

Application for taught degree awarding powers: Architectural Association School of Architecture

Scrutiny team report

May 2019

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About this report

This report reflects the findings of a team appointed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) to conduct a detailed scrutiny of an application from the Architectural Association School of Architecture for the power to award taught degrees.

The application was considered under criteria approved by Government in 2004. In advising on applications, QAA is guided by the relevant criteria and the associated evidence requirements. QAA's work in this area is overseen by its Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP), a subcommittee of the QAA Board.

ACDAP's initial consideration of applications establishes whether an applicant has made a case to proceed to detailed scrutiny of the application and the evidence on which it is based. If satisfied on this matter, ACDAP agrees that a team may be appointed to conduct the scrutiny and prepare a report, enabling ACDAP to determine the nature of the recommendation it will make to the QAA Board.

Scrutiny teams produce reports following each of the engagements undertaken. The final report reflects the team's findings and is structured around the four main criteria contained in the 2004 TDAP criteria,¹ namely:

- governance and academic management
- academic standards and quality assurance
- scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff
- the environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes.

Subject to the approval of the Board, QAA's advice is communicated to the appropriate minister. This advice is provided in confidence. The minister determines whether it should be disclosed to the applicant. A final decision on an application, and the notification of that decision, is a matter for the Privy Council.

¹ The TDAP criteria are available in Annex A of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills publication *'Applications for the grant of Taught Degree Awarding Powers, Research Degree Awarding Powers and University Title: Guidance for applicant organisations in England and Wales (August 2004)'*. Specific frames of reference that have changed since publication of the 2004 criteria have been updated in the report below.

Executive summary

Governance and academic management

The Architectural Association School of Architecture (the School) has financial planning, quality assurance and resource allocation policies, which are aligned to the School's mission. Governance, and subsequent reporting lines, ensure that due consideration is given at all levels of the organisation for the maintenance and delivery of higher education, underpinned by effective academic leadership. Changes have continued through the period of the scrutiny and there have been significant improvements made to the governance structures. Many of these improvements are of relatively recent application, and the School recognises that these need to be maintained and in some cases that they require further development.

Oversight and management of risk has improved significantly during 2017-18. There is now coherent oversight of risk that enables effective management of the academic provision and of change management. Risk is routinely discussed, and appropriate actions are taken. The Council undertakes appropriate ownership of the Risk Register, with ongoing oversight maintained by the Senior Management Team who also contribute to the organisational Risk Register through maintaining departmental risk registers. The departmental risk registers were most recently updated and presented to SMT in November 2018.

The School has transformed itself in recent years, including its corporate and academic governance function and the installation of new processes for approving, monitoring and reviewing its higher education provision, notably those for the periodic review of higher education programmes, which have been introduced but are yet to be implemented. The transformation has, in part, been in response to external drivers, including the application for degree awarding powers, but there has also been a deliberate and proactive shift for the School to regard itself as a higher education institution which has the resilience, agility and internal controls to effectively operate and remain competitive in an increasingly complex environment. The democratic nature of the School and the historically flat organisational structures, which have long been an important part of its identity, have required its senior leaders to deliver change in a way that is inclusive of, and responsive to, staff, students and the wider membership of the Association. The original 2015 Transitional Plan (updated in 2017) has been completed and ongoing developments and enhancements in areas covered in the plan are part of the 2019 TDAP Implementation Plan which is intended for approval by Academic Board in May 2019. These plans are being addressed in a way which consolidates the progress of the School to date and seeks further progress going forward.

On the basis of these findings ACDAP concludes that the Architectural Association School of Architecture meets Criterion A.

Academic standards and quality assurance

The educational provision at the School is distinctive in ways that are valued by staff and students, and which carries an international reputation. The provision is longstanding, and the educational mission and objectives of the School are fully embedded. Learning outcomes are cogently set and are made available in approved Programme Guides. Resource allocation is sufficiently linked to course needs and continued improvements have been made to the arrangements for academic planning and decisions on resource allocation.

In broad terms the academic regulations and new Quality Manual provide an appropriate regulatory framework as regards coverage and structure for the current programmes and for post degree awarding powers purposes, and their provisions are adequately implemented.

There are however overlaps, inconsistencies, a lack of detail in some areas, and limited cross-referencing, and in principle the need for more editorial work is accepted by the School. The Quality Manual has been published on the website, with additional relevant documents and forms to accompany the relevant sections. While this is a helpful step, more work remains to be done to ensure comprehensive and coherent coverage of all areas.

