Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Access to Music Ltd

November 2017

Contents

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 Access to Music Ltd. The review took place from 7 to 9 November 2017 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Dr David Wright
- Ms Deborah Trayhurn.

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.

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[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 the degree-awarding body and other awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations for the provision of the awarding organisation.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations for the provision of the degree-awarding body.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations for the provision of the awarding organisation.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations for the provision of the degree-awarding body.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

Recommendations

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

By May 2018:

- ensure the requirements of the regulatory frameworks for the award of credit and qualifications of its degree-awarding body are met (Expectation A2.1 and A3.2)
- develop and implement internal periodic review processes which meet the requirements of the degree-awarding body (Expectation B8)
- review and revise the terms of reference and operation of deliberative committees to ensure effective oversight of higher education programmes and that degree-awarding body requirements are met (Expectation B8, A2.1, A3.2 and B6)
- develop and implement policies and procedures that will ensure that information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, and meets statutory and regulatory requirements (Expectations C and B2).

By September 2018:

- develop and implement internal procedures to ensure the maintenance of definitive records of each programme and qualification validated by the degree-awarding body (Expectation A2.2)
- develop and implement deliberative structures and effective internal processes to design, develop and approve programmes (Expectations B1 and A3.1)
- use the outcomes of review processes to assure and systematically enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices (Expectations B3, B8 and Enhancement)
- ensure that it publishes and operates assessment practices and procedures which are clear, comprehensive and consistent (Expectation B6 and A2.1)
- articulate and consistently apply internal processes to identify, prioritise and address issues identified in monitoring and review (Expectation B8)

- establish appropriate written agreements with support providers to manage risk and secure service level arrangements that safeguard the provision of learning opportunities for students (Expectation B10)
  develop and implement a strategy that will systematically identify and introduce enhancements to students' learning opportunities and embed this at all levels within the Institution (Enhancement).

About the provider

Access to Music Ltd (the College) was established in 1992 as a privately funded provider of higher education and became part of Armstrong Learning in 2009. The College is a provider of specialist music, digital and creative education and primarily delivers further education programmes, with a small amount of higher education provision in music. The College's mission is focused on 'developing the next generation of creatives through innovative, practical, employment-led education and training'.

The College's higher education provision comprises two degree programmes validated by Birmingham City University, the awarding body, and a Diploma for Creative Practitioners, a 64-credit level 4 programme delivered on behalf of Rockschool, the awarding organisation. The College refer to this programme as Artist Development in their public information and internal documentation. Both degrees are two-year accelerated programmes and the Artist Development is a one-year programme of study. All programmes are offered as full-time only.

The College operates from eight delivery locations across the UK, with the Artist Development programme currently delivered at seven of these. The two degree programmes, BMus (Hons) Popular Music Performance and BA (Hons) Music Business are both delivered at the Birmingham centre only. In September 2017, 77 students were enrolled on the Artist Development programme across all centres. On the validated degree provision, there were 43 students enrolled, representing a decrease of 44 per cent compared with 65 students at the time of the previous QAA monitoring visit in 2016. The College currently has a student number control allocation of 78 and holds specific course designation for the two accelerated degrees, and additionally has a Tier 4 licence.

The College's higher education provision is overseen by the Higher Education Development Manager who is based in Birmingham. There is a small staff team at the Birmingham centre delivering on both types of provision, a number of who are employed on a fractional basis. There are 10 staff involved in delivering on the validated provision, nine of which are employed on a part-time basis and a further part-time member of staff delivers on the Artist Development programme. Staff from the University also support the delivery of the two accelerated degree programmes at both levels 5 and 6. In the case of the Artist Development programme each delivery centre has a small team of staff; the Head of Operations and Performance has an overarching role across all centres for the oversight and management of this provision.

The College has identified the intensive nature of the degree provision as having an impact on progression, retention and achievement and attributes this to the timescale of assessment and the different systems used by the awarding body, which operates a standard semester-based system and the College, that operates on a trimester basis. The College identifies this as a key challenge that they are seeking to address as part of the upcoming revalidation. In addition, a further challenge is the low progression of the College's level 3 students onto the degree programmes, which are only available at the Birmingham centre. The College note in their self-evaluation that these students are not sufficiently prepared for the intense nature of the programmes. The College is keen to expand its higher education portfolio and student numbers and has received confirmation of institutional and

course level approval for two foundation degrees to be franchised from Nottingham Trent University Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies (Confetti ICT).

The College has previously been reviewed by QAA; its initial review for Specific Course Designation was in November 2013, with further monitoring visits in 2015 and 2016. The last visit noted that the College had made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision from the November 2013 Review for Specific Course Designation. However, the current review team found that the College still has a lack of clarity about responsibilities, weaknesses in its operations, and the rigour in which it applies its quality assurance procedures. Although the College has established committees, its oversight and governance is not transparent. Furthermore, the team identified differences between the validated degree provision and the provision offered on behalf of the awarding organisation, leading to differential judgements between the two types of provision.

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   The College currently offers two degree programmes that are validated by Birmingham City University and a level 4 Artist Development programme. The latter comprises 64 credits and leads to the award of a Diploma for Creative Practitioners validated by Rockschool. The College does not have degree awarding powers and therefore the awarding body and organisation with whom it works in partnership are responsible for ensuring that programmes are aligned with national frameworks, Subject Benchmark Statements and reference points for academic standards. The agreement with the University requires the College to deliver the programmes according to the approved specifications. Any changes to a programme or its constituent modules require the prior approval of the University. In the case of the Artist Development programme the centre approval process requires that the College confirm that it will adhere to Rockschool policies and procedures and deliver the programme according to the approved specification. All qualifications are awarded following the achievement of positively defined learning outcomes. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.2   The review team tested the Expectation by scrutinising programme specifications and module handbooks, external examiners' and moderators' reports and reports of validation events. It also discussed procedures relating to programme development and approval with senior staff of the College.

1.3   The degree programmes were developed and written by the College and validated by the University in 2012. Learning outcomes and curricula were informed by the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ. Annual monitoring by University-appointed independent external examiners confirms that the standards set continue to be appropriate and that the content of programmes is consistent with the appropriate Subject Benchmark Statement. The review team noted that the programme specifications for these degrees cross-reference older versions of Subject Benchmark Statements that have been updated since the original validation. However, it also noted that, the programmes are scheduled to be revalidated in 2017-18.

1.4   The Artist Development programme is accredited by Ofqual and benchmarked against the European Qualifications Framework. An independent external moderator oversees the programme at all delivery centres and provides written reports to Rockschool and the College. These reports also confirm that the College is setting the standards required for this award.

1.5   The College is in the process of establishing a link with Nottingham Trent University Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies (Confetti ICT) that would see it initially delivering two franchised foundation degrees at three centres. The programme specifications for these degrees also cross-reference older versions of Subject Benchmark Statements that have since been updated. Senior College staff confirmed that this was discussed during internal consideration of the programmes but also noted that as the programmes are franchised the College was not able to revise the specifications itself. However, the review team noted that the programme and module documentation will be checked for accuracy and currency by Nottingham Trent University's Centre for Academic Development and Quality before final approval is granted.

1.6   Given the central role of the awarding body and organisation in setting academic standards and the adherence of the College to their requirements the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that 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

1.7 Responsibility for the award of credit and qualifications lies with the awarding body and organisation with whom the College works in partnership. In the case of the degree programmes the College is required to adhere to the University's regulations relating to assessment, academic progression and the award of degrees and exit awards. These regulations are published on the University's public website. They are also made available to staff and students via references or links to them on the College's virtual learning environment (VLE), in module handbooks and in the College's higher education student handbook. Grading criteria for the award of credit are specified in module handbooks. The University also prescribes procedures for the conduct of assessment and examination boards. University-appointed external examiners and link tutors attend these boards and comment on their operation in their reports. Within the College, examination boards report to the Higher Education Committee.

1.8 The award of the Diploma for Creative Practitioners is governed by the procedures of Rockschool. The programme specification and module descriptions define the procedures for assessment, grading and award. There is a standard assessment schedule across all centres where the programme is delivered and a Rockschool-appointed external moderator monitors the grading of students' work. Examination boards are conducted at each centre where the programme is offered, following the College's internal verification and moderation procedures. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.9 The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing University regulations, programme specifications, the minutes of examination boards and relevant committees, reports from external examiners and moderators. It also discussed the examination process with senior management staff of the College and the link tutor and a quality assurance representative of the University.

