



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of The Academy of Contemporary Music Ltd

October 2017

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at The Academy of Contemporary Music Ltd. The review took place from 24 to 26 October 2017 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Gregory Clark
- Ms Colette Coleman
- Dr Nick Papé
- Ms Nina Di Cara (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provision and to make judgements as to whether or not academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)¹ setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
 - the setting and maintenance of academic standards
 - the quality of student learning opportunities
 - the information provided about higher education provision
 - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#)² and explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).³ For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.

² QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.

³ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education.

Key findings

Judgements

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities is **commended**.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice**.

- The use of extensive engagement and links with industry, which informs effective programme development and enhances graduate employability (Expectation B1 and Enhancement).
- The audition process, reinforced by appropriate staff development and bespoke technology, which is communicated clearly to prospective students, and which supports the Institution's core value of inclusiveness and accessibility (Expectation B2).
- The holistic approach to learning and teaching that engages students with current and emerging knowledge and practice, enabling students to develop into independent, autonomous and industry-ready graduates (Expectation B3 and Enhancement).
- The wide-ranging initiatives and support activities that raise student aspirations and enable achievement of academic, personal, and professional potential (Expectation B4 and Enhancement).
- The integration of the Institution's approach to enhancement with its vision, mission and strategy, and the embedded, institution-wide use of that approach, in the academic, personal and professional development of its students (Enhancement).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations**.

By September 2018:

- ensure that the Complaints and Grievances Procedure is accessible and transparent to all stakeholders, and is appropriate for the consideration of Admission Appeals (Expectation B9).
- ensure that the Academic Appeals Procedure is transparent to all stakeholders, and has appropriate independent ratification of decisions (Expectation B9).

About the provider

The Academy of Contemporary Music Ltd (ACM) Limited is a higher education institution (HEI) that specialises in delivering programmes that prepare learners for careers in music, the music business, and the wider creative industries. Its educational mission is to provide an immersive student experience, with a curriculum which is connected to the industry in real-time, based on a 'learning by doing' ethos. Its core aim is to build confidence and self-awareness, providing students with the skills necessary to recognise and take opportunities. Ultimately its mission is to enable students to fulfil their potential and enjoy a sustainable career within the creative arts industry.

ACM was established in 1996, initially to provide access to further education courses in musical performance and production funded through arrangements with a local college. In 1999 it began delivering degree-level music industry programmes in music production, performance and business through a validation agreement with Middlesex University. The curriculum now covers core aspects of the music industry as identified through five main pathways (or routes) of study. Programmes are available at further education (FE) Levels 2 and 3, higher education (HE) at BA (Hons) degree level, and most recently a BA (Hons) degree with foundation year entry, with strong progression rates from further education to higher education.

Since the last review there have been some key changes at ACM. Overall the Higher Education student population has increased from 768 in 2014-15 to 1167 in 2016-17, a 34 per cent increase over a three-year period. Of the 1167 students that commenced in 2016-17, 253 (22 per cent) were enrolled in the Foundation Year. The Guildford campus accommodates both FE and HE programmes, with 90 per cent of the student body being full-time HE students on degree programmes, and 10 per cent being full-time further education students on Level 2 and 3 Diploma courses.

The BA (Hons) Music Industry Practice programme that was validated in 2015 now includes a Technical Services pathway. This ensures that the programme provides learning opportunities for students across all the major areas of the music industry.

ACM has identified several potential challenges: the funding restrictions placed on Alternative Providers, which may impact on the delivery of two year accelerated degrees; the reduction in DSA funding for students with assessed needs; monitoring of student retention and progression as numbers continue to grow; the continued use of contextual data to support and inform monitoring, review and enhancement activity; and the implementation of Tier 4 sponsorship.

Two areas of recommendation were identified at ACM's last review:

- make evidence of second marking clearer on the assessment forms
- extend the peer observation scheme in the Business School to the other schools.

ACM has transitioned to a new virtual learning environment, Canvas (VLE), which allows all student work to be graded and released through the VLE. There is also a thorough guidance document related on the use of Canvas to mark student work.

In relation to the roll out of the peer observation scheme to other schools, ACM are seen to be placing value in this activity through having scheduled observations that are taking place, and creating a peer observation template which encourages comments on good practice and specific feedback on various elements of the session. The self-evaluation-document states

that good practice of note is then fed back to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee for discussion.

The written student submission notes that both recommendations were in areas which are not influenced by students, but that the student body was made aware of the changes being made in response to the feedback, particularly with regard to second marking. In summary, the provider has made deliberate steps to address the recommendations provided at the last review and there are no concerns in this area.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations

Expectation (A1): In order to secure threshold academic standards, degree-awarding bodies:

a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* are met by:

- **positioning their qualifications at the appropriate level of the relevant framework for higher education qualifications**
- **ensuring that programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptor in the relevant framework for higher education qualifications**
- **naming qualifications in accordance with the titling conventions specified in the frameworks for higher education qualifications**
- **awarding qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes**

b) consider and take account of QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics

c) where they award UK credit, assign credit values and design programmes that align with the specifications of the relevant national credit framework

d) consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

Quality Code, Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards

Findings

1.1 All degree programmes delivered by ACM are validated under collaborative arrangements with Middlesex University, the awarding body, and all awards are made by the University. ACM and the University have a strong collaborative relationship developed over 20 years.

1.2 Threshold academic standards are secured through University Regulations. ACM's provision is able to meet the requirements of the FHEQ and is aligned to the Music Subject Benchmark Statement since it is assured through the validation and review processes of the University. ACM prepares documentation for course approval events with the support of the Middlesex Link Tutor.

1.3 The University Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook (LQEH) states that "the University is responsible for the academic standards of all qualifications granted in its name. In developing collaborative provision the University ensures that the student experience at collaborative partners is consistent with that provided within the University,

academic standards are equivalent to those of comparable qualifications within the University, and that collaborations reflect the ethos, mission and values of the University. The standard expected of a qualification in a partner institution is the same as that for a corresponding or comparable qualification in the University and should conform to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and subject benchmarks recognised in the UK."

1.4 ACM works closely with the University in the setting and maintaining of academic standards and has processes in place to consider its provision in relation to the FHEQ, national credit frameworks and Subject Benchmark Statements. The review team determined that these would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.5 The team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining partnership agreements, approval and validation documentation, external examiners' reports, and programme specifications. The documentation put forward for the approval of new programmes indicated attention to the alignment of the programmes with the FHEQ, credit frameworks and Subject Benchmark Statements. Evidence from meetings with staff, and minutes from the Programme Working Group at which programme development was discussed, confirms that ACM uses these frameworks as important reference points for the design of its programmes. The Validation Report for Music Industry Practice provides further evidence of engagement with external frameworks in the review and approval of programmes.

1.6 ACM follows the extensive guidance in Section 3 of the University LQHE in developing programme specifications for each award along with module narratives, that enable students to achieve the learning goals and outcomes appropriate the respective qualification level. Programme specifications clearly state the levels of the FHEQ and associated credits, and relevant Subject Benchmark Statement for Music.

1.7 ACM primarily follows the University provision for securing threshold standards. Since its last QAA RSCD review ACM has augmented its own internal quality systems and processes to support external regulatory requirements. ACM has expanded its teams of professional services staff to ensure that the wider student experience, industry links and opportunities and academic quality and standards are maintained and enhanced through centralised structures that effectively support internal and external regulatory requirements and collaborative opportunities. ACM has reviewed and updated its policies and procedures and the team were advised that these will ultimately make up the Quality Handbook.

1.8 In line with the University Programme Approval process ACM submitted an Academic Provision Approvals Committee (APAC) proposal form. Prior to the revalidation event, a 'dry run' was held with Senior Staff of Middlesex University. The Programme Working Group met on a regular basis prior to APAC submission.

1.9 Evidence from external examiner reports provides confirmation that the standards set for the award are appropriate for the qualification and that the standards of student performance is equivalent to other UK institutions.

1.10 While Middlesex University as the awarding body has ultimate responsibility through their own regulatory frameworks for ensuring that the relevant external reference points are adhered to, there is significant evidence that ACM effectively manages its own responsibilities for doing this within its partnership agreement, in particular through its own internal processes, including effective oversight and support, for new course developments. This is confirmed through a variety of mechanisms including the Music Industry Practice revalidation panel held by the University and the conclusions from external examiners'

reports. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A1 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.

Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards

Findings

1.11 ACM operates within the academic framework of the University: the collaborative arrangements are set out within the Partnership Agreement. The Memorandum of Co-operation requires ACM to adhere to the University regulations laid out in the Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook (LQHE).

1.12 ACM has delegated responsibilities to undertake assessment activities that contribute to the award of academic credit and qualifications.