The School has identified the awards to which its current programmes will lead and identified the need to review programme specifications for each of those programmes. The School has not yet undertaken a detailed, technical process to articulate the credits and learning hours within units and ensuring there is parity between units. However, it has a plan for taking each of its current programmes through a validation process before enrolling students on to versions that will lead to its own degrees, which will enable alignment to be assessed.

The academic standards of the School's current provision are sound. The School has a distinctive unit-based approach to learning and teaching with linked assessment processes that are well established. The approach of involving cross-unit staff and students in juries, progress reviews, previews and final reviews provides support for consistency, and steps have been taken to develop processes for the approval of units, the allocation of students to units, and the drawing up of assessment briefs. There is, however, room for further improving consistency and transparency in unit assessment, where external examiners focus on individual units with limited provision for external cross-programme review. There is a strong focus on ensuring professional standards are met, although the focus on monitoring and developing assessment practice is less evident.

Core quality assurance policies and processes are at different stages of operation and embeddedness and while the high-level principles for each are appropriate, it is not yet possible to fully evaluate effectiveness and impact in all cases. The annual monitoring of programmes is the most developed process and is beginning to focus the School's attention on areas for continuous improvement. Annual monitoring of undergraduate programmes, while having the hallmarks of a robust framework, is not yet fully embedded as regards identifying and monitoring all action points. External examining arrangements also lack clarity. Undergraduate examiners are predominantly concerned with assuring that individual students have met the standards of the professional bodies while also commenting on the broader academic standards of the programme. Postgraduate external examiners adopt the more expected external examiner role of confirming the academic standards achieved at programme level. The School is cognisant of this situation and the need to ensure its revised external examiner system is robust. Taken together with the School's more advanced capabilities in delivering organisational change, the School is taking effective action to identify and act on its strengths and weaknesses.

The School has made progress and established plans in all areas contributing to Criterion B, although not all have been put into practice at this stage. The School has necessarily focused on wider organisational changes during this period, but progress on quality assurance has been slow because of a need to develop expertise in how established degree awarding bodies manage and assure the academic standards and quality of higher education provision.

On the basis of these findings ACDAP concludes that the Architectural Association School of Architecture meets Criterion B.

Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff

The School has a breadth of academic staff who deliver programmes from foundation to doctoral levels. Traditionally, almost all staff have operated on temporary one-year contracts, which gave the School flexibility in staffing, but which a large majority of staff found

unsatisfactory. The School has responded to staff feedback by placing most of its staff on permanent contracts, while reserving the right to vary the nature of their teaching and hours taught. Staff are well qualified academically and in terms of their professional experience and competencies. The principal area of weakness relates to the very low proportion of staff (approximately 10 per cent) who hold a recognised teaching qualification. In recognition of this issue, the School has taken up membership with Advance HE which in turn facilitates staff to seek HEA fellowship. This is a positive development, but one which will take some time to have a significant impact given the large number of teaching staff.

Staff development has traditionally focused on the mentoring of less experienced and younger staff by more experienced colleagues. The unit teaching system, and associated activities such as juries, has created a platform which supports and facilitates peer learning. Other School activities such as the Public Programme and Visiting School also contribute to peer support. All staff have membership of some form of professional body, and most staff engage in professional practice relevant to their practice within the School. The School is making progress towards a more formal approach to staff development and a working group has developed a staff development framework. There have been new initiatives for staff development, for example the staff PhD scheme, the Research Publications Fellowships, and new for 2018-19 Staff-led Exhibitions, Symposia and a Publications scheme, albeit these only benefit a small group of staff. The School introduced a more formal approach to staff appraisal, which will now embrace administrative as well as academic staff.

The School adopts a broad definition of research and scholarship. A large majority of staff engage in professional practice related activities, but rather less in academic and research-related activities. A 'focus on increasing research activity' was one of the strategic aims of the School's Strategy Plan 2015-20 although progress has been slow. The School established a Research Working Group in 2014-15, with a remit to identify the key priorities for consolidating the wide-ranging expertise within the School. The group identified several key areas for development to support this aim including establishing an externally-facing School Research Database and making an application to attain UK Research Council 'Independent Research Organisation'. The first version of the Research Database was launched in October 2018, and full delivery is planned for July 2019.