1.10 External examiners' reports confirm that examination boards for the degree programmes operate fairly. Consideration is given to students with extenuating circumstances. However, the minutes of examination boards also indicate that the College is not fully adhering to the regulatory framework specified by the University. The regulations for examination boards require that in order to be quorate 50 per cent of the approved membership should be present. The minutes of recent examination boards indicate that attendance falls short of this requirement, with participation by members of the College's teaching staff being low. During the review, the team were informed that the University is reviewing its procedures regarding establishing the membership of examination boards. Notwithstanding this, the review team **recommends** that the College ensures that it meets the requirements of the regulatory frameworks for the award of credit and qualifications of its degree-awarding body. Link tutors' reports also refer to recurring administrative and procedural issues associated with the assessment process and examination boards. These are discussed further and a recommendation made in Expectation B6 relating to the College publishing and operating assessment practices and procedures which are clear, comprehensive and consistent. Examination boards are also discussed under Expectation B8 and a recommendation is made relating to the operation of deliberative committees and ensuring effective oversight of higher education programmes.

1.11   Assessment boards for the Artist Development programme review the performance of each student and their eligibility for the award. Representatives from the College's Curriculum Quality Team oversee the operation of these boards to ensure that procedures follow the requirements of the awarding organisation and that students are treated fairly and equitably across centres.

1.12   The review team concludes that the College's awarding body and organisation have transparent and comprehensive regulatory frameworks for the award of credit and qualifications and therefore the Expectation is met. However, as the College is not adhering to the regulatory framework of its awarding body for the conduct of examination boards the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.13   The definitive records for each programme comprise the programme specification and module descriptions. The College is responsible for maintaining these records for the degree programmes. Rockschool, as the awarding organisation, is responsible for maintaining the definitive records of the Artist Development programme. These documents are stored electronically within the College's administrative systems. Responsibility for producing certificates and transcripts lies with the awarding body and organisation. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.14   The review team tested the expectation by reviewing programme specifications and module handbooks. It also discussed academic regulations and the management of programme information with senior management and professional support staff of the College, with the link tutor and a quality assurance representative of the University.

1.15   The programme specifications and module descriptions of the degree programmes do not provide a fully accurate record of the current programmes. The specification for the Popular Music Performance programme is not dated and the UCAS and JACS codes are not indicated. The specifications for both degree programmes have not been updated to reflect the 2017 UCAS tariff. Both programme specifications also indicate that some modules at levels 5 and 6 have pre-requisites at levels four and five respectively. However, the review team were informed that the programmes do not have pre-requisites. Inaccuracies in the published information of the University's validated provision are discussed further and a recommendation made in Part C relating to the College implementing policies and procedures to ensure information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

1.16   Many of the handbooks for modules at levels 4 and 5 in the Popular Music Performance programme indicate that students must complete all modules at that level successfully to progress to the next level. However, this is incorrect and could be misleading for students. To progress from one year of the programme to the next, students must meet the University's normal progression requirements. In addition, the lists of 'learning resources' in the module descriptions make few references to books published since the initial validation in 2012. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the College develops and implements internal procedures to ensure the maintenance of definitive records of each programme and qualification validated by the degree-awarding body.

1.17   The programme specifications and module handbooks provide reference points for the delivery, assessment and review of the programmes and hence the review team concluded that the Expectation is met. However, as the programme specifications and module handbooks of the degree programmes are not kept fully updated, the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.18   The College's degree programmes are validated provision and were formally approved for delivery by the University in 2012. The College is in the process of revalidating its existing degree programmes with the University. It was also establishing a link with Confetti ICT that would see it delivering two foundation degrees at three of its centres from September 2018.

1.19   Responsibilities for development and approval of the University programmes rest with the awarding body and are outlined in the Institutional Agreement with the University. Guidelines and templates provided by the University set out approaches to the development of programmes to meet its undergraduate framework regulations. These include guides to producing programme specifications and module descriptions, developing curricula and approaches to assessment, specifying resource requirements and the preparation of documents for the approval panel. The University's programme approval procedures require that knowledge, skills and understanding are clearly aligned with the appropriate level descriptor and Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.20   Responsibility for the academic standards of the Artist Development programme rests with the awarding organisation, which developed the qualification. It is responsible for writing the programme and gaining its approval by Ofqual. The new foundation degrees are to be franchised and hence the responsibility for their academic standards will rest with Nottingham Trent University as the awarding body.

1.21   These procedures would enable the Expectation to be met. It was tested by discussing programme approval processes with staff and students and by reviewing programme documentation, records of committee meetings, the terms of reference of committees and the responsibilities checklists.

1.22   The College has defined who will be involved in rewriting the validated degree programmes and the information that will be used to inform the process. However, it has no documented internal policies and procedures to guide internal programme development and approval. Within the College formal responsibility for arranging programme development was stated to rest with the Higher Education Development Manager, who takes proposals to be signed off by the College's senior Board. The College has an established committee structure for overseeing quality assurance. The Higher Education Committee is responsible for overseeing the quality of all existing and new higher education provision. This reports to the Curriculum Quality Team, which is directly responsible for quality assurance of all programmes. However, the revalidation of the University degrees and the internal consideration of the new foundation degrees does not involve consideration of programme documentation by these committees. Programme development activity associated with the College's new partnership was confirmed to have been limited to Senior Management Team meetings. Hence it was not clear how the College assures itself that the academic standards and specific requirements of programmes can be met. Programme development is discussed further under Expectation B1 and a recommendation made relating to the College developing and implementing deliberative structures and effective internal processes to

design, develop and approve programmes.

1.23   The College has been approved by Rockschool as a centre to deliver the Artist Development programme. In this case academic standards are set by the awarding organisation and approval required the College to demonstrate that it was able to meet its requirements. The programme is accredited by Ofqual and benchmarked against the European Qualifications Framework.

1.24   Ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the academic standards of the College's programmes meet the requirements of national frameworks rests with the awarding body and organisation. However, the review team noted that the College has no documented internal policies and procedures to support programme design and development and hence it is not clear how it assures itself that the academic standards and specific requirements of any new programmes can be met. This is discussed further under Expectation B1. Hence the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of associated risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.25   In the degree programmes learning outcomes are defined for each module and the programme as a whole. The arrangements for the award of credit and qualifications are defined in the College's agreement with the awarding body and its academic regulations. Assessment processes are overseen by University-appointed external examiners and link tutors who attend examination boards and submit written reports to the University. External examiners also moderate marked student work. In the case of the Artist Development programme learning outcomes are defined at module level only and the College is required to follow the assessment methods and marking criteria defined by the awarding organisation. Assessments are moderated by an external moderator who reviews student work from all the centres offering the programme. Grading criteria for the award of credit are defined in module handbooks.

1.26   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.27   The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing assessment regulations; programme specifications; the terms of reference and minutes of examination boards; reports of external examiners, external moderators and link tutors and the responsibilities checklists for the programmes. The review team also discussed assessment processes with senior management and teaching staff from the College, link tutors, a quality assurance representative from the University and professional staff responsible for the operation and oversight of assessment.

1.28   Module learning outcomes are clearly linked to assessment tasks. However, links between module learning outcomes and programme learning outcomes are not always explicit in the definitive documentation for the degree programmes. Individual modules are not mapped to programme learning outcomes in the programme specifications. Module handbooks list module learning outcomes, but these are not always linked to the relevant programme learning outcomes. While assessment tasks are linked to the specified module learning outcomes and the award of credit, it is not entirely clear how all of the programme outcomes are taught or assessed. This is discussed further and a recommendation made under Expectation B6 relating to the College publishing and operating assessment practices and procedures which are clear, comprehensive and consistent.

1.29   The College's arrangements for assessment are effective. Reports from external examiners confirm that the standards set are appropriate for the awards and comparable with those in other UK institutions. They also confirm that the range and types of assessment used allow the intended learning outcomes to be assessed effectively. Reports from the external moderator confirm their agreement with the grades awarded.

1.30   The College's 'Freestanding' Examination Board for its validated programmes has ultimate oversight for ensuring credit and qualifications are awarded only where assessments demonstrate achievement of relevant learning outcomes. However, the review team established that recent meetings of the Examination Board were not quorate. This is discussed further and a recommendation is made under Expectation A2.1 relating to the College ensuring that it meets the requirements of the regulatory frameworks for the award of credit and qualifications of its degree-awarding body. In addition, this is discussed further under Expectations B6 and in B8 where a recommendation is made relating to the operation of the College's deliberative committees and ensuring effective oversight of the higher education programmes.

1.31   However, responsibility for academic standards lies with the awarding body and organisation. The College is required to follow their academic regulations, which, ensures that credit and qualifications are awarded only where learning outcomes have been assessed and UK threshold standards have been achieved. Hence the Expectation is met. However, given that links between assessment and programme learning outcomes are not defined consistently for the degree programmes and that examination boards are not always quorate, the level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.32   In the case of the degree programmes the College is required to follow the monitoring and review processes of the University. These include consideration of reports from independent external examiners, who are required to comment on the maintenance and achievement of academic standards. External examiners' reports are initially received and scrutinised by the University and subsequently forwarded to the College for inclusion in annual programme monitoring reports. Responsibility for oversight of monitoring and review processes is delegated to the College's Academic Board, working together with the University's Faculty Board. The College also produces an Annual Evaluative Report for its higher education programmes, summarising issues raised by external examiners, links tutors and by students. This is considered by the College's Student Council/Academic Board. The College does not yet have internal processes and procedures for periodic review. Further details of the approaches to monitoring and review are provided in under Expectation B8.