1.13 ACM makes available definitive information concerning academic regulations for undergraduate awards. This information is available through the Programme Handbooks, which contain programme specifications. Programme specifications detail the credit allocation and assessment strategy for each award and these are available through the VLE. ACM also has a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy, which sets out ACM's policy in regard to assessment and associated procedures. It also references relevant policy documents which are available on the VLE and external reference points.

1.14 ACM implemented an enhanced governance structure in 2016-17 to ensure continued effective monitoring of academic quality and standards and arrangements in response to changes in the external regulatory environment, and the growth in its provision.

1.15 Arrangements for credit recognition and transfer are set out in the University LQHE. ACM has an approved Accreditation of Prior Learning and Credit Transfer policy that is aligned with the University regulations. Where an applicant provides evidence of certificated learning to the ACM Admissions team, an assessment of the certificated or experiential learning against the learning outcomes of the programme will be made by the Programme Manager and moderated by the Head of Education. All APL applications are sent to the University Chair of the Academic Programme Quality Committee (APQC) for final approval in line with the University regulations and guidance on the LQHE. The Chair of APQC (Deputy Dean Faculty of Arts & Creative Industries) serves as Chair of the Finalist Examination Board at ACM; credit is only formally conferred once it has been granted by Chair of the APQC. The Head of Education informs Admissions of the final decision of the Chair, which they communicate in writing to the applicant. APQC sends samples of APL forms received in the academic year to the external examiner.

1.16 ACM's arrangements are subject to regular scrutiny by the awarding bodies through external examiners and the operation of exam boards. These ensure that all the requirements of the programme specifications are met in order to achieve the relevant awards. A senior academic member from Middlesex University chairs the Finalist Exam Board which is responsible for the award of credit and qualifications for taught degrees.

1.17 In line with the partnership agreement with the University, ACM has in place appropriate mechanisms and processes to ensure this Expectation is met.

1.18 The team reviewed the documentation available to staff and students concerning the regulatory framework governing the award of academic credit and qualifications and met with staff and students. A range of evidence including the student handbook programme specifications and programme handbooks, annual monitoring reports, Exam board minutes and external examiner reports were examined. The review team also explored the process of programme approval and review which ACM, with the University, has in place to ensure compliance with regulations.

1.19 ACM's arrangements for securing academic standards and implementing its awarding body requirements are set out in 'ACM Institutional Governance. The ACM Executive Council is responsible for strategic oversight and monitoring and evaluation of the maintenance of academic standards and quality enhancement. This is facilitated through Academic Board and the associated academic governance structures. Academic Board has responsibility for the academic work of ACM and oversight of the assurance of academic standards and quality of ACM's education provision. The team were advised that the Academic Board reports to the Executive Council and that the Director of Innovation and Strategy has membership of both, providing a direct link between the bodies, though this was not clear from the terms of reference. The review team recommends that ACM Institutional Governance be updated to accurately reflect membership.

1.20 The processes for approval and review of programmes is set out in the Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook (LQHE) for Middlesex University. This document indicates that the design of the programme, the use of credit, and the assessment processes used to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes are tested in relation to the awarding body's regulatory framework. The revalidation of programmes in 2015 illustrates ACMs engagement with the requirement of the awarding body to change modules and assessment requirements. Staff demonstrate understanding of the process of approval, revalidation of programmes and of programme amendment confirming that there appear to be clear lines of accountability and clarity within ACM with respect to ACM and partner responsibilities.

1.21 The standard programme review processes into which external examiners' reports feed provide a means of verifying that the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements for each programme of study are appropriately set and maintained. The examining process as evidenced through the examination board minutes and external examiner reports confirm the appropriate implementation of regulations to determine the award of qualifications. Oversight by the degree-awarding body is also ensured through chairing of examination boards. The review team ascertained from teaching staff and students that they are familiar with the documentation specifying academic frameworks and regulations, including the assignment of academic credit and the intended learning outcomes.

1.22 The review team note from the documentary evidence supported by responses in meetings that appropriate measures are in place to ensure transparent and comprehensive frameworks and regulations for the award of academic credit and qualifications. Through the approval and revalidation process, consideration is given to the design of the programme and through standard review processes ACM has oversight of the standards in force. External examiners' reports contribute to this oversight. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (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.

Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards

Findings

1.23 The responsibility for record keeping is shared between ACM and the awarding body, Middlesex University. ACM is proactive in maintaining a definitive (provider) record of each programme in the form of a programme specification. Specifications are included for four HE Certificates, BMus in Professional Performance and four BAs. ACM has processes for record checking through the committee structure. Committees have student and industry representation and there are clear lines for recording and reporting to relevant committees. Programme specifications are included in the relevant Programme Handbook. These are made available with the Student Handbook to students through the Canvas Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and MyACM. These state the programme structure and programme and module learning outcomes are updated documents which are submitted to the University annually and provide an overview of teaching and assessment methodology. The programme specifications are prepared for validation and subsequent review through periodic review and annual monitoring processes aligned with University regulations. The University course approval process indicates that a draft programme specification is prepared at the start of the approval process. The programme handbooks are detailed, covering course content, external content and processes both at ACM and at the awarding body.

1.24 The processes for keeping records for each programme enables the Expectation A2.2 to be met.

1.25 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing systems and documents (Quality Data Records System (QDRS), Records of Assessment Boards, Final Exam Board (FEB) panels, Student Progression & Achievement Panel) and met with staff involved in registry, admissions and administration. The team tested the Expectation by reviewing the terms of reference and minutes of the committees, the responsibilities of ACM and the awarding body, the VLE provision and programme handbooks that students receive from ACM. The team met with senior staff, academic staff, professional support staff and students.

1.26 ACM ensures that it meets the regulations of its awarding body and that records from the programmes specifications are definitive throughout all information provided to students, both on the VLE and within handbooks. In addition, students and members from the Industry Advisory Groups are able to contribute to the provision to ensure that the programme of study is fit for purpose. Students were able to explain to the team where they can find the information for their programmes within both the handbooks and VLE. ACM has a long-standing relationship with the University; clear and robust processes and procedures evidenced were confirmed in the meetings that the team held with senior and academic staff, in particular with the Academic Registrar, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager, and Head of Quality and Student Experience.

1.27 Overall, ACM meets its responsibilities and demonstrates clear academic governance under this Expectation through the review of their committees and input from

key stakeholders. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that 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.

Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards

Findings

1.28 Middlesex University is responsible for setting standards and outcomes for academic awards at ACM of Contemporary Music (ACM). All validated programmes are approved by the University, however, ACM has considerable involvement in the design and content of programmes, due to its heavy involvement with the contemporary music industry. ACM states it adheres to the University's requirements for programme approval. The University sets the academic standards for the programmes and level of qualification. Programme documentation reflects these requirements and University course approval panels confirm that courses operate at, or above, threshold standards. This process is the result of careful scrutiny of ACM and University policies and procedures.

1.29 The processes and procedures for ensuring academic standards in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.30 The team considered documentation including programme outlines; institutional policies for ACM and its awarding body; committee structures and terms of reference. The team cross referenced this information in meetings with senior managers and teaching staff, and a link colleague from the University.

1.31 ACM's Head of Education and Head of Teaching & Learning communicate with the University's Centre for Partnerships at executive level. At programme level there is a binary approach, with contacts at delivery level between ACM and the academic department at the University and between ACM's Registry & Data Services (QRDS) and the University Academic Partnerships. The relationship is shown to be strong and responsive. Within ACM, ultimate responsibility for approval rests with the Executive Council, which has devolved responsibility for academic matters to the Academic Board and reports to the Board for its approval. University staff attending the review confirmed that its process of validation aims to be empathic to the needs of ACM rather than insisting that ACM mirrors the University's approach, recognising the leading nature of ACM's relationship with the music industry.

1.32 ACM's committee structure not only ensures the curriculum is kept up to date but in light of programme approval, is clear, responsive and iterative, taking into account external examiner feedback. ACM adheres to the University's policies and procedures, and there is evidence of a strong academic partnership in operation. The development of course material seems balanced with the needs of industry and at appropriate academic standards in which FHEQ benchmarks are applied.

1.33 ACM meets the expectation. The oversight of the awarding body and ACM's clear committee structure ensures that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:

- **the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment**
- **both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.**

Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards

Findings

1.34 ACM's awards are validated by the University and the respective responsibilities of the two collaborative partners are articulated in a Responsibility Checklist. ACM's policy framework for assessment is articulated in its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy, as informed by the relevant sections of the Regulations of the University including Section M, Code of Assessment Practice Minimum Requirements, in effect the University's assessment principles. The latter take precedence unless an exception has been granted by the University, for example, the permission for ACM to use grading scales different from those used at the University.

1.35 The policy framework is overseen and kept under review by Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC), on behalf of Academic Board. ACM procedures relevant to assessment, in common with all ACM procedures, as well as being subject to annual update, are also reviewed on a two-year cycle.