Staff engagement with the wider higher education environment is relatively limited overall, though nearly a quarter of staff have experience of some form of external examining.

On the basis of these findings ACDAP concludes that the Architectural Association School of Architecture meets Criterion C.

The environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes

A significant strength of the School, which is embedded in the unit-learning model, is the constructive and developmental feedback students consistently receive on their performance and progress on their programme of study. This is highly valued by students. The student voice is also effectively facilitated and communicated to the School, both through the representational system and other student feedback mechanisms. The School has still to develop effective ways to 'close the loop' on student feedback, so that students see evidence of the School responding positively to their feedback or explaining where action is not possible. This is something which continues to be a source of dissatisfaction with students of the School.

The School has a premier location in central London, which both students and staff value highly, and the Hooke Park facility in Dorset, the potential of which is beginning to make an impact on the School. The downside is that the London premises place a space constraint

on expansion and will become significantly more expensive with the anticipated rent increases. The School is at an early stage in developing the metrics which will enable it to manage its limited London space more effectively. At Hooke Park, the School faces an interesting challenge: to go forward and complete its original masterplan for development, or to make a radical change in the way the site is developed in alignment with the School's aspirations. The new Director has set up a Working Group to consider the options.

The School has just completed a major investment project: The Digital Prototyping Laboratory (DPL). It has further major projects planned for 2018-19 including a new website to replace the existing website, and the development of the Hooke Park site. The DPL project is a valuable addition to student learning resources, but it experienced significant over spend against budget and ran well behind schedule. Weaknesses in the management of the DPL project and lessons to be learned have been widely discussed in Council committees and in the Senior Management Team.

Student support systems are well managed and effective. Admissions and recruitment are well handled, and students report being empowered to make informed decisions. Systems to monitor student progression and to provide support are effective, and the creation of the new Head of Teaching and Learning post has provided a coordinating oversight of student support. Support for students with special learning needs and disabilities is inevitably circumscribed by the relatively small scale of the School, and it generally does a good job working within these limits. A good example is the creation of 'mental health first-aiders' to provide first-line support to both staff and students. The provision of information, which is accurate, up to date and in formats required by regulatory bodies has been challenging. The School has responded effectively, though response has usually been reactive to external pressure rather than proactive anticipating information needs

On the basis of these findings ACDAP concludes that the Architectural Association School of Architecture meets Criterion D.

Privy Council's decision

The Privy Council's decision is to grant the Architectural Association School of Architecture renewable taught degree awarding powers for a fixed six-year term beginning on 1 October 2019 and expiring on 30 September 2025.

Introduction

This report provides a summary of the work and findings of the scrutiny team (the team appointed by QAA to review in detail the evidence submitted in support of an application for taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) by the Architectural Association School of Architecture).

The application was considered by QAA's Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP) in September 2015, when the Committee agreed to proceed to the detailed scrutiny of the application. The team appointed to conduct the detailed scrutiny comprised Professor Brian Anderton, Professor Susan Blake, Mr Dan Derricott and Professor Alan Jago (scrutiny team members) and Mr David Batty (secretary). The detailed scrutiny was managed on behalf of QAA by Mr Alan Weale, Quality Manager.

The detailed scrutiny began in January 2016 and was put into abeyance in September 2016. The scrutiny was reactivated in September 2017, culminating in a report to ACDAP in May 2019. In the course of the scrutiny, the team read a wide range of documents presented in support of the application. The team also spoke to a range of stakeholders and observed meetings and events pertinent to the application.

Key information about Architectural Association School of Architecture

The Architectural Association was established in 1847 as a public forum and learned society in London, opening as a day school in 1901. It was the first independent school in the UK dedicated to the education and practice of architecture. Today, operating as the Architectural Association School of Architecture (AASA), it comprises five parts, three of which deliver full-time programmes and two deliver part-time programmes. The three full-time parts consist of a foundation course; an Undergraduate School, delivering programmes that are professionally accredited by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and prescribed by the statutory regulator, the Architects Registration Board (ARB); and a Graduate School with nine programmes of advanced studies and a PhD programme. The remaining two parts are The Architectural Association Professional Practice and Practical Experience Course leading to ARB/RIBA Part 3; and the Visiting School delivering short non-academically creditable programmes worldwide.