1.33   The Artist Development programme is monitored by the College using the procedures adopted for its further education programmes. These include the production of a separate pathway self-assessment report for the programme at each centre.

1.34   These arrangements are designed to check whether UK threshold academic standards are achieved and the standards required by the awarding body and organisation are being maintained, and would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.35   To assess the effectiveness of the College's procedures for programme monitoring and review, the team considered annual programme monitoring and review reports; the terms of reference and minutes of committees involved in the process, reports from external examiners and moderators and the College's internal monitoring reports and action plans.

1.36   The degree-awarding body and organisation are able to monitor academic standards directly via the reports they receive from the external examiners and external moderator that they appoint to oversee the programmes.

1.37   Module reviews and annual reviews of the degree programmes are completed by tutors and programme managers respectively using the template provided by the University as the awarding body. Any issues identified by external examiners are documented and, where appropriate, included in the action plan. Feedback from external examiners is incorporated into the College's Annual Evaluative Report, which also includes analysis and an action plan.

1.38   Monitoring of the Artist Development programme is the responsibility of the College and is undertaken through regular meetings between Curriculum Leaders and Programme Development Managers and by inspections by members of the College's Curriculum Quality Team at each centre. The pathway self-assessment reports compiled at each centre specifically address the extent to which learners' standards of work are appropriate to their level of study and meet the requirements of the qualification.

1.39   The review team concludes that the College, working with its awarding body and organisation, operates effective procedures for monitoring and reviewing the achievement and maintenance of academic standards. Hence the Expectation is met and the associated 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

1.40	The awarding body and organisation are ultimately responsible for the academic standards of the awards that the College delivers on their behalf. They have overall responsibility for ensuring that external and independent expertise is used to advise on the setting and maintenance of academic standards. The College is responsible for ensuring that its internal processes and procedures enable it to meet the expectations of its awarding partners.

1.41	The degree programmes are validated by the University using approval panels which include external members. Detailed operational guides are provided to ensure that the College conforms with the awarding body's processes for programme development and approval.

1.42	Academic standards are secured through University-appointed external examiners who provide external and independent advice to the awarding body and the College on the standards set for the awards and their comparability with those in other institutions, the standards of internal marking and the operation of the examination board.

1.43	An external moderator is appointed by the awarding organisation to report on assessment and the grades awarded at each centre in the Artist Development programme.

1.44	The College's approaches to the use of independent and external expertise would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.45	The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing the reports of external examiners and moderators and discussing programme development and monitoring with senior College staff and representatives from the awarding body.

1.46	External examiners' reports for the degree programmes confirm their role in setting and maintaining academic standards. They are required to comment specifically on the standards set for the awards and their comparability with those in similar programmes; the overall quality and standards of students' work; the marking standards adopted by internal examiners and the conduct and operation of the examination boards. The comments from these reports are considered and reported to the College's Higher Education Committee.

1.47	The external moderator's report for the Artist Development programme confirms their role in monitoring academic standards. They are required to comment on assessments and the grades awarded at each centre.

1.48	The review team concludes that the Expectation is met 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

1.49 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this judgement area are met with four of the seven representing a moderate level of risk.

1.50 There are no features of good practice or affirmations in this judgement area.

1.51 The review team made two specific recommendations, under Expectations A2.1 and A2.2, both of which relate to provision that is validated by the degree-awarding body only. Expectation A2.1 relates to the College ensuring it meets the requirements of the regulatory framework for the award of credit and qualifications. In this case the regulatory framework is adequate, but the team found shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which the College applied the University's prescriptions for the conduct of examination boards. Expectation A2.2 relates to the need for the College to develop and implement internal procedures that will allow it to maintain definitive records of its programmes and qualifications. In this case there is a need for the College to update documentation on a regular basis. This will not require any major structural, operational or procedural change.

1.52 An additional four recommendations are linked to this section and discussed further in Parts B and C. These relate to Expectation A2.1 and its operation of assessment practices and procedures (see B6); in respect of Expectation A2.2, around policies and procedures relevant to the provision of information (see Part C); for Expectation A3.1, its processes for the design, development and approval of programmes (see B1); and in the case of Expectation A3.2 and the College's operation of its deliberative committees (see B8).

1.53 The College does not have its own degree awarding powers. The awarding body and organisation are responsible for setting academic standards and have transparent and comprehensive regulatory frameworks for the award of credit and qualifications.

1.54 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body and other awarding organisation at the College **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 The College's approaches to the revalidation of existing programmes and the development of new programmes reflect the requirements of the respective University partners and the specific approval arrangements. The existing honours degree programmes are validated by Birmingham City University, having been first approved in 2012. The College is responsible for the initial development of programme documentation, using templates provided by the University. In the case of the Artist Development programme, this is franchised provision with the College being approved by Rockschool as a centre to deliver the programme. The new foundation degrees are existing programmes that will be franchised from Confetti ICT and hence the College has not been involved in their design or development.

2.2 The College's Higher Education Committee is responsible for the quality assurance of existing and new programmes. It reports to the Curriculum Quality Team. Programmes must be signed off by the Higher Education Development Manager before being considered by the Senior Management Team, which oversees strategic planning and business development. Proposals must then be finally approved by the College's Board, before being passed on to the awarding body for its consideration.

2.3 The College has been approved by Rockschool as a centre to deliver the Artist Development programme. In this case responsibility for the design, development and approval of the programme rests with Rockschool itself. Approval was required for the College to deliver this provision and to demonstrate that it was able to meet the awarding organisation's requirements. The programme is accredited by Ofqual and benchmarked against the European Qualifications Framework.

2.4 These procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.5 To test the effectiveness of the College's procedures the review team considered documentation related to programme development and approval, including the terms of reference and minutes of committees involved in the process. It also discussed programme development and approval processes with senior College staff.

2.6 The College does not have any documented standard procedures for the internal development, approval or revalidation of new and existing academic programmes, whether franchised or validated provision. The College's honours degree programmes are scheduled to be revalidated during the academic year 2017-18. However, rewriting of programme documentation has not commenced. As part of the revalidation process the College is required to ensure that the provision is aligned to the University's revised academic plan. The College and University staff involved in rewriting programme specifications and module descriptions and the inputs that will be used to inform curriculum development have been defined. However, the revalidation process flowchart indicates that the College's deliberative committees with responsibility for quality assurance of new and existing programmes will not

be involved in the revalidation process.

2.7   The new foundation degrees have been established in order to increase opportunities for students on the College's level three programmes to progress to higher education. Approval followed the procedures of this new awarding body, Nottingham Trent University. It was a two-stage process, with initial approval of the College as a franchise partner of Confetti ICT being followed by approval of the College to deliver the specific programmes. Internal approval of this new partnership firstly involved agreement of the business proposition between the senior directors of the College, Confetti ICT and Nottingham Trent University. The College then developed an initial business case which included predicted numbers and delivery sites. The proposals were also considered internally by the Higher Education Committee and the Senior Management Team. However, the internal approval process did not involve any of the College's committees with designated responsibility for the quality assurance of new programmes or consideration of the College's capacity to meet the specific requirements of delivering foundation degrees. Hence the review team **recommends** that the College develop and implement deliberative structures and effective internal processes to design, develop and approve programmes.

2.8   In view of the fact that the current systems the College uses to design and internally approve programmes do not involve their consideration by its key committees with delegated responsibility for quality assurance academic, the review team concludes that the Expectation is not met. Although financial issues are given consideration, insufficient priority is given to assuring standards and quality in the College's planning processes. However, as all programmes require approval of an awarding body or organisation the associated level of risk is considered to be moderate.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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   The College is responsible for admissions to all its higher education programmes. Information relating to College facilities, academic programmes, entry requirements and the admissions process is available to prospective applicants on the College website and, in the case of the degree programmes, on the UCAS website. Applications to the degree programmes are made via UCAS. Applications to the Artist Development programme are made directly to the College via an online system. All applications are initially considered by the College's central admissions unit based in Manchester. Any non-standard applications are referred on to the appropriate College centre. All applicants are interviewed and those applying to the Popular Music Performance and Artist Development programmes are additionally required to complete an audition. All applicants receive an e-mail confirming the outcome of their application and indicating who to contact if they are unhappy with the decision. Students' qualifications are checked prior to enrolment. The College has a Tier 4 licence and information from the UK National Recognition Information Centre is used to check the equivalence of international qualifications. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.10   The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing information in the College's self-evaluation document and the prospectus for the degree programmes and by examining the College and UCAS websites. It also discussed recruitment and admissions processes with senior management and professional support staff and students.

