarked against other comparable institutions'. The board must also establish processes to monitor and evaluate its own performance and effectiveness.

408. As the academic authority, the Academic Board holds overall responsibility for the monitoring and review of the college's higher education provision; this includes approving policies and processes relating to the monitoring, review and enhancement of academic standards and student outcomes. As part of its annual schedule of business, the Academic Board considers and responds to reports it receives relating to academic standards and the quality of the student experience, such as External Examiner Reports, external reviews, annual programme monitoring reports, and the results of student surveys. The Academic Board also maintains oversight of programme action plans.

409. The Academic Board delegates some of its functions to the Programmes Committee, including the monitoring of quality and standards on the college's higher education programmes; this includes the monitoring of student outcomes data, student feedback, and monitoring the progress of programme enhancement or action plans. The Programmes Committee makes recommendations to the Academic Board with regards to enhancing the quality of the programmes, and it must act on any recommendations it receives from the Academic Board with regards to these enhancements or improvements.

410. To evaluate whether critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the college's higher education provision, and whether it takes action in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review, the assessment team reviewed evidence of the college's quality assurance process, including module and programme monitoring, and student feedback. Additionally, the assessment team reviewed internal and external assessments of how the college operates, including internal board effectiveness reviews from 2019-20 and 2020-21 and an independent governance effectiveness review from 2022. The assessment team also considered evidence of action planning through cross-referencing of a range of boards and meeting minutes, where the college addressed weaknesses in performance and aimed to develop strengths.

411. The Annual Programme Monitoring Policy, which is approved by the Academic Board, states that 'Norland is a self-reflective institution which seeks to monitor and evaluate all aspects of its provision in order to enhance the quality of learning opportunities and the overall student experience'. The policy describes how monitoring at both module and programme level feed into annual reviews of higher education provision, which in turn inform action plans that are then implemented to improve the academic experience.

412. In considering how these arrangements operate in practice, the assessment team examined the Annual Monitoring Report for Combined Programmes 2022-23, which included analysis of student data (such as continuation and academic breaches) and a summary of feedback from students, staff and external examiners. The final section of the report is the Chair of the Programmes Committee's assessment of the key areas of strength and areas for improvement on the programme, taking into consideration the data and feedback collected. The assessment team found evidence to support the view that the committee provides a self-

reflective and critical assessment of the college's performance as it relates to the operation of its higher education provision. Examples include:

- 'Students and External Examiners have drawn attention to a need to review marking and feedback processes as well as understanding of "levelness" across the degree programme.'

- 'Student feedback indicates that "student voice" is an area which would benefit from attention. In particular, student representation of the whole cohort, closing the feedback loop via student representatives and opportunities for students to engage in mid-module feedback are key focuses for 2023-24.'

- 'Student feedback highlights a need to ensure that there is consistent academic and pastoral support amongst the lecturing team. Whilst the inconsistency can be related to changes in staffing and absence during 2022-23, we will look at ways to enhance personal tutoring in 2023-24'.

413. The assessment team then examined the 2023-24 Action Plan for Combined Programmes, which was approved by the Academic Board following consideration of the 2022-23 Annual Monitoring Report, and is implemented by the Programmes Committee. The team found that the matters raised by staff, students and external examiners in the monitoring report were appropriately addressed in the action plan; example actions include 'Review marking, feedback and moderation processes including student participation in the process' and 'Create module slides to demonstrate how feedback has been heard and will be acted on following mid-module evaluations, where appropriate'.

414. As set out in its schedule of business, the Programmes Committee monitors the progress of these action plans. The assessment team saw evidence of this monitoring in the minutes of Programmes Committee meetings, such as the meeting held on 9 June 2023, which noted that 'student feedback is being reviewed to look at the marking process and how it has been conducted this year'. These documents provide insight into how the college embeds continuous improvement within its processes, and supports the assessment team's view that the college critically reviews its own performance, in particular in relation to standards and student outcomes.