1.36 In accord with the LQEH, programme specifications are accompanied by module narratives (which describe the level, characteristics and context of the learning expected and include detailed assessment criteria) and are approved at programme validation. Programmes, modules and their assessment arrangements are subject to annual monitoring, culminating in consideration of assessment arrangements, in the context of progression and student achievement data, at Academic Board itself and, through the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), at the University.

1.37 ACM's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy explains the purpose of these measures initial and ongoing quality assurance arrangements as ensuring that assessment is reliable and consistent; that all assessments are aligned to the generic level descriptors; that all awards will be delivered in accordance with the University's Regulations; and that assessments support the learning process by being authentic, aligned with the intended learning outcomes and related to the learning topic. ACM underpins that Policy by ensuring the wide and accessible information and support on assessment is available to staff through such mechanisms as guidance and briefings on such aspects as assessment design, including reasonable adjustments, moderation and e-submission. ACM also ensures wide dissemination of assessment information to students including through programme handbooks.

1.38 For progression and award, ACM operates two Assessment Board tiers: Student Progression and Achievement Board, chaired by the ACM Academic Registrar, and Finalist Examination Board, chaired by a senior staff member from the University. Again, these arrangements are aligned with the cited Sections of the University's Regulations. Through this structure all module grade outcomes and award outcomes are subject to internal and external verification. External examiners at both Assessment Board tiers comment on the effectiveness and efficiency of assessment procedures.

1.39 The design of ACM's policy framework and supporting procedures for assuring academic standards and for the assessment of learning outcomes enables the Expectation to be met.

1.40 The team explored the effectiveness of ACM's arrangements for assuring academic standards and for the assessment of learning outcomes by scrutinising, in addition to the policy and procedure documents already identified, a wide range of assessment-related documentation including assignment briefs, student and programme handbooks, programme validations, LTAC minutes, Academic Board minutes, Student Progression and Achievement Board minutes and supporting papers, Finalist Examination Board minutes and supporting papers and by discussion of assessment-related issues with a range of staff and students.

1.41 All staff and students whom the team met demonstrated clear awareness of the ACM's assessment arrangements. Students, in particular, evidenced that they understood the different purposes of formative and summative assessment and that assessment was their opportunity to show that they had achieved module and programme learning outcomes. The team established that ACM, in collaboration with the University, consistently and systematically calibrated student achievement against both UK threshold standards and the University's academic standards. Assessment was appropriately overseen by ACM's deliberative committee system and assessment decisions were made at both tiers by properly delegated and effectively operated examination boards.

1.42 In summary, the team found clear evidence that ACM operates a robust system for ensuring that academic standards are met when credit and qualifications are awarded through the achievement of module and programme learning outcomes. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which 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.

Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards

Findings

1.43 As ACM's awards are validated by the University, the respective responsibilities of the two collaborative partners with respect to the monitoring and review of the achievement of academic standards and their maintenance are articulated in a Responsibility Checklist.

1.44 ACM programme monitoring is annual, and its primary function is to satisfy the requirements of the University's LQEH, Section 7 Annual Monitoring and Enhancement, which explicitly embeds and references FHEQ levels, Subject Benchmark Statements and takes account of the England, Wales and Northern Ireland Credit Consortia. The University requires ACM to complete an AMR for each programme, which is then submitted to the University. The AMR is authored in accord with a University template by the Institution Link Tutor (ILT) with support available from University guidance and University Link Tutor.

1.45 Additionally, in the context of its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy, ACM sets out its own internal approach to the production of the AMR, under the direction of the Head of Education and Programme Leaders. Data and analysis on a range of academic standards-related matters are inputted into this process, including student progression and achievement, assessment board minutes, and external examiner reports and responses. The policy framework for this area is overseen and kept under review by Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC), on behalf of Academic Board.

1.46 University and ACM procedures relevant to monitoring and review are together designed: to verify and ensure the maintenance of standards for taught provision; to confirm the effectiveness of programmes in achieving stated aims and intended learning objectives; and to identify issues associated with achieving programme standards. In common with all ACM procedures, these ACM procedures, as well as being subject to annual update, are also reviewed on a two-year cycle.

1.47 ACM programme review is on a six-yearly cycle and its primary function is to satisfy the requirements of the University's LQEH Section 3 Programme Validation, Review and Modifications, as applicable to validated programmes and which explicitly embeds and references FHEQ levels, Subject Benchmark Statements and takes account of the England, Wales and Northern Ireland Credit Consortia. As with the production of the AMR, academic standards-related inputs of data and analysis are an important part of this process, and include programme specifications.

1.48 ACM's policy framework and supporting procedures for the monitoring and review of the achievement and maintenance of academic standards enables the Expectation to be met.

1.49 The team explored the effectiveness of ACM's arrangements for programme monitoring and review by scrutinising, in addition to the policy and procedure documents already identified, a range of related documentation including the 2015-16 AMR; programme evaluation questionnaires and feedback on them; academic deliberative committee minutes; direct reports to academic deliberative committees and by discussion of assessment-related

issues with a range of staff and students. As explained in more detail in Expectation B8 below, there were no recent periodic programme reviews or ACM's own mid-point internal reviews for the team to consider.

1.50 The team established that ACM's arrangements for annual programme monitoring, in collaboration with the University, allowed ongoing review of the academic currency of its programmes and, informed by qualitative and quantitative data, allowed review of student achievement against both UK threshold standards and the University's academic standards. The team also established that ACM had in place similarly effective and thorough arrangements for periodic review, including review of programme specifications, although those arrangements had yet to be applied in practice.

1.51 In summary, the review team found robust processes in place for the monitoring and review of programmes which explicitly addressed whether academic standards were being achieved and maintained. The team, therefore, concludes that the Expectation is met, and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the degree-awarding body are appropriately set and maintained.**

Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards

Findings

1.52 Externality in the management of threshold academic standards is met through the use of external examiners and the involvement of external academics in the course development and approval processes. University guidelines define the role, criteria for appointment and processes for external assessors in the programme approval/review process and the associated guidelines for external examiners.

1.53 ACM adopts the University's regulations for independent, external expertise in the development and review of programmes validated by the University. External expertise is used to ensure that appropriate academic standards are set and maintained for new and existing programmes. Validation and Review panel membership include both external academic and industry panel members as 'External Assessors'. ACM has an opportunity to put forward nominations for validation panels to the University through the APAC process. The University provides external advice to ACM during course development and operation through the appointment of link tutors and formally appoint external assessors. As part of validation and review, external assessors are asked to comment on the extent to which standards set are appropriate with reference to the FHEQ and similar awards at other institutions, and validation panels consist of University staff that are independent of the validation process.

1.54 ACM adopts the University's external examiner system outlined in Section 4 of the University LQHE. ACM uses external examiners to provide independent, external advice on academic standards.

1.55 ACM engages with industry through the Industry Advisory Group, which was created as part of the new Governance Structure. This group meets annually and is used to consult and gather feedback on programme design and the development of learning outcomes during programme reviews.

1.56 The approach taken by ACM to ensure appropriate externality would enable this Expectation to be met.

1.57 The team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining documentary evidence and through discussion with staff and students. Evidence was provided of external examiners' reports which are presented on a standard template determined by the University and require external examiners to comment on the appropriateness of standards.

1.58 External examiners are nominated by ACM and appointed by the University and provide an independent perspective on student performance and the conduct of assessment processes through attendance at examination boards and in their annual report. It was noted by the review team that external examiners do not routinely attend examination Boards and are required to complete an absence form which is sent to the University.

1.59 The team found evidence that ACM formally considers the external examiners' comments in its annual monitoring report. External examiner reports are received and considered at Board of Studies which are attended by students. Through the process of annual monitoring, the programme teams reflect on the external input. Actions arising from external examiners are integrated into the Annual Monitoring Reporting and review. This ensures that there are appropriate levels of accountability and actions in response to external examiner recommendations. The external examiners' reports confirm that academic standards are being met at appropriate qualification levels.

1.60 ACM uses Middlesex University's processes for new course development, and these processes require the input of external academic advisers. The review team saw evidence that external academic and professional expertise had been obtained for the recently validated Music programmes. ACM has recently implemented an Industry Advisory Group and makes effective use of this to review its provision.

1.61 The review team found these processes to work effectively in practice. ACM, together with its awarding body, use external expertise in course development and approval processes and in the maintenance of academic standards. ACM has a close and supportive relationship with its awarding body who provides external advice to ACM during course development and delivery through the Middlesex Link Tutors.

1.62 From documentary evidence, supported by responses in meetings, the team determines that ACM takes account of external input in setting and maintaining academic standards. This is evident with respect to programme design, approval and review and in the input of external examiners at programme level. ACM makes appropriate use of this input in relation to the standards of the programmes. The review team therefore concludes that ACMs processes and procedures meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations: Summary of findings

1.63 There are no recommendations, affirmations, or areas of good practice identified in relation to the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations.