2.11   The College website allows potential applicants to make informed decisions about the College as a place to study. It includes information on College facilities and the support that is available for students with disabilities or additional learning needs. Links to the Unistats data set enable comparisons to be made between the degree programmes in the College and those in other providers. However, the review team also noted some inaccuracies and omissions in the information for the degree programmes on both the UCAS and College websites. Both provide an overview of the programmes but make no mention of course modules and include little information relating to teaching and assessment. The Popular Music Performance programme is listed as Popular Music in UCAS. The College website and the prospectus do not indicate that the final award is an Honours degree. The College website also states that both programmes are delivered over five days each week but in practice it is four. These inaccuracies and omissions put the College at risk of not being compliant with the Competition and Markets Authority guidelines and are referred to again, and a recommendation relating to policies and procedures for the provision of information is made in Part C.

2.12   Standardised procedures for interview and audition ensure that applicants are dealt with consistently and that they have an opportunity to disclose any disability or additional learning needs. Guidance notes on the College website help applicants to prepare. Overseas students are interviewed and auditioned via Skype. Systems are in place to assist students in their transition into the College. These are discussed further under Expectation B4.

2.13   The College does not routinely evaluate data relating to applications or the effectiveness of its admissions processes. However, the admissions process for the degree programmes has recently been revised to address issues with student retention and to ensure that entry criteria are adhered to.

2.14   The review team concludes that the College's admissions procedures are transparent, inclusive, consistent and fair and therefore the Expectation is met. However, in the case of the degree programmes insufficient priority is given to ensuring that information for applicants is accurate and hence the review team concludes that the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.15   The degree programmes are delivered at the College's Birmingham centre only and are overseen by the College's Higher Education Committee, which reports to the Curriculum Quality Team. The Artist Development programme is delivered at several centres and is managed within the College's further education quality systems, which also report to the Curriculum Quality Team. Individual teaching and learning strategies are articulated in the specifications and module handbooks for each programme. Information relating to programmes, modules and assessment is available to teaching staff and students via the College VLE. Procedures are in place to ensure that staff have appropriate qualifications and experience, for monitoring their performance and for promoting their professional development. The College has a Performance and Capability Policy and Procedure that can be invoked when staff do not meet the standards required.

2.16   The College does not have its own library but students on the degree programmes have free access to the University's library. All students are able to access facilities for instrumental development and ensemble performance. Annual monitoring and review processes, incorporating feedback from students and external examiners, are used to evaluate individual modules and programmes and to identify opportunities for improvement. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.17   The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing the College's self-evaluation document and the student submission. The team also examined programme specifications, module handbooks, information on the College VLE, module and programme reviews and the minutes of the committees involved in the process. It also discussed teaching and learning with students, senior management and academic staff.

2.18   Students commented positively on their teaching and learning experiences within the College. They highlighted the fact that 'staff go out of their way to pinpoint areas where students are struggling' and that they are 'able to get the best out of people'. The College is developing a charter for the degree programmes but the students the review team met were unaware of this.

2.19   The College recognises the challenges created by the two-year accelerated structure of the degree programmes, particularly in relation to the development of academic and critical writing skills, student progression, retention and achievement. It is planning to address these at revalidation. The intense nature of the course is made clear at interview. Although students the review team met did not express significant concerns about the accelerated structure, they did note that if they missed a class they could quickly get behind.

2.20   Recruitment and induction processes ensure that new staff have appropriate qualifications and experience, that they are briefed on College policies and procedures and that they are supported when they commence teaching. The University receives a copy of the CV of any new member of staff that is appointed.

2.21   College policies and procedures promote and monitor scholarly activity and staff development. Academic staff that teach the degree programmes are also able to participate

in training and development activities organised by the University but staff the review team met were not aware of this. The College's academic staff are not yet engaged with the UK Professional Standards Framework. Classroom observations are a scheduled part of annual quality assurance procedures and provide academic staff with constructive advice on their teaching practices. The Higher Education Development Manager uses the records of individual peer observations to provide a summary of good practice and areas for improvement and these are included in the Annual Evaluative Report and shared with teaching staff. The outcomes of the teaching observations for the Artist Development programme are incorporated into the College's Self-Assessment Report, but are not disaggregated from those of the College's further education programmes.

2.22   Teaching programmes reflect the College's aim to provide employment-led education and training. Academic staff draw on their own professional experiences and guest speakers provide additional inputs on current or specialist topics. Links with industry are also used directly in teaching and assessment. For example, by students reviewing tracks by unsigned artists or using existing companies to form the basis for case studies. At each centre the delivery of the Artist Development programme is tailored to the needs of students and the local music industry, while adhering to the programme specification. All programmes incorporate measures to develop students intellectual and communication skills. Individual and group activities develop students' capacity to work on their own or as part of a team. In the degree programmes shared modules at levels four and five encourage students to extend their thinking beyond their immediate subject boundaries and a major project at level six requires students to conduct independent research and study a subject in depth.

2.23   In consultation with its students the College has developed and introduced a revised attendance policy in order to address problems of low attendance and late arrival at timetabled sessions. There are separate versions of the policy for the two University programmes, with different penalties applied for late arrival. However, during the review the College confirmed that there should be a standard policy across both programmes and the information was amended accordingly.

2.24   The College employs a variety of methods to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning. These are discussed further in B8. The Annual Evaluative Review provides a consolidated list of issues arising from peer observation, external examiners' and link tutors' reports for the degree programmes. However, it does not encompass annual programme monitoring reports and does not identify common themes or prioritise areas for staff development. The review has an associated action plan but this does not address all the issues identified in the review. Link tutors' reports also indicate a lack of progress in addressing some key issues. A self-assessment report is compiled for the Artist Development programme at each centre that delivers it. However, these reports do not note comments made in the external moderator's report and although they identify targets for improvement the associated action plans are not always completed. Hence the review team **recommends** that the College ensures that it uses the outcomes of internal review processes to assure and systematically enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices. This is discussed further under Expectation in B8 and under Enhancement.

2.25   The College's academic programmes allow students to study subjects in depth and develop their transferable skills. Monitoring processes enable the provision of learning opportunities to be reviewed, but the outcomes of review processes are not systematically used to inform staff development and enhance teaching practices. Hence the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.26   The College has a strong commitment to safeguarding, promoting equality and diversity and protecting the health and welfare of its students, underpinned by policies that operate across the College. College handbooks emphasise the need for students to act responsibly and respect others. High priority is assigned to protection against noise during performance sessions.

2.27   Students on the degree programmes do not have a personal tutor but meet academic staff informally on a regular basis. Formal pastoral and academic support is provided through individual and group tutorials. Students also have access to a wide range of support services within the University including advice on completing assessments, healthcare, counselling and careers. Advice and support is also available for international students and those with disabilities or additional learning needs. The College does not have its own library, but students have full access to the University's library. Students are also members of the University Students' Union. The link tutor provides an induction to the University library, has close contact with the student body and attends the Student Council/Academic Board meetings. Students on the Artist Development programme access the support services that are available at each centre. Study programme managers hold regular individual tutorials with students to discuss assessments and any other issues. Each centre also has a dedicated additional learning support tutor.

2.28   Students have access to recording studios and facilities for instrumental tuition and ensemble performance. All academic programmes include aims and learning outcomes directed towards students' transferable and subject specific skills as well as their knowledge and understanding. As noted under Expectation B3 programmes also incorporate links with industry that enhance students' experience and employability. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.29   The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing the College's self-evaluation document and the student submission and by examining relevant policies and procedures. It also discussed support with students and academic staff.

2.30   The students the review team met commented positively on the friendly environment within the College. Academic staff, who are students' first point of contact if they have issues or concerns, are both approachable and helpful. Students on the degree programmes noted that the support services of the university are generally accessible and effective, but reported difficulties in obtaining library cards at the start of the year. This had impacted on the ability of some to complete assessment tasks and access the Students' Union. The College does not formally evaluate the effectiveness of the university support services for its students. However, students are able to provide feedback to the College via the Student Council/Academic Board and the link tutor.

2.31   Systems are in place to facilitate students' transition into higher education. Prior to their arrival in the College students on the degree programmes receive an induction pack that introduces them to College and university policies and procedures. Individual and joint activities in the first week of term provide an introduction to what to expect from the course and include a tour of University facilities with a representative from the university. Feedback from students on their induction experience is generally positive.

2.32   In the Artist Development programme, the induction period extends over six weeks. This provides opportunities for the College and students to assess whether the course is right for them and to identify any additional support required. Students are able to complete an online individualised learning plan that allows them to monitor their own progress against targets during their time in the College. Students on the Artist Development programme reported contrasting experiences of their initial time in the College. Students at one centre reported that they had had an introduction to the use of the College VLE and had received the student handbook. Students at a different centre reported that they were not yet using the VLE and were unaware of the handbook.