415. The college also provided evidence on its approach to undertaking critical self-assessment at an institutional level, namely through the 2019-20 and 2020-21 Internal Board Effectiveness Reviews and the commissioning of the Independent Governance Effectiveness Review undertaken in 2022. In the internal reviews, members of the Board of Directors were surveyed for their views on the effectiveness of the board, and in the external review, an external consulting company assessed the adequacy and effectiveness of the college's governance arrangements in line with the CUC HE Code of Governance and the OfS's conditions of registration relating to management and governance (E1 and E2).[35]

416. The results of the governance reviews were generally positive, with the external review identifying areas of good practice, such as 'The Board's iterative involvement in the

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[35] See CUC, Publications - Committee of University Chairs.

development of the college's strategy and its key performance indicators (KPIs), with clear subsequent reporting of progress against the strategy and KPIs'.

417. Where areas for improvement were identified in the reviews, such as improving board members' understanding of the work of the Academic Board and updating governing documents to reflect the membership categories of board members (i.e. independent members, ex-officio members and co-opted members), the assessment team saw evidence these were included in the External Governance Review Action Plan. Minutes from Board meetings in March, June and December 2023 demonstrated to the team that delivery of the action plan was monitored on an ongoing basis, via a standing agenda item entitled 'Action Status Report'.

418. The assessment team was satisfied that critical self-assessment is integral to the college's operations as they relate to higher education provision and overall governance arrangements, and that appropriate action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review.

419. The assessment team reviewed the college's mechanisms for assigning and discharging actions related to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision. As described in paragraphs 407-409, the Programmes Committee is responsible for programme and module monitoring, and the implementation of programme action plans. The Academic Board holds overall responsibility for the monitoring and review of higher education provision, and maintains oversight of action plans.

420. To test the effectiveness of these arrangements, the assessment team examined a sample of documentary evidence relating to how actions are assigned and discharged in the scrutiny and monitoring of the college's academic provision, as follows:

- 2023-24 action plans for placements and student support

- minutes from Academic Board meetings held in June and November 2023 and March 2024

- minutes from Programmes Committee meetings held in June, September and November 2023.

421. The action plans closely monitor actions arising from a range of sources, such as student survey responses, External Examiner Reports, feedback from placement families, and from staff self-reflection. The action plans require details of where the action arose, the action point itself, the progress to date, the member of staff responsible, and the action's target completion date. The meeting minutes provided further evidence of monitoring the discharging of actions, through the requirement for staff to provide updates for the standing agenda item entitled 'Action Status Report'. Based on its sample, the assessment team concluded that the college has clear and effective mechanisms in place for the assigning and monitoring of actions relating to its higher education provision.

422. It is the assessment team's view that the college effectively integrates expertise into programme design, approval, delivery and review, using a robust and collaborative approach. Programme design, approval, deliver and review arrangements are discussed in detail under

criteria B2 and B3, including the inclusion of ideas and expertise from within and outside the college.

423. Internal expertise is leveraged through regular reviews and consultations, with documents such as the 2022-23 Annual Monitoring Report for Combined Programmes and the resulting 2023-24 Action Plan for Combined Programmes, reflecting continuous refinement of teaching practices and assessment approaches and current academic thinking.

424. A recent example of the college including the ideas and expertise of staff and students in programme delivery is the development of the college's approach to the use of AI in assessment and in the development of marking guidance. The college reports that it adopted an iterative approach, consulting with staff and students throughout the process. As a result of these discussions, the college created the Assessment Innovation Team, comprising academic staff and students, to explore several areas related to assessment, including optionality in assessment methods and the use of AI. This demonstrated to the assessment team that the college effectively integrates the expertise of internal stakeholders into its policymaking and practices with regards to higher education provision.

425. The college's academic staff bring a wealth of expertise, which is further enhanced through strategic initiatives such as staff training, CPD, and engagement in academic activities such as publishing and researching that form part of the college's aims and strategic plans. A large number of the college's staff also work as external examiners in other settings, which ensures that the college is part of a larger network and this will further enhance expertise. As can be seen from the assessment team's review of criterion C, the college has internal expertise in place and is developing a research strategy to support staff undertaking research and publishing. The college effectively understands its areas of strength as a specialist provider and utilises this well.

426. Examples of external engagement include the New Programme Approval Report 2019, which showcases collaboration with external stakeholders to ensure programme relevance and quality. As mentioned under criterion A1, the assessment team also found from the minutes of the Academic Board held on 18 November 2022 that feedback from external stakeholders, for example placement providers (families), is considered and taken on board regarding continuous improvement and therefore further enhancement and improvement of procedures.