1.64 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.

Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval

Findings

2.1 ACM has developed two new programmes in 2014-15: a two-year accelerated BA (Hons) Music Industry Practice; and a three-year BA (Hons) Music Industry Practice with Level 0 foundation year (the latter replacing the CertHE programme). ACM has a long-established relationship with the University, with programmes validated in 2015 and due for renewal in August 2021.

2.2 Strategic oversight of the programme approval process rests with Executive Council, which has overall responsibility for the development of the academic work of ACM, led by the Director of Strategy and Innovation.

2.3 In tandem with this managerial process, ACM's Academic Board manages the process of programme approval and development through the subcommittees that include the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC), the Curriculum Review Committee (CRC), the Student Engagement and Experience Committee (SEEC), and the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (ASQC), to undertake development and monitoring of existing or future programmes. The committees review all curriculum, including feedback from students, staff and third parties as well as external reference points.

2.4 The described process is thorough and would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.5 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing the partnership agreement, the University regulations, policies, records, committee structures and terms of reference, meeting minutes and met with staff, particularly Head of Education and Education Strategist and registry. The team cross-referenced this information in meetings with senior managers, professional services staff and their colleague from the University.

2.6 ACM can draw on an excellent range of support when designing a new programme. The support of the awarding body has been considerable throughout. ACM can also draw on the expertise and guidance provided by Head of Creative Industry Development as well as substantial links with the music industry. Prior to the formation of the Industry Advisory Group (IAG) the views of sessional teaching staff, who have extensive current industry experience, were considered in preparation for the BA (Hons) Music Industry Practice degree validation.

2.7 The association with Metropolis Studios, use of the Electric Theatre, and participation of external musicians offers students enriched and enhanced learning opportunities. This was evidenced in meetings with students and staff. This ensures a scrupulous observance of professional level demands and criteria. In addition, ACM has a newly formed IAG that offers advice and industry expertise which contributes to the programme development process. It must also be noted that ACM draws on the professional expertise of its teaching staff, most of whom are practitioners of considerable standing and who have a highly current view of the industry. In the process of programme revision,

ACM can draw on an exceptional range of industry advice and insight, adding another pathway in response to industry demand. The use of extensive engagement and links with industry that informs effective programme development and enhances graduate employability is **good practice** (see also Enhancement.)

2.8 The review team found that ACM has a strong relationship with the University and an exceptional access to industry advice and participation in its design and development of programmes. The team conclude that the Expectation is met, and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B2): Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.

Quality Code, Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education

Findings

2.9 ACM is responsible for the application and interview process for entry onto its higher education courses. Applicants to higher education programmes are required to apply through UCAS where their applications are then managed and supported by the ACM Admissions Team, overseen by the Admissions Manager. If the prospective student is eligible for the course they are invited to an interview/audition in the first instance which is assessed by teaching staff, with Pathway Leaders required to make a final decision on whether to uphold or overturn a decision made at audition. Admissions processes are reviewed annually by the Admissions Team, and are guided by the Admissions Policy, Manual and Guidance, Reasonable Adjustments Procedure, and Equality and Diversity Policy, which allow for students to apply for reasonable adjustments and Accreditation of Prior Learning.

2.10 The design of the processes for the recruitment, selection and admission of students would allow this Expectation to be met. The audition process is reinforced by appropriate staff development and bespoke technology, is communicated clearly to prospective students, and supports the institution's core value of inclusiveness and accessibility is **good practice**.

2.11 The team tested this Expectation by reviewing all relevant policies and procedures, reading the self-evaluation document, viewing admissions data, and interviewing staff and students.

2.12 ACM makes use of a broad range of materials to recruit prospective students and share information about its courses, including a prospectus, videos, recruitment events, Student Ambassadors and a comprehensive website. Once accepted the Access All Areas initiative gives successful applicants the opportunity to access ACM's resources before committing to their studies.

2.13 Information about admissions, as well as the Admissions Policy is available online to new students and provided in good time for applicants before audition which ensures they are prepared for their audition, and their day is well structured. In addition, staff from the Admissions Team are available to answer any questions students might have around the auditions process in order to ensure students feel fully prepared. The admissions process allows for students to declare additional needs at an appropriate time, and they are then fully supported by the Education Guidance Team and Student Services, who liaise with Pathway Leaders to ensure that any additional needs or reasonable adjustments are in place, and are appropriate. During auditions iPad software is used to guide staff on the minimum requirements for courses, guided by UK standards, and to provide them with information about the applicant, such as their Personal Statement. All auditions are recorded for transparency using ACM's bespoke student information management software, and there is a thorough moderation process in place whereby Pathway Leaders oversee decisions for unsuccessful applicants as well as a random sample of successful applicants, though no decisions have yet been overturned in practice which is believed to be due to the thorough staff training provided. For all applicants there is feedback and advice available which is

given verbally after audition, and often students are redirected to a more appropriate programme. By introducing the Level 0 to the Music Industry Practice degree, access to the higher education courses has been made more accessible to students from a variety of educational backgrounds, and there is also a coherent process for consideration of APEL.

2.14 The small percentage of applicants who are unsuccessful are notified at audition, where they receive feedback and advice, and they later also receive a letter. However, students are not formally notified of their right to appeal the audition decision in this letter. Any appeals would be directed through the Complaints and Grievances Procedure, though this does not make explicit mention of the management of audition appeals; this is discussed in Expectation B9.

2.15 The annual review of the Admissions procedures is seen to identify relevant and actionable issues which staff have recognised over the past year and demonstrates a close understanding of any issues experienced by the student body. This review recently led to the conception of the Admissions Manual which intends to provide consistency in the management of the admissions process. This one of many ways in which ACM has sought to ensure that the audition process remains robust and transparent for all students and ensures that admission to ACM is fair and inclusive.

2.16 The team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B3): Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.17 ACM aims to create a diverse and inclusive learning environment that provides a range of learning opportunities to enable its students to develop their personal, academic and professional skills and abilities. This is aligned with strategic objectives, and is underpinned by the Learning Teaching and Assessment Policy and Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy. The Student Charter seeks to affirm a joint commitment to engagement with learning and teaching. Academic Board is responsible for the approval and review of the Learning Teaching and Assessment policy and is responsible for all matters relating to the academic work of ACM, including learning, teaching, assessment, scholarship and research, and to develop and communicate ACM's vision in this regard. Academic Board is underpinned by Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC), Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) and Student Experience and Engagement Committee (SEEC).

2.18 ACM's strategically led approach to learning and teaching indicates that this Expectation would be met.

2.19 The holistic approach to learning and teaching that engages students with current and emerging knowledge and practice, enabling them to develop into independent, autonomous and industry-ready graduates, is **good practice** for this Expectation, and also for Enhancement.

2.20 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the ACM's approach to learning and teaching by considering documents, including strategy and policy, annual monitoring report, Head of Education Reports to LTAC and Academic Board, Committee minutes, programme handbooks and programme specifications, staff development documentation and VLE demonstration. Discussions with staff and students assisted the team in understanding ACM's provision of learning opportunities, and how teaching practices impact students' learning experiences.

2.21 A key feature of ACM programmes is to engage students with current and emerging knowledge and practices within the industry. This is achieved through a range of Industry links and through teaching staff who are active in industry who bring real world experience into the learning environment. Modules are designed to facilitate project-based learning which provides students with flexibility to pursue their interests. Students complete a range of individual, and team based tasks and projects and have a choice of two elective modules to broaden studies or refine specialised area of interest.

2.22 All new students are required to attend induction sessions and are provided with a comprehensive induction pack. Progressing students attend a re-induction session 'Academic Transition Events'. Students confirmed that induction sessions are useful and that the Course chapters provided for each module provide a good understanding and what to expect and helped to prepare. Course chapters are provided to students via the VLE along with schemes of work for each module which include a list of recommended resources to support and amplify the chapters created for students.

2.23 ACM implemented a new VLE Canvas in 2016-17; this serves as a hub for students' studies and provides access to all teaching, learning and assessment materials. Students confirmed that the VLE is widely used, is accessible and that all course information is available which helps to support their studies.

2.24 Students confirmed that they are well supported through the 'tutorial credit system': they are allocated four tutorial credits per term and are able to request additional credits where required provided they have at least 75 per cent attendance. Students can also receive further guidance and support on assessment tasks through individual or group tutorials that can be booked throughout their studies.

2.25 Students are able to book tutorials, equipment and practice/recording facilities, access their personal timetables, download course materials, monitor their attendance statistics, search the knowledgebase and contact staff to ask for help and support.