2.33   The College recognises the importance of links with industry for enhancing students' experience and employability. Curricular and extracurricular activities foster students' personal and career development. Students are encouraged to build up their own portfolio by attending gigs, recordings and promoting themselves. Details of performance and other opportunities are circulated by e-mail. The 'Futures Gateway' section of the VLE provides students with information and advice on gaining employment within the creative industry and includes a link to a database of employment opportunities. Students commented on the industry experience staff brought to modules and were positive about how this adds value to their learning experience.

2.34   The College makes musical instruments available but most students prefer to use their own. The studios used for performance and recording are well equipped and can be accessed without charge at times outside the formal timetable so that students can rehearse. Students on the Artist Development programme make use of the College's own facilities at each centre. Students on the degree programmes are dependent on facilities in commercial studios located adjacent to the College's Birmingham teaching centre. This is discussed further under Expectation B10. The student representative system enables the College to identify and respond to any resource issues that arise. For example, when students on the Popular Music Performance programme reported difficulties in accessing and using specific song-writing software the College responded by updating the relevant computers and by providing additional training sessions.

2.35   The review team concludes that the College has effective arrangements and resources in place to allow students to engage fully with their academic programmes and to support their development. It concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of 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

2.36   The College employs a variety of approaches to elicit feedback from its students. In the case of the degree programmes module evaluations and exit interviews are used to gather feedback and gain destination data. The College has also recently started to participate in the National Students' Survey. In the case of the Artist Development programme student satisfaction surveys are conducted three times each year via an external organisation. A student representative system operates for all higher education provision with new representatives for each cohort being recruited annually. Students are alerted to the opportunities they have to provide feedback on their programmes at induction and in programme handbooks. The Student Council/Academic Board is the main forum at which issues raised by students on the degree programmes are discussed. It reports to the Higher Education Committee, at which students are also represented. The University-appointed link tutors also meet students and include commentary on issues raised in their annual reports.

2.37   The Colleges' approach to student engagement would enable the Expectation to be met. To test the Expectation the review team considered the students' submission, the course representatives' handbook and the minutes and terms of reference of the Higher Education Committee and Student Council/Academic Board. It also discussed student engagement with students and student representatives from all programmes and with senior management, teaching and professional support staff of the College and link tutors.

2.38   Student surveys allow the College to monitor students' experience of their academic programmes. The module evaluation process used for the degree programmes has recently been revised and an online survey form adopted. This ensures that the survey is administered across all modules and allows quantitative feedback to be obtained on different aspects of teaching, assessment and programme management. This offers a more comprehensive approach to obtaining feedback, although the College recognises that further development is needed to revise the form and increase student engagement. Feedback from module evaluation questionnaires is incorporated into annual module review processes and the development of associated action plans. This is discussed further under Expectation B8. The College participated in the National Students' Survey for the first time in 2017. This is discussed further under Enhancement.

2.39   Student representatives receive guidance on how to undertake their role effectively. This includes guidance on obtaining feedback from and reporting back to the wider student community. The College committees involved in programme management have recently been revised. The role of the Board of Studies has been subsumed into the Student Council, so that it is now the Student Council/Academic Board. However, revised terms of reference for the new committee have not been approved by the College or the University. Notwithstanding this, communication and reporting systems within the College allow any matters raised to be dealt with appropriately. The Student Council/Academic Board meets on a regular basis and is attended by course directors, teaching staff and the link tutor as well as student representatives. Issues raised by students are minuted and where necessary, matters can be escalated up to the Higher Education Committee. The College oversees the main issues raised in the Student Council/Academic Board and actions taken to address them via the Annual Evaluative Report.

2.40   Questionnaire surveys, conducted three times a year, are the main methods used to elicit feedback from students on the Artist Development programme. The results are collated within and across centres and used to identify and implement improvements to the student experience. Each centre also holds meetings with student representatives from all programmes and the representatives from the Artist Development programme are included in these.

2.41   The review team concludes that the College engages effectively with its students as partners to assure and enhance their educational experience. Hence the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

2.42   The College is required to follow the assessment processes and regulations that are specified by its awarding body and organisation. These are detailed in institutional agreements, academic regulations and the definitive programme documentation.

2.43   Admission and selection procedures allow students to disclose any additional learning needs or to seek recognition of prior learning. The assessment instruments for each module are defined in the approved module descriptions and include both formative and summative tasks. The College is responsible for assessment design for the degree programmes. Responsibility for assessment design for the Artist Development programme is shared with the awarding organisation. New module tutors receive guidance on assessment matters through staff mentoring arrangements. The College has a documented procedure for internal verification and moderation, which describe its processes for ensuring that assessment is operated consistently, accurately and fairly.

2.44   Assessment briefs and associated grading criteria are communicated to students through links in module handbooks and associated documents provided on the College's VLE. There is a standard assessment schedule for the Artist Development programme that operates across all centres. Its implementation is monitored by the Curriculum Quality Team.

2.45   In all programmes first marking and provision of feedback to students is the responsibility of the College. In the degree programmes, internal moderation is undertaken by staff of the College and the University. The University-appointed link tutor exercises oversight of the assessment processes and is also involved in internal moderation. In the Artist Development programme internal moderation is undertaken by the College. External moderation is conducted by independent external examiners and an external moderator appointed by the awarding body and organisation respectively. The University maintains oversight of assessment processes via the reports of the independent external examiners it appoints to the programmes. External examiners are able to review assessment tasks before they are issued. They also review samples of marked students work. In their reports, they comment on marking and moderation processes, the standards set by the College and those achieved by students and the operation of the examination boards. In the case of the degree programmes issued raised by the link tutor and external examiners are summarised in the Annual Evaluative Report. The awarding organisation maintains oversight of assessment on the Artist Development programme via the reports of the external moderator. In order to monitor consistency across sites the moderator reviews assessment at all centres.

2.46   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.47   The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's approaches by reviewing module handbooks, feedback on students' work; the arrangements made for students with specific learning needs and the recognition of prior learning; reports from link tutors, external examiners and moderators and minutes of the examination boards. The review team also discussed assessment processes with senior management, teaching and professional

support staff of the College, students from all programmes and the link tutor and quality assurance representatives of the University.

2.48   Assessment tasks aim to be as authentic to the music industry as possible and include case studies and live performances. Students confirmed that induction sessions and their handbooks provided advice on good academic practice, with further online facilities and support available within the College and the University. Working with live briefs is recognised to create extra burden on students on accelerated programmes particularly but nevertheless these were welcomed by the students.

2.49   Formative assessments are used to support student development. Students are also able to gain feedback from staff by submitting assignment drafts. Feedback on summative assessment is useful and, for written work, is provided within three weeks. In the case of live performances students receive feedback from staff and their peers on completion of the task. Students explained that they received guidance about unfair practice during induction and specific guidance on avoiding plagiarism and referencing style is available on the VLE. The College does not currently use software to support detection of plagiarism, although where it is suspected it can be checked by the University.

2.50   The review team found some inconsistencies in the operation of assessment processes across the two degree programmes. There is a standard University template for assignment briefs that details the assessment tasks and grading criteria and specifies the schedule for formative and summative assessment and feedback. However, it is not used in many modules of the Music Business programme. In these cases, links between module and programme learning outcomes are not stated and therefore it is not clear that all programme outcomes are assessed. This is also referred to under Expectation A3.2.

2.51   Assessment processes and the conduct of examination boards are overseen by the external examiners and the link tutor and the College responds to issued raised by them in their reports. External examiners reports confirm that the standards set by the College are appropriate, that students are provided with sufficient information to enable them to complete tasks and that marking is generally fair. The College has taken steps to address over-generous marking in some modules through staff development activities. Link tutor's reports refer to recurrent problems with failure to follow procedures regarding moderation and the presentation of marks at examination boards. The College has responded by strengthening its approaches to internal verification and moderation and by placing responsibility for meeting awarding body requirements with the Curriculum Quality Team. In order to ensure that its requirements are met the University now compiles the mark sheets that are used by examination boards.

2.52   As noted under Expectation A2.1, attendance at the examination boards for the degree programmes does not meet the threshold required by the University for the meeting to be deemed quorate. The membership of the boards includes all staff teaching on the programme, including sessional and University teaching staff who make a significant contribution to teaching. However, attendance by College teaching staff is low and some boards have taken place at which only one member of the College's teaching staff was present. This matter has not been formally addressed by the College and supports the recommendation under Expectation B8 relating to the College reviewing and revising the terms of reference and operation of deliberative committees to ensure effective oversight of higher education programmes and that degree-awarding body requirements are met.

2.53   Responsibility for development of the degree programmes is shared with the awarding partner. In its self-evaluation document the College refers to problems of repetition and bunching of assessment deadlines in the Music Business programme. Students confirmed that staff measures to constrain the assessment load such as limits

placed on the number of group work projects running simultaneously, were not always successful. The review team was informed that these were to be addressed through the forthcoming revalidation of the programmes. The volume of assessment will also be reduced, to bring the programmes in line with the awarding partner's strategy.

