



Review for Educational Oversight: Report of the monitoring visit of Ballet West, December 2014

Section 1: Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that Ballet West (the School) has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the December 2013 [Review for Specific Course Designation](#).

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 No major strategic changes have taken place at the School since the review visit in December 2013. The visit in 2014 was for Review for Educational Oversight monitoring.

3 There are 64 students enrolled on three higher education programmes, two Higher National programmes approved by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and a BA (Hons) Dance approved by Northumbria University Newcastle. The number of students is similar to that at the time of the December 2013 review visit when there were 70 full-time students.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

4 Student engagement with performing arts practitioners and the Ballet West touring company continue to be features of good practice. Students spoke enthusiastically about the number of guest lecture opportunities provided and the professional status of individual lecturers. Student representatives meet School staff after each guest lecture to provide feedback on their learning experience. Students continue to be encouraged to enter national and international competitions and are fully supported by the School. At the time of the visit the School was preparing to perform Romeo and Juliet on a tour of Scotland. All students participate in the tour, which enables them to extend their performing experience.

5 The availability of academic and pastoral support and the School's responsiveness to student feedback and comment continue to be features of good practice. Students were unanimous in their praise for the academic skills support provided by the School Student Support Officer. All students meet individually with the School Student Support Officer to identify individual skills development needs. In addition, each student is allocated a named tutor, but indicated that they would approach any staff member for academic or pastoral support. All students who do not have A level, Higher or an equivalent qualification in English now undertake Higher English during the first and second year as a means of preparing them for degree-level study. This is delivered at the School by an English teacher from Oban High School and students sit the examination as Oban High School external candidates. The introduction of student learning plans and meetings held every other month and led by student representatives in each year group are effective mechanisms for identifying students who require additional support and for monitoring the School's responsiveness to student feedback and comment.

6 The School has published an Operations Manual, which contains written policies and procedures for the operational management of all higher education provision. Northumbria University Newcastle requires the Operations Manual to reflect its practice and procedures to assist in consistency of quality and standards of degree delivery across its three partner colleges. As the School is an approved SQA centre, it has autonomy to implement procedures which meet SQA expectations. The Manual is cross-referenced to some chapters of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). During discussion it was recognised that not all aspects of the Quality Code have been considered by the School, for example, students do not have access to external examiner reports. The School acknowledged that further mapping within the Operations Manual would be beneficial to address all Quality Code Expectations and to enhance practice by mapping against Chapter Indicators. The Manual is supported by a handbook setting out the roles and responsibilities of staff for the management of academic standards.

7 The School staff development plan is reviewed annually. Part of the plan is that all staff involved in the regular delivery of higher education will gain membership of the Higher Education Academy. At the time of the visit, five of seven staff have achieved this. All staff have an individual development plan and progress in achieving planned aims is monitored at the end of each academic year. Individual development plans are based on personal and professional development aspirations. Regular engagement with Northumbria University Newcastle staff and the developing network, which includes college staff involved in delivering the degree elsewhere, provide further staff development opportunities. This is extending external benchmarking opportunities and assessment experience of School staff.

8 The School's engagement with the Review for Educational Oversight process has encouraged a proactive approach to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of its internal quality processes designed to enhance the student learning experience. Staff are becoming aware of a need to develop strategic approaches to academic quality by using, for example, the individual learning plan process to identify and inform the development of internal quality processes. The introduction of the Operations Manual and plans to review its effectiveness annually will provide further opportunities to build on good practice and recommendations identified through the School's procedures.

Section 4: Progress in working with the external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

9 The School continues to make appropriate use of the Quality Code and staff have a general awareness of its Expectations. However, as noted in paragraph 6, further mapping within the Operations Manual would be beneficial to address all Quality Code Expectations and to enhance practice by mapping against Chapter Indicators.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

10 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

11 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Grant Horsburgh, Coordinator, and Ms Deborah Trayhurn, Reviewer, on 11 December 2014.

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