2.26 All staff recruitment and selection is supported through the Human Resources team. ACM have recently introduced new contracts for academic staff to reward and recognise professional and academic experience through enhanced staff development opportunities. ACM teaching staff have current industry knowledge which ensures students are exposed to current industry knowledge and practice in line with ACM's strategic objectives. Students confirmed that the staff are excellent in their fields, having worked as professionals in industry.

2.27 Opportunities for CPD include regular staff training activities (INSET days) and mandatory online training modules on Prevent Duty and Safeguarding. Regular training events are incorporated into the annual calendar; these contain seminars and presentations from tutors on learning and teaching methods, assessment and marking; sharing good practice and strategic and operational information. New staff are provided with an induction

2.28 The review team were advised of the range of initiatives ACM is taking to enhance staff development. These include an Employee Development and Review (EDR) procedure, HEA Recognition and the introduction of an online PG Cert HE. The EDR commenced in 2016-17 with senior staff and is being progressively implemented across departments; it includes a personal development plan which will be used to identify development needs to meet objectives and KPIs. In 2017 ACM became a member of HEA. An HEA fellowship/membership workshop was delivered by an HEA consultant in July 2017 to 22 members of teaching staff at ACM, and staff are in the process of applying for fellowship. ACM are working towards the launch of an online PG Cert HE in January 2018.

2.29 Peer observation is used to monitor and enhance quality and standards within the teaching and learning environment, and to offer developmental feedback through pedagogic discussion. All academic staff are involved in peer observations including sessional staff. Staff are provided with training to help them make the most of peer observations. New staff are scheduled for peer observations in their first period of teaching by their department line manager and subsequently by a member of the senior management team. Outcomes from the peer observation process have identified areas of teaching and learning which are discussed at INSET days. The peer observation process is complemented by learning walks undertaken by senior staff members which are used to identify areas of good practice and areas for further development and support.

2.30 ACM uses its Board of Studies to facilitate monitoring and review of learning and teaching and provides opportunities for staff and student reps to discuss matters, agree actions and matters for referral. Board of Studies uses a variety of information to facilitate the effective monitoring of learning and teaching including external examiner reports, Annual Monitoring reports, Pathway Leader reports, Student Representatives reports and survey data.

2.31 ACM has a strategic approach to learning and teaching which supports a positive student learning experience through the use of industry practitioners, effective systems for monitoring and review of teaching and learning, and student feedback. ACM has continued to enhance its learning, teaching and assessment practices through supportive initiatives that have strengthened and aligned practice across all programmes. There is good practice in this area offering students opportunity for professional practice and engagement with industry. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is met, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B4): Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.32 ACM supports student development and achievement in a variety of ways and has a range of provisions in place that assure the effective monitoring and evaluation of arrangements and resources that support students to develop their personal, academic and professional skills and abilities. ACMs strategic objectives are supported by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment policy which articulates arrangements for effectively enabling student development and achievement.

2.33 Students have access to a broad range of learning spaces to support their learning and ACM makes significant investment in resources to support learning. The Head of Learning and Teaching monitors and evaluates resources in liaison with the Admissions team, Facilities team and Pathway leaders to ensure that adequate resources are in place at the commencement of each year.

2.34 Programmes are designed to offer a degree of flexibility for students to develop knowledge and skills within their professional area of interest. The recently validated BA (Hons) Music Industry Practice provides five routes which reflect the current major areas within the music industry. The approach to study is through project-based learning and access to emerging knowledge and practice of the music industry.

2.35 ACM has appropriate arrangements and resources in place to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential, which allows this Expectation to be met.

2.36 The review team explored the effectiveness of ACM's approach to the provision and monitoring of resources by scrutinising documents including the Strategic Plan, annual monitoring reports, committee minutes, reports to committees, and through discussion with senior staff, teaching staff, professional services staff, and students.

2.37 ACM has continued to make significant investment in learning resources and facilities to support teaching and learning; these include acquisition of space in the YMCA building to create a Creativity Centre (library), and the new 'Billings' building which provides computer labs, a lecture theatre and workstations. ACM has recently secured the lease for Guildford Electric Theatre to be used equally for public and education to enhance student learning opportunities through hosting events, showcases and masterclasses. The Creativity Centre (library) provides access to a range of learning resources and reference materials to support learning. Students can use printing and binding services study spaces for independent and group research. The Centre provides support with digital literacy, referencing, critical writing and conceptual analysis. The library includes workstations, reading materials, digital databases, journals, articles.

2.38 Students have access to a wide variety of enrichment activities and events which include non-credit bearing electives at Level 4. Industry Link provides a range of support and resources to prepare students for industry. These include 'Electric Theatre' sessions, special guest/master classes and Industry events. Masterclasses are subsequently made available as video content on the VLE. ACM students have access to Metropolis studios in London which provides a range of network opportunities. ACM set up the department for Artist Development and Creative Output (ADCO) in 2016. It serves all students at ACM and alumni

providing a service that runs alongside curriculum activity, helping every student that engages with it to develop and track short and long-term goals in their chosen career pathway. Feedback and guidance are tailored to the individual and students who show flair, drive and potential are flagged to Industry Link to provide industry opportunities. Students can also self-refer from Industry Link and are provided with targeted support from ADCO for example business start-up, mentoring in song-writing or stagecraft and understanding contracts.

2.39 The review team considers the wide-ranging initiatives and support activities that raise students' aspirations and enable achievement of academic, personal and professional potential is **good practice**.

2.40 ACM has created new posts including Head of Student Services, Accommodation Officer, Student Support Officers, Well-being Coaches and additional counsellors to meet increased student demand from growth in numbers. Student Services have been consolidated and offer an increased range of services. Student Services provides a central point of contact for students requiring any support information or services. Students can request support through the Help button on MyACM which allows Student Services to quickly identify and assess needs to direct appropriate support. Students are provided with a range of wellbeing sessions, including mindfulness sessions.

2.41 Students with extenuating circumstances may be subject to intervention under Fitness to Study policy and procedures which considers physical and mental wellbeing for further study. It reviews support available and reasonable adjustment requirements. This can be via self-referral or staff referral. The Education Guidance team provide specialised learning support for individuals with a formal needs assessment and access to DSA. ACM has recently undergone a successful DSA Quality Assurance Group audit.

2.42 The Pathway leaders are responsible for monitoring student engagement and attendance primarily through formative and summative assessment tasks. Attendance requirements are communicated through induction, Student Handbook and Attendance policy which has been approved by the University. During 2016-17 the Education team has worked to strengthen progressive monitoring of student engagement with a greater emphasis on early intervention strategies. Pathway Leaders and Senior Programme Officers hold meetings with students to ensure needs are assessed. Students at risk may be placed on an Individual Learner Agreement (ILA) to formalise mutually agreed arrangements. Pathway Leader Reports are discussed at Board of Studies which has a remit to facilitate monitoring and review of learning and teaching.

2.43 ACM works collaboratively with students to monitor, review and enhance learning and teaching and the student experience. ACM has developed a Student Charter that aims to further affirm a joint commitment to engagement with learning and teaching. ACM seeks to ensure that every student has the opportunity to develop their analytical and technical knowledge within their specialised area(s) of interest, and extend and explore their creative and artistic skills and abilities within a supportive, professional environment.

2.44 Students have access to a range of services, both academic and non-academic including the Creativity Centre, ADCO, Industry Link and Student Services. Processes are in place through programme monitoring, surveys and committees to monitor the support students have access to. Through the introduction of the Student Experience and Engagement Committee (SEEC) which reports to Academic Board, ACM has oversight of the student experience beyond the immediate academic environment. Students have access to information concerning support through the student handbook and the wealth of the resources on the VLE and were aware that there was a team devoted to this.

2.45 ACM has a systematic and comprehensive approach to ensuring that students have access to the resources they require to develop their potential. This includes a strong focus on industry readiness with work-related and industry relevant opportunities, access to academic and non-academic resources and services. There is good practice in this area which enables student to achieve their academic, personal and professional potential. Therefore, the team concludes that ACM meets Expectation B4 and the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.46 ACM seeks to engage students as partners in their quality assurance processes, in line with Middlesex University's policies. In order to do so there is a Student Representative System which is engaged with all levels of the ACM committee structure, and student opinion is also sought through Student Forums, and surveying of students through internal MEQ/PEQs as well as the NSS and DLHE which were joined for the first time in the 2016-17 academic year. There is a Student Charter which sets out expectations for both the student body and expectations of ACM for students.

2.47 The design of the process allows the Expectation to be met.

2.48 In order to test this Expectation, the team reviewed ACM's current policies in relation to student engagement, viewed data and documents outlining their responses to student feedback, viewed minutes of committee meetings and also met with students, Student Representatives and staff to seek their views.