2.54   There is a standard assessment schedule for the Artist Development programme that aims to ensure consistency of assessment practices across the centres at which it is delivered. However, examples of assessment briefs seen by the team were found to have different volumes of assessment, leading to a degree of inconsistency of practice between centres.

2.55   The external moderator's report confirms their agreement with the grades awarded by the College's staff. Students' progress is reviewed at examination boards held at each centre.

2.56   Under Expectation A2.1 the review team found that the College was not fully adhering to the regulatory framework specified by the University for the award of credit and qualifications. Under Expectation A3.2 the review team found that links between programme and module learning outcomes are not specified consistently in the definitive documentation for the degree programmes and hence it is not entirely clear how each module is taught and assessed. In view of the inconsistencies in the operation of assessment processes and examination boards and the inconsistent links between assessment, module and programme learning outcomes the review team **recommends** that the College ensures it publishes and operates assessment practices and procedures which are clear, comprehensive and consistent.

2.57   Assessment processes are independently overseen by the external examiners and moderators appointed by the awarding body and organisation respectively. Their reports conform that assessment processes are valid and equitable, and that they allow students to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes. Hence the review team concludes that the Expectation is met. However, as the College has some weaknesses in their operation and governance of assessment and is recommended to review practices and procedures to ensure assessment activity is clear, comprehensive and consistent, the level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.58   The awarding organisation appoints an external moderator to oversee the academic standards of the Artist Development programme and to provide an independent view of the provision. Visits are undertaken annually to review samples of assessment briefs and marked student work. Reports of the outcomes of these visits are reviewed by the awarding organisation and sent to the College and considered by the Curriculum Quality Team for responses to be made.

2.59   The agreement with the awarding body details the arrangements made for the academic oversight of the degree programmes. The University appoints external examiners to provide independent oversight of the College's assessment practices. The College manages examination boards at its sites which are attended by the external examiners and the link tutor. The University's Collaborative Partnerships Office provides administrative support to the examination boards. Details of the activities, role, rights and duties of the external examiners are specified in a schedule of the institutional agreement and University operations manual. The examination boards take place three times a year and reports are received and scrutinised by the University before circulation to the College.

2.60   Any issues raised by the external examiners during the examination boards or in their report are responded to individually by the Course Director via the University and action plans developed following these.

2.61   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.62   The team tested the Expectation by reviewing the minutes of examination boards, external examiners' and moderator reports and the College's response to them. The team also discussed external examining and moderation processes with students and professional support and academic staff from the College and the University, including those responsible for supporting this activity.

2.63   The reports from the external moderator for the Artist Development programme include comments on programme coverage, quality of content, fulfilment of assessment requirements, areas of good practice and issues arising, the presentation of evidence, use of formative feedback and extent of agreement with the judgement of grades awarded. The issues raised are discussed at Curriculum Quality Team meetings. Any actions required are discussed with the centres as appropriate. The external moderator's report is not made available to students.

2.64   Issues raised by the external examiners of the degree programmes are noted at the examination board meetings and documented in their formal reports which are considered by the University and the College's Higher Education Committee. They are also summarised in the Annual Evaluative Review. The Course Director compiles a response to the external examiner. This is checked by the University, which is then responsible for making the formal response to the external examiner. The Link Tutor liaises between the College and the University faculty. A few external examiner reports note some delays and communication issues with the awarding body.

2.65   External examiner reports, the Annual Evaluative Review and its associated action plan are placed on the College VLE, making them accessible to students. Some of the issues raised have led to improvements in practices disseminated through staff development

sessions, for example in respect of verification and moderation.

2.66   The review team concludes that the College makes effective use of the external examiners and moderators to monitor its programmes, their assessment and academic standards. Accordingly, the Expectation is met and the 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

2.67   The College is responsible for annual monitoring of all its higher education programmes. Monitoring and review of the degree programmes is required to follow procedures defined by the University. The institutional agreement outlines the University's expectations and its requirements of the College for the governance and management of the degree programmes. These include specific roles for an Academic Board and a Board of Studies. The Board of Studies is responsible for oversight of the operation and delivery of the programme including matters relating to the assurance of quality and the maintenance of standards and for making proposals for the programme's continued development. The Academic Board is responsible for ensuring that an annual review of the programmes takes place in accordance with the University's procedures. Responsibility for modifications to the degree programmes and periodic review processes is shared with the University.

2.68   Templates provided by the University are used to complete reviews of programmes and modules. A quality calendar defines the activities to be completed at different stages of the annual academic cycle. Annual monitoring reports are completed by Course Leaders and are provided to the awarding body for each programme. These incorporate issues raised by external examiners, link tutors and students. They can also be used to trigger minor modification to programmes.

2.69   The Artist Development programme is monitored and reviewed following the procedures the College uses for its further education programmes. A quality framework and quality calendar outline the monitoring undertaken at the College at different stages of the learner journey. The process includes reviews of admissions, interview and enrolment, induction, learning and teaching delivery, assessment and internal verification processes, assessment outcome sampling and leadership and management. A pathway self-assessment report is compiled for the Artist Development programme at each centre where it is delivered. Any changes to the Artist Development programme can only be made by the awarding organisation.

2.70   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.71   The review team tested the Expectation by examining University and College policies and procedures, module and programme reviews and the minutes of committees involved. It also discussed processes with staff responsible for, and engaged in, annual monitoring and review.

2.72   The modules of the degree programmes are reviewed using a template provided by the University. Reviews incorporate feedback from students, an evaluation by the module tutor and an analysis of student performance. Completed module reviews are placed on a shared drive allowing them to be reviewed by the Higher Education Development Manager.

2.73   Annual monitoring reports for the degree programmes are compiled separately by programme, cohort and level. The review team found that the overall quality of annual monitoring reports is very variable with many having sections that are blank, that fail to review the previous year's action plan or to use the full set of inputs such as the external examiner and link tutor reports. Annual monitoring reports are reviewed by the University

Faculty Board and any issues passed on to the University Senate. This process allows the University to check that modules have been reviewed and that a response to the external examiner has been prepared. However, reports indicate that these actions are not always completed.

2.74   A self-assessment report is provided for the Artist Development programme at each centre where it is delivered. These reports include consideration of course leadership and management, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, student's personal development and welfare and outcomes for learners. Targets for improvement are identified but the associated action plans are not always completed. The programme is also monitored via quality monitoring visits and teaching and learning observations. Reports from all centres are compiled into an annual College-wide, self-assessment report, although this does not disaggregate the findings for individual programmes.

2.75   The College's internal monitoring and evaluation processes include development of an Annual Evaluative Report for the degree programmes written by the Higher Education Development Manager. The report includes comprehensive lists of issues arising from external examiner and link tutor reports and the Student Council/Academic Board. However, it does not incorporate issues arising from annual monitoring reports. The report has an associated action plan with targets for improvement. The review team considered that further critical and analytical development of the information in the report would assist the College to identify cross-cutting issues, to focus on key areas and prioritise actions to enhance teaching and learning more effectively.

2.76   The review team's findings identified that the College lacks a consistent approach for the review of modules (see paragraph 2.72) and that the quality of annual monitoring reports is variable (see paragraph 2.73). In addition, the College does not effectively prioritise actions to enhance teaching and learning (see paragraph 2.75). The team therefore **recommends** that the College articulate and consistently apply internal processes that enable it to identify, prioritise and address issues identified in monitoring and review. Annual monitoring processes are discussed further under Expectation B3 and Enhancement and recommendations made relating to the use of the outcomes of review processes to assure and systematically enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices.

2.77   At the request of the University the College has made changes to the governance arrangements for programme management, monitoring and review. The role of the Board of Studies has been subsumed into the revised Student Council/Academic Board. However, the terms of reference of the committees have not been fully revised to reflect this change. The Student Council/Academic Board acts mainly as a forum in which student representatives are able to raise issues with the College.

2.78   Academic oversight of programme standards and the quality of learning opportunities is maintained through the Higher Education Committee, and the college-wide Curriculum Quality Team. The minutes of these Committees indicate that they are not fully effective in exercising oversight of the degree programmes. The Higher Education Committee notes issues raised by external examiners but not the outcomes of annual programme and monitoring review processes which, as noted in paragraphs 2.72 and 2.73 above are not always fully completed. It has also noted the fact that attendance at examination boards does not meet the threshold required by the University for them to be deemed quorate (see Expectations A2.1 and B6). The Curriculum Quality Team focuses mainly on the College's further education programmes, with relatively few matters specific to higher education students being noted in its reports. The College confirmed that integration between the governance committees is informal, with documents placed on a shared drive for College colleagues to identify relevant materials to develop at other committees.

Hence the review team **recommends** that the College review and revise the terms of reference and operation of deliberative committees to ensure effective oversight of higher education programmes and that degree-awarding body requirements are met.