The broader Association includes a professional and alumni association; a membership of more than 7,000 members; a registered charity; a publishing house for books and journals - AA Publications Ltd; the AA Bookshop; and a Public Programme of exhibitions, lectures, symposia, seminars, conversations, research clusters and excursions. Activities take place in three main settings: Bedford Square, London; Hooke Park, Dorset; and approximately 30 annual part-time Visiting Schools at locations in the UK and around the world during 2018-19. The Bedford Square facility is the main site for the majority of teaching. Hooke Park is a woodland site in Dorset containing an educational facility for design, workshop, construction and landscape-focused activities. It is used by visiting groups of London-based students, and is the location of the MArch, MSc Design and Make programme, and for short courses

The Association's mission is to promote and afford facilities for the study of architecture for the public benefit. The School envisions itself as 'an international hub for architectural learning, where students and staff comprise a creative, intelligent and adaptable network of knowledge and experience'. The total number of students enrolled in January 2019 was 779; undergraduate students number 529 and postgraduate 250. Of the 250 postgraduate students, 28 are studying for a PhD with the School's sole awarding body, The Open University (OU).

The School employs 15 full-time academics, 168 part-time and 72 associate or visiting academic staff. There are an additional 90 employees providing administrative and support services.

The School had its first review by QAA under the scheme for Educational Oversight (EO) in May 2012. It had a further successful Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) (HER (AP)) in 2016. In the succeeding two years it has been subject to annual monitoring under QAA's EO processes. In both, the School was found to have made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance the higher education provision since the previous visits. The School continues to meet the requirements of the professional, statutory and regulatory bodies RIBA and ARB.

Detailed scrutiny against taught degree awarding powers criteria

A Governance and academic management

Criterion A1

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers is governed, managed and administered effectively, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. Its financial management is sound, and a clear relationship exists between its financial policy and the safeguarding of the quality and standards of its higher education provision. In the case of an organisation that is not primarily a higher education institution; its principal activities are compatible with the provision of higher education programmes and awards.

Financial planning, quality assurance, and resource allocation policies are coherent and relate to the organisation's higher education mission, aims and objectives

1 The School is both a Registered Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee. It is governed by the Architectural Association Council, which is a body of non-executive and executive directors and trustees of the company and charity. The Charity Commission has given permission for the Architectural Association to have up to three members of Council who are in receipt of remuneration from the Association. The Director acts as the de facto chief executive officer and is a member of the Council. The principal purpose of the School is to promote and afford facilities for the study of architecture for the public benefit, which includes the running of a school of architecture. It has been undertaking this responsibility since 1901 and its programmes have been recognised by the relevant professional and statutory bodies.

2 The Council has four standing committees to allow it to discharge its responsibilities: Audit and Risk; Estates and Infrastructure; Finance and Resources; and Nominations and Remuneration. The Council delegates the management of all operational, financial and academic matters to the Director; however, the Council maintains oversight of the operations of the School. The revisions to the membership of the Council and its committee structure introduced in 2017 have resulted in improved Council oversight of matters related to financial planning, quality assurance and resource allocation.

3 The School's broad framework and reference points for financial planning, quality assurance and resource allocation policies are outlined in its revised Strategy Plan 2015-20. The framework forms a set of strategies which are regularly reviewed, although these reviews are in an early stage of development. The Strategy Plan was not approved by Council until July 2017, and at the same time it was agreed that some aspects of the Strategy be further developed. The strategic objectives related to financial planning include (i) continuing to achieve sustainable financial targets, (ii) maintaining minimal tuition fee increases, (iii) maintaining budget processes, (iv) growing net assets, (v) enhancing internal financial monitoring systems, and (vi) increasing non-tuition fee income. These goals are monitored by the Finance and Resources Committee, on behalf of the Council, through consideration of the overall application and detailed aspects of the annual Operational Plan by executive members presenting to the Committee. These plans include a set of performance areas and some key performance indicators (KPIs), although the KPIs are not yet fully defined.