2.49 ACM has a strong culture of engaging with students as colleagues and partners which allows for students and staff to communicate frequently on an informal level about the views of the student body. The formal Student Representative system is one which is still being fully developed, with enhancements planned for the coming academic year. As of 2016, students are represented on committees at every level and currently there are 16 active Student Representatives. Student Representatives are chosen through a vote by the cohort at the beginning of the year, or invited by staff where these roles are not volunteered for. Student Representatives are recognised with a certificate and a written reference letter, and receive induction training, a handbook as well as a named staff contact which ensures that they feel supported in their roles. The general student body is made aware of the Student Representative system and the importance of sharing their views at induction, as well as through their Student Handbook. Students did not always know who their Representative was and were uncertain about formal student engagement processes unless directly involved in them, but were confident they could find this information if they sought it. The minutes of groups and committees that the Representatives sit on, as well as Student Fora, are made available to all students through the VLE, and any suggestions from students during these meetings are tracked on a centralised document. ACM acknowledges a limited take-up of student forums, which feeds directly into the Board of Studies, as it is in its first year, and has discussed the fact that they want to improve this and continue to enhance the Student Representative system.

2.50 Another way in which students are engaged in quality processes at ACM is by completing surveys during the year which are then used to create actions, with appropriate deadlines set to complete these actions. As of the 2016-17 academic year there has also been engagement with both the NSS and DHLE surveys, with a response rate of 66 per cent in the NSS. Students were positive about the availability of staff to discuss matters informally as well as through official feedback methods, including opportunities such as 'Meet the Principal' which allow for open discussion with senior staff. Actions taken on feedback are communicated to students using 'You Said, We Did' posters and ACM plans to further support this by sending out a periodical update to students. To date students have not met with external examiners, however, ACM provide students with External Examiners reports on request, or to Student Representatives through membership of committees, and are seeking

opportunities for students to meet with external examiners in the future.

2.51 The team considers that this Expectation be met, with a low level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B6): Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.

Quality Code, Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning

Findings

2.52 ACM's policy framework for assessment is articulated in its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy, as informed by the relevant sections of the Regulations of the University. The regulations take precedence unless an exception has been granted by the University, for example, the permission for ACM to use grading scales different from those used at the University. The detailed respective responsibilities of the two collaborative partners in relation to assessment are articulated in a Responsibility Checklist.

2.53 The policy framework is overseen and kept under review by LTAC, on behalf of Academic Board, which also receives detailed analyses of progression and student achievement data. There is further consideration of progression and student achievement data at Academic Board itself and, through the AMR, at the University.

2.54 For progression and award, ACM operates two Assessment Board tiers: Student Progression and Achievement Board, chaired by the ACM Academic Registrar, and Finalist Examination Board, chaired by a senior staff member from the University, with both tiers serviced by ACM's Quality, Registry and Data Services Team who also manage the recording and certification of student achievement in liaison with the University. Again, these arrangements are aligned with the cited Sections of the University's Regulations. External examiners at both Assessment Board tiers comment on the effectiveness and efficiency of assessment procedures.

2.55 Assessment is considered at programme design and approval stage with due consideration of external reference points. The details of assessment arrangements for individual programmes, including learning outcomes, programme specifications and module narratives, are set out in programme handbooks. Programme handbooks also brief students on academic good practice and academic misconduct. ACM integrates its Academic Integrity policy into the curriculum and currently uses plagiarism-detection software to deter plagiarism but is also rolling out its use as a developmental aid for students through its Canvas VLE.

2.56 ACM's policy for the Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning is similarly aligned with University's Regulations and LQEH and there are arrangements for University and external examiner oversight of decisions on individual applications.

2.57 Overall the design of ACM's policy framework and supporting procedures for assessment would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.58 The team explored the effectiveness of ACM's arrangements for assessment by scrutinising, in addition to the policy and procedure documents already identified, a wide range of assessment-related documentation including assignment briefs, student and programme handbooks, programme validations, diploma supplements and degree certificates, APEL registers, LTAC minutes, Academic Board minutes, Student Progression and Achievement Board minutes and supporting papers, Finalist Examination Board minutes and supporting papers and by discussion of assessment-related issues with a range of staff

and students.

2.59 The team found that the arrangements for the management of assessment were consistently and robustly applied in all aspects including verification of assessment, moderation, due and accurate recording, mitigating circumstances, classification, award of credit, progression and final award. Formative assessment was consistently and thoughtfully applied at appropriate stages and was complementary to subsequent summative assessment. Staff were fully conversant with and felt well prepared for ACM's arrangements for reassessment. Students demonstrated a clear understanding of ACM's approach to assessment; an appreciation of the nature and differentiated purposes of formative and summative assessment; and full awareness of the availability of assessment-related information.

2.60 ACM was able to evidence a mature consideration of assessment issues such as the adoption of a bespoke grading scale; the addressing of timing issues in arising from the assessment of its accelerated degrees; and the factoring in of matters arising from reasonable adjustment for students with learning difficulties into its assessment arrangements.

2.61 The team concludes that, overall, the ACM operates valid and reliable assessment arrangements which allow students to demonstrate their level of achievement in relation to learning outcomes. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met, and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.62 The University is responsible for the appointment and management of external examiners and ACM adopts the University's external examiner system outlined in Section 4 of the University LQHE. External examiners are appointed in accordance with the University regulations which includes guidance, forms and documentation and detailed criteria. ACM puts forward nominations for external examiner appointments to Middlesex University. The University reviews and approves all appointments, in line with the University LQEH. The University is responsible for the appointment and induction of external examiners. The University provides induction training and supporting guidance from the relevant school on regulations relating to assessment and moderation and the expectations of the external examiner. External examiners are normally appointed for a four-year term with provision for a one-year extension.

2.63 External examiners submit reports to the University, using a standard template, these are circulated to ACM for comment. External examiners are asked to confirm that academic standards are being met at appropriate qualification levels. External examiner reports are considered in at ACM Boards and Committees. Comments from the external examiners feed into the annual monitoring review process, actions are integrated into external examiner responses which are integrated into the Annual Monitoring Report.

2.64 Pathway Leaders and Senior Programme Officers liaise with external examiners to facilitate the selection of samples for external examiner review prior to each Final Exam Board and Student Progression and Achievement Board. ACM adopts University guidance for the selection of samples for external examiner review. External examiners are required to review samples from Level 5 and 6. External examiners are members of the Finalist Exam Board and provide commentary and advice in relation to the work reviewed and note recommendations and areas of good practice for dissemination. The ACM Institutional Link Tutor (Head of Learning and Teaching) will follow up and liaise with the external examiner, University Link Tutor and Academic Registrar on matters requiring immediate follow up.

2.65 The approach ACM takes in relation to external examiner input would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.66 The review team investigated the use made of external examiner input by considering external examiner reports, committee minutes, the annual monitoring report and associated action plan. Meetings with students and senior staff and teaching staff demonstrated familiarity and engagement with the external examining process.

2.67 It was noted by the review team that external examiners do not routinely attend examination Boards and are required to complete an absence form which is sent to the University. Following the recent validation of a BA (Hons) Music Industry Practice programme ACM has recently nominated two new external examiners whose appointments have been approved by the University. The team received evidence that both external examiners were in attendance at the September 2017 Examination Board.

2.68 ACM and the University hosted a joint Induction event for the newly appointed external examiners to meet with key education staff and find out about ACM provision.

2.69 The team were advised that ACM students had not previously met with external examiners but intended to introduce this following the appointment of new external examiners. Students are provided with information about the external examiners in the Student Handbook which lists the names of the external examiners, and can access external examiner reports and further details regarding the external examiner's system through the VLE and MyACM 'knowledge base'.

2.70 ACM recognises the key role that external examiners play in assuring academic standards and the review team found that ACM makes appropriate use of external examiner input to inform the quality of its provision.

2.71 ACM has a robust external examining system which is used effectively in the improvement and management of programmes. Therefore, the team concludes that Expectation B7 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B8): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.72 ACM programme monitoring is annual and its primary function is to satisfy the requirements of the University, which explicitly embeds and references FHEQ levels, Subject Benchmark Statements and takes account of the England, Wales and Northern Ireland Credit Consortia. As ACM delivers validated programmes, the University requires it to complete an AMR for each programme, which is submitted to the University. The detailed respective responsibilities of the two collaborative partners in relation to programme monitoring and review are articulated in a Responsibility Checklist. The AMR is authored in accord with a University template by the Institution Link Tutor (ILT) with support available from University guidance and University Link Tutor.

2.73 However, in the context of its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy, ACM sets out its own internal approach to the production of the AMR, under the direction of the Head of Education and Programme Leaders. Data and analysis on a range of matters related to programme monitoring and review are inputted into this process. The AMR identifies good practice for dissemination and notable successes for celebration. ACM sees AMR as a good example of its P-R-I-M-E (Plan-Review-Implement-Monitor-Enhance) quality assurance cycle or approach.