2.79   The agreement with the University expires at the end of academic year 2017-18 and in line with its normal procedures the degree programmes must be subject to periodic review and revalidation. This process requires the College to prepare a revised Student Handbook and an Evaluative Paper that critically evaluates the current programme, sets out any proposed changes and a rationale for them. It also requires programme specifications and module outlines to be updated in line with the University's Transforming the Curriculum initiative. In its self-evaluation document the College notes that the process of rewriting the degrees began in January 2017. However, the team was informed that this process had not started and that the College intended to complete the periodic review in spring 2018. Although the College has identified who will provide inputs to the periodic review and revalidation process it has no internal documented policies or procedures to guide the internal revision of documentation and approval of revised programmes. Hence the review team **recommends** that the College develop and implement periodic review processes that will enable it to meet the requirements of the degree-awarding body.

2.80   The review team concludes that the College's methods of monitoring and review of the degree programmes have shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied, and by which they are used to maintain academic standards and assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities. The effectiveness of monitoring and review procedures and the College's oversight of its degree programmes require strengthening. Hence the Expectation is not met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

2.81   The Artist Development programme is monitored and reviewed using the procedures the College uses for its further education programmes. Although this treats the programme separately from the other higher education activity undertaken, the review team considers the governance of this is effective. Hence it concludes that monitoring and review of the Artist Development provision meets the Expectation and the risk is considered low.

For awarding body:

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

For awarding organisation:

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

2.82   Procedures for reporting and responding to complaints and appeals are outlined to students at induction and made available in handbooks. The awarding body and organisation retain responsibility for their awards and hence they are ultimately responsible for any appeals relating to academic standards. In the case of the degree programmes the College is responsible for complaints. Students are encouraged to discuss and resolve any issues they are concerned about with their module tutors. Any that remain unresolved are referred on to the Higher Education Development Manager, the College Board, and then the University if they have not been resolved at an earlier stage. Similar procedures apply to students on the Artist Development programme. Again, emphasis is placed on resolving issues locally via personal tutors but matters can be escalated nationally if they remain unresolved.

2.83   Together these policies and procedures would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.84   To test the Expectation the review team examined College policies and procedures and student handbooks. The team also discussed processes with students and with staff with responsibility for dealing with complaints and appeals.

2.85   The students the review team met emphasised that teaching staff are in regular contact with students at timetabled sessions and operate an open-door policy. This encourages open communication and helps to ensure that any issues or concerns are identified and addressed at an early stage. Issues can also be raised with student representatives. Students also confirmed that they had been informed of complaints and appeals processes during induction, by staff and in the case of the degree programmes, in the University Students' Union session.

2.86   The College's internal verification and moderation procedures, that apply to the Artist Development programme specify that academic decisions may be subject to appeal. Detailed, tiered and reported activity to meet the Good Practice Guidance issued by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) was less fully reflected in the examples seen by the team. If issues are not resolved locally they are referred up to the awarding organisation.

2.87   The College is developing its procedures in this area and these have not yet been evaluated in full. While some consideration of the advisory statements in the Good Practice Guidance from the OIA may benefit this work, information reviewed from the College demonstrated it follows practices of the awarding body and organisation. Staff and students also showed an understanding of the appeals and complaints procedures and therefore the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

2.88   The College makes use of specialist University services for the provision of professional counselling, disability and mental health advice for students on the degree programmes. Students also use the University library to access books and journals and are able to access the University's Centre for Academic Success for advice on completing assessments.

2.89   The College is also dependent on a number of external providers for the provision of office space, recording studios and performance venues. All of the College's teaching centres are leased but recording and other equipment is owned by the College. However, for instrumental teaching and ensemble performance on the degree programmes the College is dependent on arrangements with external providers. The delivery of the Artist Development programme is not dependent on any external partners for the provision of services, facilities or resources. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.90   The College has a signed agreement with the University that defines the respective responsibilities of the College and the University and the right of students to access university services. It includes provision to protect current students in the event of programme closure. The programmes are overseen by the University-appointed link tutor who meets students and attends the Student Council/Academic Board and examination boards. The link tutor also compiles a written annual report that forms part of the College's annual monitoring process. These are discussed further in Expectation B8. As noted in under Expectation B4, the College's arrangements with the University's professional support services work well. Although the College does not actively monitor their effectiveness it does get feedback from students via the Student Council/Academic Board.

2.91   The College makes use of commercial recording studios located adjacent to the Birmingham teaching centre on two days per week and a separate studio outside these times. These arrangements enable students to use a modern performance and recording facility and to work alongside the trained technicians within them. Performance sessions are recorded and archived so that they can be reviewed at a later date if required. The arrangement with the main provider is long-established but is not covered by any written agreement. Hence levels and extent of service provision and any period of notice or actions that might result in termination of access are not documented. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College establish appropriate written agreements with support providers to manage risk and secure service level arrangements that safeguard the provision of learning opportunities for students.

2.92   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met, but in the absence of a written agreement for the use of the main external recording studio used for the continued delivery of the Popular Music Performance programme, the level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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   The College does not deliver research degrees therefore this Expectation does not apply.

Expectation: Not applicable
Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.94   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. Two of the ten applicable Expectations are not met (B1 and B8) in the case of provision relating to the degree-awarding body, whereas for the provision relating to the awarding organisation, only Expectation B1 is not met.

2.95   In the case of the validated provision with the degree-awarding body a moderate risk has been identified in six of the ten applicable Expectations with the remainder identified as low risk. In the case of the provision offered on behalf of the awarding organisation five Expectations are identified as low risk and five have an associated moderate risk. The moderate risks are due to shortcomings in the rigour with which the College applies its quality assurance procedures and weaknesses in the College's operations, in its oversight and governance, and a lack of clarity about responsibilities.

2.96   There are no features of good practice or affirmations noted in this judgement area.

2.97   The review team made a number of recommendations relating to this judgement area. Recommendations for Expectations B1, B3 and B6 relate to the College's provision in respect of both the degree-awarding body and the awarding organisation. In the case of Expectations B8 and B10, recommendations are made solely for the validated provision with the degree-awarding body.

2.98   The recommendation in respect of Expectation B1 (also referred to under Expectation A3.1) relates to the College developing and implementing deliberative structures and effective internal processes to design, develop and approve programmes. In the case of Expectation B3, the recommendation relates to the College using the outcomes of its review processes to assure and systematically enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices. For Expectation B6 (also referred to under Expectation A2.1) the team recommends that the College publishes and operates assessment practices and procedures that are clear, comprehensive and consistent.

2.99   Three recommendations are made in respect of Expectation B8. These apply only to provision with the degree awarding body and relate to: the development and implementation of internal periodic review processes; review and revision of the terms of reference and operation of deliberative committees to allow the College to have more effective oversight of its higher education programmes (also referred to under Expectation A3.2); and for the College to articulate and consistently apply internal processes that enable it to identify, prioritise and address issues identified in monitoring and review. A further recommendation that links to Expectation B8 is outlined under Enhancement and relates to the outcomes of review processes being used systematically to enhance provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices. In the case of the Artist Development programme, the College follows procedures it uses for its further education programmes. Although this treats the programme separately from the other higher education activity undertaken, the review team considers the governance of this is effective and hence a differential outcome is concluded for this Expectation.

2.100   In the case of Expectation B10, the team recommended that the College establish appropriate written agreements with its support providers to manage risk and secure service level arrangements that will safeguard the provision of learning opportunities for its students on the validated degree provision.

2.101   The review team found that in the case of the validated provision the College has weaknesses in the operation of its governance structures and in the rigour with which quality

assurance processes are applied, particularly in relation to programme monitoring and review. In the case of the awarding organisation only one Expectation is not met. Although several moderate risks are identified these do not present a serious risk to the quality of students' learning opportunities.

2.102   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations for the provision of the awarding organisation. The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations for the provision of the degree-awarding body.

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 The vision and mission of the College are published on its public website and in its strategic plan. The College website also provides information on academic programmes, resources and facilities, tuition fees, learning support available to students, application, interview and audition procedures. Once they are registered in the College students also have access to programme and module information, policies and procedures on the College VLE. The Higher Education Development Manager has overall responsibility for information. The admissions and marketing team based in the College's Manchester centre manage its public website and programme entries on the UCAS website. Use of any marketing materials that incorporate the university logo must have the prior approval of the University. The College is aware of the importance of ensuring that its information meets the requirements of the Competition and Markets Authority. The staff in each centre manage information on the VLE. Responsibility for production of certificates and transcripts lies with the awarding partners. All information is held and archived electronically within the College's administrative systems and its VLE. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.2 To test the Expectation, the review team scrutinised information on the College and UCAS websites and on the College VLE. Procedures for developing and approving information were also discussed with senior management and professional support staff.