427. Evidence from the BA External Examiner Reports 2022-23, 2021-22, 2020-21 demonstrates how external examiner feedback has positively influenced programme development. As detailed in the 'External examining' section of criterion B3, the assessment team expresses confidence in the college's use of external examiners and its comprehensive review of delivery and programme design policies.

428. As discussed throughout this report, due to its specialist provision, it can be challenging for the college to assess how it is performing in comparison with other similar organisations, for the purposes of identifying good practice. Additionally, due to its small size alongside its specialist provision, there are limited opportunities for the college to broaden its pool of external experts. Should the college expand its operations in future, it may wish to explore the potential recruitment of an additional external examiner or liaise in some way with an expert with a higher education background and significant experience in research and publishing within this specialist field. This forward-thinking approach would further demonstrate the

college's commitment to maintaining and enhancing academic excellence. However, this is just a suggestion for improvement, and the team considers the requirements for this criterion are fully met.

Conclusions

429. The assessment team's conclusion, based on a comprehensive review of evidence demonstrating that over the past six years the college has effectively exercised its DAPs, is that the evidence shows the college takes proactive steps to evaluate its performance, address identified areas for improvement, and build on its existing strengths.

430. The assessment team concluded that the college takes effective action to assess its own performance through robust processes, such as governance effectiveness reviews and annual programme reviews.

431. The assessment team also concluded that the college has clear mechanisms for assigning and discharging actions in relation to its review of its academic provision. Evidence shows it takes actions to resolve issues identified by internal and external stakeholders or through monitoring of student outcome data.

432. The assessment team found evidence that the college seeks to include ideas and expertise from within and outside the college to inform programme design, approval, delivery and review. For instance, staff and students contributed effectively to the development of the college's approach to the use of AI in assessments.

433. In summary, the assessment team concluded that the college meets criterion E1 because it takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths.

Assessment of overarching criterion for the authorisation 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

434. The assessment team's view is that Norland College Limited meets the overarching criterion for Full DAPs because it meets all the underpinning criteria, and the requirements of the overarching criterion.

435. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the evidence, which shows in summary that the college develops and encourages a self-critical and cohesive academic community. It has clear commitment to the assurance of standards, supported by effective and robust quality systems.

436. This view is based on consideration of the evidence requirements for the DAPs criteria alongside any other relevant information.

Reasoning

437. The assessment team found that **self-criticality** is demonstrated through the college's full engagement with self-evaluation. It has a systematic approach to collecting and responding to student feedback alongside a meaningful approach to student engagement. Governance systems are robust and effective and maintain proper control over academic matters.

438. The assessment team found the college to constitute a highly **cohesive academic community** through its shared mission to deliver a single degree programme aimed at a highly specialist area. The expectations for being part of this community are high, but clearly expressed, and from an academic point of view students are well supported to achieve their aims. Staff are well supported and given time and support to achieve their goals in research and scholarship alongside teaching.

439. The college has a **proven committed to the assurance of standards**, as demonstrated through its rigorous approach to course review, its responsive approach to external expertise and internal quality processes. While the degree programme and student experience are unique, it is clear that there is benchmarking against sector standards.

440. The assessment team considers the **effectiveness of the college's quality systems** is apparent through the provision and effective implementation of policies that govern the teaching and assessment, award of credit and quality review of all aspects of the academic experience at the college.

Conclusions

441. The assessment team therefore concluded that Norland College Limited meets the overarching criterion as the evidence demonstrates that the college has a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards as supported by effective quality systems. Further that the college has demonstrated its ability to exercise its DAPs securely, since those powers were awarded.

Annex A: Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
AI	Artificial Intelligence
APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning
BoD	Board of Directors
CPD	continuing professional development
CUC	Committee of University Chairs
DAPs	degree awarding powers
ECEC	[BA (Hons) in] Early Childhood Education and Care
EYDL	[BA (Hons) in] Early Years Development and Learning
FHEQ	Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications
FTE	full-time equivalent
HERA	Higher Education and Research Act 2017
IHE	Independent Higher Education
KPIs	key performance indicators
NASS	Norland Annual Student Survey
NQN	Newly Qualified Nanny
NSS	National Student Survey
OfS	Office for Students
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
QAC	Quality Assessment Committee
QSC	Quality and Standards Committee
QSR	Quality, Standards and Registry
SSLC	Staff Student Liaison Committee
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
VLE	virtual learning environment