4 The operational oversight of the School finances is maintained by the Head of Finance and Strategic Development who provides detailed reports to the Council and the

Senior Management Team. Financial planning is clear and ensures that all stakeholders are aware through regular reporting and monitoring at senior management meetings, at the Finance and Resources Committee and at the Council. The annual budget setting process involves the Head of Finance and Strategic Development, in consultation with the Director and Senior Management Team, preparing an annual revenue budget and capital programme. An annual budget is produced and presented to the Director and the Senior Management Team before recommendations are made to the Council through the Finance and Resources Committee. The Head of Finance and Strategic Development, and the governance of the financial oversight, ensures that the management of the Architectural Association's finances are secure, although it is acknowledged that the School has been through difficult financial times recently. The reliance on student fee income and the costs of maintaining and developing its central London estate have been a difficult balancing act in the recent past, but improvements in financial monitoring and management have led to a more stable financial position.

5 The Audit and Risk Committee has responsibility for assuring Council that funding is used for proper purposes and confirms effectiveness of the Architectural Association's systems of internal control, its management of risk and governance processes. The Council makes use of both an external auditor report and an annual report by the Head of Finance and Strategic Development to contribute to the evaluation of the effectiveness of financial management.

Higher education mission and associated policies and systems are understood and applied consistently both by those connected with the delivery of the organisation's higher education programmes and, where appropriate, by students

6 The School's objects are stated in the Articles of Association and are reflected in the mission stated in the current strategic plan and provides a clear rationale for architectural education. Staff and students are made aware of the mission and associated policies and systems through the quality assurance processes, inclusion within staff and student induction and through regular formal and informal meetings with senior staff.

7 Academic Board, which is chaired by the Director, is the 'sovereign' academic body charged with responsibility for the academic governance of the School's programmes of study. The Board has a general overview of the delivery of the School's programmes, and during the period of the scrutiny, has become more involved in the detail and rigour of the operations of the programmes. The Academic Board makes quarterly reports to the Council. Academic Board has demonstrated increasing understanding of both policies and systems and of the need to ensure that staff and students understand the policies and systems that are appropriate to them. Observations of Academic Board demonstrate that it is becoming more effective and indicate that the Board is likely to continue strengthening its oversight of programmes and academic effectiveness more generally.

8 The work of the Academic Board was, until recently, supported by the work of three subcommittees, namely the Undergraduate Management Committee (UMC), the Graduate Management Committee (GMC), and the Teaching Committee. Clear terms of reference are available for each of these sub committees, and their operations and efficacy were monitored closely by Council. In July 2018, following a working group review, it was agreed by Academic Board that the UMC and GMC should merge into an Academic Committee. The case being that under its own degree awarding powers there would be common regulations for both undergraduate and postgraduate activities and that merging the committees would avoid duplication and facilitate better communication of policy and systems across the institution. These recent changes in responsibilities, membership and authority are indicative of a continuous process of reviewing the operation of the committee structure and demonstrates a self-critical approach. Much of the output and operation of the

Academic Committee is still work in progress and it is therefore premature to judge the effectiveness of these latest changes.

There is a clarity of function and responsibility at all levels in the organisation in relation to its governance structures and systems for managing its higher education provision

9 The overall structure of the School is clear both as a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. The Architectural Association was incorporated in 1920 with recent amendments to its Articles of Association and its by-laws in 2017. The School is governed by the Architectural Association Council. The Articles of Association, By-Laws and Standing Orders specify clearly the composition and duties of the Council, the appointment of officers, the election and appointment of members, the conduct of meetings and the range of the Council's supervisory duties, responsibilities and powers in respect to financial transactions and resource management.

10 The School has a developing governance structure. A considerable number of changes were introduced in 2017, which were bedding in during the period of the scrutiny. The Council currently consists of 13 members, 10 of whom are independent members, six of these are currently elected from School members and six from the wider higher education, business, legal and finance environment. There are clear policies in place for appointments and identification of the skill sets needed for Council membership. All members of the Council are given an induction by the Company Secretary, which outlines the scope of their duties. The operation of the Council as currently constituted represents a significant change from the way it previously operated. This has proved to be challenging, both for new and continuing members of the Council, and for the executive. There were several resignations from the Council during the last year and several factors were cited for the departures. Among architect members, several long-standing members cited that their role was being marginalised: for non-architect members the explanation being a lack of time for the role.

11 In many ways the embedding of the new structure is an ongoing process. The School acknowledges that there is need for further development, although the arrangements introduced in July 2017 represent a considerable improvement over the previous structure. The changes introduced in 2017 to the committees of the Council have resulted in a much clearer set of responsibilities and much less involvement in day to day management than was previously the case. The experience and expertise of the new members of the Council has been used expeditiously and sensitively to date in developing appropriate governance for a higher education institution.