3.3 The College does not have a documented policy that details procedures for the development and sign-off of information or defining where responsibility for ensuring that it meets statutory requirements lies. The College staff the review team met expressed differing views about where responsibility for checking the accuracy of material on the College's public website lay.

3.4 In the course of its scrutiny of published information relating to the degree programmes the review team found some inaccuracies and omissions that could be misleading or confusing for potential and current students. As noted under Expectation B2 the title of the Popular Music Performance programme is listed as Popular Music on the UCAS website and on the College VLE. The programme specification, the agreement with the University and the Unistats data set all indicate that the final award is BMus (Hons). However, the College website, the prospectus and the VLE do not indicate that the degree is an honours degree and some of the students the review team met were also unsure about this. In the case of Music Business, the UCAS website does not indicate that the programme is validated by the University. The College and UCAS websites provide no information about modules and only limited information about teaching and assessment. Hence the College is at risk of not meeting the requirements of the Competition and Markets Authority.

3.5 Student handbooks are comprehensive and provide a valuable source of information for students, although the VLE site for the Music Business programme referred students to an outdated version. Programme specific information including module handbooks and guides to completing assessments are also available on the VLE.

The learning outcomes of the Popular Music Performance programme are listed on the VLE but those of the Music Business programme are not. As noted under Expectation A2.2 programme specifications have not been kept up-to-date and some of the level 4 and 5 module handbooks for the Popular Music Performance programme state that students must complete all modules at that level successfully before they can proceed to the next level. This is incorrect and could be misleading for students.

3.6   In contrast, the published information for the Artist Development programme was found to be more comprehensive and accurate. The College website notes the correct title and level of the award, specifies admissions requirements and provides guidance on the interview and selection process. The website provides some limited information about the scope of the programme although this could be enhanced. Detailed information about each of the course modules is made available to students via the VLE. This includes information on activities, learning resources and assignments. Additional sections of the VLE provide advice and guidance on progressing to employment or higher education. The VLE is also used to notify students of current employment opportunities.

3.7   Given the inaccuracies in the College's current published information for the degree programmes and the absence of documented policies and procedures for the development and sign-off of information the review team **recommends** that the College develop and implement policies and procedures that will enable it to ensure that the information it provides is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy and meets statutory and regulatory requirements.

3.8   Based on the its findings the team concludes that the Expectation is not met and the level of risk is moderate for its validated degree provision. In the case of the Artist Development programme, however, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

For awarding body:

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

For awarding organisation:

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.9   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. In reaching a decision for the single Expectation for this judgement area, the review team made a differentiated judgement in respect of the validated provision leading to awards of the degree-awarding body and that provided on behalf of the awarding organisation.

3.10   In the case of the Artist Development programme the team concludes this Expectation was met and the associated level of risk is low. However, in the case of programmes validated by the degree-awarding body, this Expectation requires improvement to meet UK expectations and has a moderate level of risk identified. The inaccuracies in the College's current published information for the degree programmes indicate that insufficient priority is given to assuring quality in planning processes. Due to the absence of documented policies and procedures for the development and sign-off of information there is a lack of clarity about where responsibilities for ensuring the accuracy of information lie. In contrast, the published information for the Artist Development programme was found to be more comprehensive and accurate.

3.11   There are no features of good practice or affirmations in this judgement area.

3.12   The review team identified one recommendation which relates to the College developing and implementing policies and procedures that will allow it to ensure that the information it provides is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, meeting statutory and regulatory requirements. This recommendation is also associated with the discussion under Expectations A2.2 and B2.

3.13   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations for the provision of the awarding organisation. The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations for the provision of the degree-awarding body.

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 The College has recently taken steps to allow it to maintain more effective oversight of its higher education programmes. It has appointed a Higher Education Development Manager to oversee practices and internal committee structures have been re-organised. The Higher Education Committee reviews the undergraduate degree programmes although its remit excludes the Artist Development programme, which is considered alongside the College's further education provision. However, the Curriculum Quality Team is responsible for the quality assurance of all the College's programmes. It oversees the College's further education programmes, receives reports from the Higher Education Committee and reports to the Senior Management Team. Although the arrangements for monitoring and review of the Artist Development and degree programmes are different, in both cases the College has systems in place that allow it to garner feedback from students, teaching staff, external examiners and moderators and for this to be communicated and evaluated within the institution.

4.2 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.3 The review team tested the expectation by reviewing the College's strategic plan, reports of the external examiners and moderator, annual programme reviews, the annual evaluative report, the terms of reference and minutes of the College committees. It also discussed programme development with senior management and teaching staff.

4.4 The College is in the process of updating its strategic plan. However, currently it has no specific strategy or set of principles to guide enhancement of higher education. Instead it relies on the policies and procedures of its awarding body and organisation to develop, deliver, monitor and review its programmes. The College's higher education programmes are overseen by the Higher Education Committee, the Curriculum Quality Team and the Senior Management Team. However, specific responsibilities for enhancement are not indicated in any of the terms of reference of these committees.

4.5 The College engages with its students via module reviews, the Student Council/Academic Board and the Higher Education Committee. Students who met the review team confirmed that the College was supportive and responded to individual issues raised in the Student Council/Academic Board and the Higher Education Committee. A revised attendance policy has been introduced in response to concerns expressed about the disruptive effect of students arriving late to classes. Up until recently the systems used to gather feedback from students on the degree programmes did not allow it to gain quantitative data on their experiences of teaching and learning within the College, and hence identify potential targets for enhancement. It did not participate in the National Students' Survey and the previous module review form was not structured, requiring students to provide hand-written comments only. The College now participates in the National Students' Survey and the results for two cohorts of students have been considered by the Higher Education Committee. However, despite the very low levels of satisfaction expressed by students for several areas within the survey, including declining levels of overall satisfaction expressed by students on the Music Business programme, the Committee did not note any specific actions to address these. The College has piloted the use of an online questionnaire for module reviews. This allows quantitative feedback to be obtained on different aspects of

teaching, assessment and programme management, although the College recognises that further development is needed to revise the form and increase student engagement.

4.6   A summary of issues raised by students together with those noted by the external examiners and link tutors is included in the Annual Evaluative Report. However, approaches to analysis and consideration of issues is not systematic. The review lists a large number of issues that have been raised but these are not prioritised so that progress on developments can be effective and tracked. Some potential targets for enhancement identified by external examiners, for example variability in the level of engagement by students in academic research practices, do not feature in the action plan.

4.7   The College commenced a peer observation of teaching scheme in July 2016. A review of the scheme identified areas of good practice and those requiring improvement. Although these were shared with teaching staff the findings were not prioritised in any way and did not lead to College-wide staff development activities. Overall the review team found that deliberate steps to analyse impact and ensure that best practices are shared across the College, were found to be informal. Staff were encouraged to gather and use the feedback through their own initiative. This approach makes it harder to evaluate and identify the impact of any steps taken.

4.8   The Artist Development programme is evaluated using the systems the College uses for its further education programmes. These include classroom inspections and student surveys. A self-assessment report is produced for the programme at each centre where it is delivered. The College also compiles an annual self-assessment report covering all its further education programmes. The findings for the Artist Development programme are included within this, but are not disaggregated from those of the College's further education programmes Staff teaching the College's programmes at different centres are able to meet at annual national curriculum meetings, but these do not necessarily focus on any particular programme. The review team concludes that the approach the College uses to evaluate the Artist Development programme allows issues to be identified and addressed within centres, but does not allow it to systematically identify and address targets for enhancement for the programme as a whole. A further consequence of the approach is that the College does not take a holistic approach to the enhancement of all its higher education programmes.

4.9   The review team concludes that the College lacks a strategic and deliberative approach to enhancement and is deficient in its own policies, procedures and effective governance of this. The review team has also made a recommendation, noted earlier under Expectation B3, relating to the use of outcomes of review processes to assure and systematically enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices. Hence the team **recommends** that the College develop and implement a strategy that will enable it to systematically identify and introduce enhancements to students' learning opportunities and embed this at all levels within the Institution.

4.10   The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is not met. As noted above the College does have systems in place that allow it to garner feedback from students, teaching staff, external examiners and moderators and for this to be evaluated within the institution. However, at present these systems are not being fully used to identify and address targets for enhancement. Hence the review team concludes that the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.11   In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation in this area is not met and the level of risk is moderate.

4.12   There are no features of good practice or affirmations in this judgement area.

4.13   The review team identified one recommendation, namely that the College develop and implement a strategy that will enable it to systematically identify and introduce enhancements to students' learning opportunities and embed this at all levels within the institution. Under Expectations B3 the recommendation relating to the College using the outcomes of review processes to assure and systematically enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices further supports the approach to enhancement the College should seek to address.

4.14   The review team found that the College lacks a strategic and deliberative approach to enhancement. Further development is required to ensure that it systematically identifies, plans and undertakes deliberative steps to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

4.15   The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

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.