2.74 Programme evaluation questionnaires have operated since 2016-17. Module evaluation questionnaires were introduced for the current academic year. ACM has created a Survey Framework which seeks to ensure that these internal questionnaires are appropriately spaced and factored into the academic deliberative committee system in the context of an accelerated degree programme with other external student surveys during the student journey.

2.75 ACM's academic deliberative committee system, which includes student representation throughout, is integrated into the annual monitoring processes. Consideration of AMRs beginning with the Board of Study, then the subcommittees of Academic Board (LTAC, Student Engagement and Experience Committee (SEEC) and Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC)) and then Academic Board itself. LTAC has specific responsibility for the approval of AMRs and ensures the implementation and central monitoring of the resultant quality improvement plans. AQSC oversees the annual monitoring processes for programmes and modules. SEEC prepares issues of ACM student feedback to be taken forward for consideration by other appropriate bodies and procedures. Academic Board signs off the AMR for forwarding to the University for its consideration. In addition ACM deploys a system of direct reports to complement and supplement the AMRs: Programme Leader to the Board of Study; Student Representative to the Board of Study; Head of Learning and Teaching to Academic Board; Academic Registrar to Academic Board; and Head of Education to LTAC.

2.76 ACM programme review is on a six-yearly cycle and its primary function is to satisfy the requirements of the University's LQEH, including the maintenance of academic standards against the reference points of the Quality Code. The inputs of data and analysis are similar to those for AMR but include also programme specifications and more detailed resource implications and are supplemented by guidance notes on such matters as the composition of the periodic review panel (including externality, both employer and academic,

and student representation) and an agenda for the periodic review process which must include a meeting with current cohort students. ACM also states that it conducts its own internal mid-point review during the six-year validity of a programme.

2.77 Overall the design of ACM's policy framework and supporting procedures for programme monitoring and review would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.78 The team explored the effectiveness of ACM's arrangements for programme monitoring and review by scrutinising, in addition to the policy and procedure documents already identified, a range of related documentation including the 2015-16 AMR; programme evaluation questionnaires and feedback on them; academic deliberative committee minutes; direct reports to academic deliberative committees and by discussion of assessment-related issues with a range of staff and students.

2.79 The team clearly found a system of cyclical review which ensures that all components of a programme are subject to regular monitoring, informed by direct student feedback and by other information from student engagement including programme evaluation questionnaires and module evaluation questionnaires. The team found a considered and internally owned approach to programme monitoring at ACM which allowed ACM to meet the University's requirements in this area, especially in the context of the wider range of external reporting it has undertaken since 2014: the HEFCE Unistats (formerly KIS) return; the HEFCE National Student Survey (NSS); the HESA Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE) Survey; and the HESA Alternative Provider Student Return.

2.80 Furthermore, in accord with its P-R-I-M-E (Plan-Review-Implement-Monitor-Enhance) quality assurance cycle or approach, ACM has added value to its annual monitoring with additional direct reports from key staff and students. The student reports were an important mechanism for the capture of the student voice at pathway level and the retention of a certain granularity in a programme-wide document. The 2015-16 AMR included a dense and rich 27-page analysis of all ACM's provision with the University, supplemented by 15-page data appendices which prompted informed debate and action planning. (This can be considered an example of the good practice identified under Enhancement.)

2.81 The outcomes and analysis of programme evaluation questionnaires were similarly well presented using graphs, statistics and even word clouds. Module evaluation questionnaires have yet to be presented to the academic deliberative committee system.

2.82 As the former portfolio of separate programmes had been replaced by the consolidated, newly validated, Music Industry Practice undergraduate and foundation programmes there was no recent periodic programme review (or ACM's own mid-point internal review) for the team to consider. Similarly, for that reason, there were effectively no recent examples of programme closure for the team to consider.

2.83 The team concludes that ACM has in place secure arrangements for programme monitoring and review. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met, and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.84 Responsibility for academic appeals and complaints is shared between ACM and Middlesex University. ACM has in place a Complaints Policy and Procedure, as well as an Appeals Policy and Procedure. At the informal stage students are encouraged to raise issues directly with tutors or Student Representatives, and if an issue remains unresolved it will be raised within ACM through their two formal stages. If the student is not satisfied with the decision it may then be raised with the University, and if still unsatisfied the OIA will manage the appeal or complaint. To date the OIA have not received any appeals or complaints. These policies and procedures are reviewed through Middlesex University's annual monitoring process, as well as being subject to ACM's internal review on a two-yearly basis.

2.85 The policies and procedures for academic appeals and student complaints would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.86 The team tested the Expectation by reviewing current policy and procedure around complaints and appeals, reading samples of complaints and appeals submitted to ACM, reviewing relevant data, exploring public information and speaking to staff and students during the review visit.

2.87 The Appeals and Complaints procedures have both recently been approved following ACM's internal review, whereby they were altered to include better defined informal and formal stages. At present ACM do track both complaints and appeals to attempt to ensure they are managed in a timely manner, with the newly centralised Quality, Registry and Data Services Team allowing for better oversight of this tracking in the future with the potential for learning from key themes. ACM correspond with student via letter and, in most instances, inform students of their right to appeal decisions made at each stage of the process for both academic appeals and complaints.

2.88 The Academic Appeals and Complaints and Grievances Policies are available on the ACM website and in the public domain so as to be easily accessible, and are also available on the student VLE. Students are made aware of these policies in the Student Handbook, and are confident that they would know how to find them if necessary. It is noted that students and staff feel that dissatisfaction is usually dealt with in an informal stage. While policies are available online, the Academic Appeals Procedure and the Complaints and Grievances Procedure are not which would mean that prospective students would not be given a thorough understanding of how their complaint may be dealt with or how to make one. Added to this, the Complaints and Grievances Procedure is cited as the mode through which an admissions appeal would be managed, yet it makes no explicit mention of the management of such appeals, and students are not made aware that they have the right to access this procedure at the point of rejection from the programme. ACM has never received an admissions appeal. The review team **recommends** that by September 2018 the College ensures that the Complaints and Grievances Procedure is accessible and transparent to all stakeholders, and is appropriate for the consideration of Admission Appeals.

2.89 While there are separate policies and procedures for both processes, except in the case of admissions appeals, the difference between an appeal, or a complaint, is often

unclear to both staff and students. This can be seen by the way in which the terms are used interchangeably, and evidence of submitted complaints or appeals shows that student have submitted an appeal as a complaint or vice versa, leaving the institution to deduce the true grounds.

2.90 At the point of making an appeal, if there are deemed to be grounds, an Appeal Panel will be held which is usually chaired by the Academic Registrar and though conflicting with the Appeals Procedure, the team was informed during their visit that this could then be raised again to the Academic Registrar. Since the procedure is newly revised the team were unable to fully test its efficacy in practice, particularly in terms of independent ratification of decisions, but were satisfied that the process would be sufficient if adopted as written. The review team **recommends** that by September 2018 the College ensures that the Academic Appeals Procedure is transparent to all stakeholders, and has appropriate independent ratification of decisions.

2.91 The team found that this Expectation was met with moderate risk due to the lack of clarity in the difference between complaints and appeals, the lack of availability of these procedures in the public domain and the risk that prospective students may not be aware of their right to appeal audition decisions.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

Expectation (B10): Degree-awarding bodies take ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them. Arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the degree-awarding body are implemented securely and managed effectively.

Quality Code, *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*

Findings

2.92 As ACM does not have any arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with others, this Expectation is not applicable.

Expectation: Not applicable

Level of risk: Not applicable

Expectation (B11): Research degrees are awarded in a research environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols. This environment offers students quality of opportunities and the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees.

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.93 This Expectation is not applicable as ACM does not offer research degree provision.

Expectation: Not applicable

Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.94 There are four areas of good practice identified regarding the quality of student learning opportunities. These relate to Expectations B1, B2, B3 and B4. Three of these areas of good practice (those relating to Expectations B1, B3 and B4) also relate to Enhancement.

2.95 There are two recommendations regarding the quality of student learning opportunities. These relate to Expectation B9.

2.96 There are no affirmations recommendations regarding the quality of student learning opportunities.

2.97 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the provider is **meets** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 ACM provides information for all stakeholders, in line with the guidance from the University, and has procedures to ensure that the public information provided about the programmes and resources at ACM is accurate, accessible and reliable. ACM has a Public Information Policy and Content Approval Procedures, which provide clear and transparent guidance on procedures to ensure the information is accurate and fit for purpose, as stated. This includes a list of responsibilities and stages for reviewing and signing off information before publication. The Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) has oversight of ACM's approach to assuring the completeness, accuracy and reliability of information provided for applicants and students on ACM websites and elsewhere. Content approval for recruitment activity is led by the Marketing Team. The ACM website contains detailed information about each programme, with an outline of all the study components, the entry requirements, student finance and programme fees and the study options that are available to students. Prospectus as well as access and participation are present. In August 2017 ACM is reviewing all information published in preparation for its new KPIs/Unistats return. All information current students receive can be found on Canvas VLE and MyACM, accessed by App (launched in 2014).

3.2 The structures and processes for Information design, development and approval would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.3 To test the Expectation, the team reviewed evidence, including the Public Information Policy, other policies and procedures on admissions, records from the Academic Board, Student programme handbooks and the website. The team also held meetings with senior, academic and professional services staff, and students.

3.4 Admissions information is available to prospective students online via the website. The policy and its contents are clear about what ACM provides and what is expected from applicants. Students confirmed this information is easy to find on the website. All information current students receive can be found on Canvas VLE alongside MyACM student portal. Information available was found to be extensive, both for public and internal consumption. The ACM website seems comprehensive, Canvas and MyACM are high quality as confirmed by meeting with students and particularly the demonstration by systems team. For each programme, information about entry requirements, fees, options for study and programme content are good with sign-off processes in place; ongoing review process are found to be strong. There are a variety of platforms from which ACM provides information to students via the MyACM App (social media, videos including YouTube, and Access All Areas scheme). When the review team met the students, the students confirmed they were able to find all the information in regards to their studies and academic procedures, such as mitigating circumstances and appeals procedures and stated it was clear and transparent to them throughout their student journey. This was also confirmed in the academic and professional services staff meetings, where staff were able to direct students to the relevant information and share good practice across the disciplines. However, there was confusion expressed by some students and staff regarding complaints and appeals procedures (see Expectation B9).

3.5 The review team found that ACM's processes to provide accurate, accessible and reliable information for all stakeholders are robust and concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

The quality of the information about learning opportunities: Summary of findings

3.6 There are no recommendations, affirmations, or areas of good practice identified in relation to the quality of the information about learning opportunities.

3.7 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

Findings

4.1 ACM in its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy states that it “assures academic quality and standards through the deliberate implementation of strategic monitoring and review that is supported by robust operational and academic governance structures that effectively support learning, teaching and the student experience” and “provides opportunities for staff and students to identify and share areas of good practice through reporting to the standing boards and committees” with “the student voice is central to the monitoring review and enhancement process.”

4.2 Additionally, ACM advises that it “operates its own Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy to ensure effective cyclical monitoring and review of its programmes” with the Policy based on a P-R-I-M-E Quality Assurance Cycle, underpinned by effective use of data. Senior staff saw P-R-I-M-E as offering an appropriate balance of opportunities for deliberative reflection (Review-Monitor-Enhance) and operational implementation (Plan-Implement). An explanatory flowchart illustrated how P-R-I-M-E at the higher, conceptual level could then be implemented at an operational level in the particular example of the arrangements for the production of the AMR. Enhancement at ACM is overseen by the LTAC, AQSC and SEEC subcommittees of Academic Board and this is reflected in their terms of reference. ACM cites the University's Regulations and its LQEH, especially Section 7, Annual Monitoring and Enhancement, and Section 9, Student Engagement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement, as well as the Quality Code as key external reference points for its Policy.

4.3 ACM claimed that the above approach applied across the institution and was evidenced in particular by six example areas of enhancement: of Governance Structures and Reporting (see Expectation A2.1 above); of the Student Representative System (see Expectation B5 above); of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (see Expectation B3 above); of Learning Facilities and Resources (see Expectation B4 above); of Student Services (see Expectation B4 above); and of the Student Experience and Links To Industry (see Expectation B4 above).

4.4 Overall the review team considered that ACM's approach to, and design of an underpinning policy framework for, the enhancement of students' learning opportunities would enable the Expectation to be met.

4.5 The team tested the operation of ACM's approach by meeting with senior, academic and professional services staff and with students and by reading documentation already supplied to evidence the six example areas of enhancement.

4.6 The detailed consideration of those six sample areas confirmed enhancement activities in these areas. Furthermore, the team began to appreciate that the six sample areas were indicative examples only and that ACM's approach to the enhancement of students' learning opportunities was strategic, integrated and systematic. The team noted that ACM benefitted from a sound collaborative partnership with the University and believed that its approach to enhancement enabled it to demonstrate not just compliance but also competence and maturity to its validating partner. The team heard consistently about ACM's tripartite approach to foster the academic, personal and professional development of students and recognised that this at all times underpinned actions taken in relation to

enhancement.

4.7 As an example, the enhanced Governance Structures and Reporting allowed the academic committee structure to maintain an overview of enhancement and to maximise the use of ACM's quality assurance framework to identify enhancement. The prime manifestation of the latter was the comprehensive use of existing inputs, such as external examiner reports, and newly commissioned inputs, such as programme leader and student representative reports, into the AMR process not only to improve quality assurance but also to allow the identification, dissemination and support of good practice. Those revised Governance Structures and Reporting were also integrated with the improvement in the Student Representative System and the student feedback framework, to ensure not only that there was a robust deliberative committee system but that there was an institutional ethos, shared both by staff and students, promoting enhancement.

4.8 Similarly, in terms of the enhancement of Learning Facilities and Resources and Student Services, this prompted the team to identify good practice (see Expectation B4) in the wide-ranging initiatives and support activities that raise student aspirations and enable achievement of academic, personal, and professional potential. In turn, the team recognised that this integrated with the enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment and the good practice (see Expectation B3) identified in the tripartite approach to learning and teaching that engages students with current and emerging knowledge and practice, enabling students to develop into independent, autonomous and industry-ready graduates.

4.9 Again, in terms of that enhancement of Learning Facilities and Resources and Student Services, the team recognised that this integrated with the enhancement of the Student Experience and Links to Industry which prompted the team's identification of the good practice (see Expectation B1) in the use of extensive engagement and links with industry, which informs effective programme development and enhances graduate employability.

4.10 Senior staff contended that more important than the origins of particular enhancement initiatives, whether top down or bottom up, was their consistent alignment with the strategic focus on the tripartite approach to foster the academic, personal and professional development of students. An enhancement such as the acquisition of a new performance venue might be considered 'top down' (or management led) in the sense that it required the commitment of large capital funds, but its 'bottom up' impact can be seen in the potential impact on the curriculum and on the learning opportunities and professional development of students. An enhancement, such as beginning the lecturing day no earlier than 10.00 in the morning, might be considered 'bottom up' (or student led) in that it followed student feedback, but it reflected an understanding of the normally late working hours of the industry in which many student learning opportunities took place.

4.11 ACM's tripartite approach to enhancement aligns well with the academic, professional and practitioner experience of the staff whom the team met. It is also consistent with the aspirations and engagement of students whom the team met. The integration of the institution's deliberate approach to enhancement with its vision, mission and strategy, and the embedded and shared use of that approach, in the academic, personal and professional development of its students is **good practice**.

4.12 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.13 There are four areas of good practice identified regarding the enhancement of student learning opportunities. Three of these are identified elsewhere in this report (see Expectations B1, B3 and B4). The remaining area of good practice is identified in point 4.11 above.

4.14 The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the provider is **commended**.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 21-24 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#).

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality.

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer Glossary on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx.

Academic standards

The standards set by **degree-awarding bodies** for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

Award

A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended **learning outcomes** and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a **programme** or unit of study.

Awarding organisation

An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

Blended learning

Learning delivered by a number of different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see **technology enhanced or enabled learning**).

Credit(s)

A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education **programmes of study**, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level.

Degree-awarding body

A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree awarding powers, research degree awarding powers or university title).

Distance learning

A course of study that does not involve face-to-face contact between students and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'. See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for the same **programme** by two **degree-awarding bodies** who have jointly delivered the programme of study leading to them. See also **multiple award**.

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement

The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in our review processes.

Expectations

Statements in the **Quality Code** that set out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

Flexible and distributed learning

A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations. See also **distance learning**.

Framework

A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

Framework for higher education qualifications

A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FQHEIS).

Good practice

A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

Learning opportunities

The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

Learning outcomes

What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

Multiple awards

An arrangement where three or more **degree-awarding bodies** together provide a single jointly delivered **programme** (or programmes) leading to a separate **award** (and separate certification) of each awarding body. The arrangement is the same as for **dual/double awards**, but with three or more awarding bodies being involved.

Operational definition

A formal definition of a term, establishing exactly what QAA means when using it in reviews and reports.

Programme (of study)

An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

Programme specifications

Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of programmes of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

Quality Code

Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of **reference points** for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the **Expectations** that all providers are required to meet.

Reference points

Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

Self-evaluation document

A report submitted by a higher education provider, assessing its own performance, to be used as evidence in a QAA review.

Subject Benchmark Statement

A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

Threshold academic standard

The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic **award**. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **frameworks** and **Subject Benchmark Statements**.

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such resources as course handbooks, information and reading lists; blogs, message boards and forums; recorded lectures; and/or facilities for online seminars (webinars).

Widening participation

Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

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