12 Academic Board now reports to Council on a quarterly basis, with an additional annual report in relation to the agreed KPIs. The role of the Academic Board is to oversee, advise and provide assurance to the Council on academic matters. Observations of Council meetings indicate some interest by Council, although the KPI reports are given little in-depth oversight.

13 The post of Director is central to the organisation. The Director line manages all activities in the School (these include the administrative areas, defined as management and administration, resources, public programmes and communication) and chairs the Academic Board. The Director is directly involved in all staff appointments and in academic direction, particularly in the Undergraduate School. All senior managers, both academic and administrative report directly to the Director; thus, the role is pivotal in terms of academic standards and quality.

14 The Director is appointed for five years and may be re-appointed. The Director is appointed by Council, the appointment being based on wide consultation, including with the School Community, which comprises the current staff and students of the School, year-out

students, and members of Council (except the Director) (see also paragraph 114). The School Community's role is a powerful one, although it has recently been clarified as an advisory body to ensure that its role in advising - rather than instructing - the Director is understood. However, the Director is contractually obliged to carry the confidence of the Community throughout their term of office. As chief executive and senior academic officer, the Director is responsible to Council for the operational management of all aspects of the School's work. The Director may delegate responsibility for specific aspects of the management to individual members of the Senior Management Team and Academic Board but retains ultimate responsibility. During 2017-18 the Interim Director worked with the Senior Management Team to improve clarity of function and responsibility at all levels of the organisation and this has been continued in the short time that the new Director has been in post.

There is depth and strength of academic leadership across the whole of the organisation's higher education provision

15 As noted in paragraph 14, the Director has delegated responsibility from Council for the day to day running of the School and acts as the de facto chief executive officer. The current Director took up post in August 2018 and is supported by the Senior Management Team which consists of the Heads of the Undergraduate and Graduate Schools, the Head of the Visiting School, the School Registrar, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Head of Estates, the Head of Public Programmes and Publications, and the Director of Development and External Engagement. The Senior Management Team meets weekly and provides strategic and operational oversight and support for the Director. Senior Management Team is operating effectively in providing this oversight and support.

16 The staffing structure was under revision throughout the period of the scrutiny, and adjustments made in response to both changes in personnel and changes in responsibilities. In particular the scrutiny team observed the transition from the departure of the previous Director, the appointment of an interim Director and the arrival of the new Director. The Interim Director initiated significant changes to the ways in which management and academic leadership operated, which demonstrated robust and effective leadership exercised with strong support from all senior managers. The structure introduced by the Interim Director has been continued by the new Director.

17 During the course of the scrutiny the new post of Head of Teaching and Learning was established. The post holder chairs the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) and is directly responsible to the Director. This post, together with the TLC has significantly strengthened academic leadership and provides a focal point for the development of academic practice across all disciplines (see also paragraphs 79 and 110).

The organisation develops, implements and communicates its academic policies and systems in collaboration with those who have responsibility for the delivery of its higher education programmes, and with relevant stakeholders

18 The School has a strong relationship with the OU for its Graduate School programmes, which has ensured there are appropriate internal procedures for maintaining standards and for ensuring and enhancing its postgraduate provision. Programmes in the Undergraduate School are validated by the professional body (RIBA) and prescribed by the statutory body (ARB) rather than a higher education awarding body. The professional body and awarding body are both supportive of the application for degree awarding powers by the School, and confirmed the equivalence of qualifications to those offered in other UK higher education institutions.

19 The School has developed a set of academic regulations and academic quality assurance procedures in preparation for the granting of taught degree awarding powers. Academic staff and students have been engaged in the development of the regulations and procedures through the committee and consultation processes. The School's academic policies and procedures were first consolidated in 2012 and presented as the School's academic regulations. The School Registrar acts as the custodian of the regulations. Any amendments or updates are taken to the relevant Academic Board subcommittee before approval by the Academic Board. During the period of the scrutiny the School developed a Quality Manual in preparation for its own degree awarding powers (see paragraphs 31-36).

20 The School communicates its approach to implementing changes and the introduction of policies and procedures through several mechanisms including regular meetings with the Director and the Head of Teaching and Learning, as part of staff induction and through use of the committee structure.

Academic policies, systems and activities are monitored and reviewed, and appropriate and timely action is taken when deficiencies are identified

21 The Academic Board is charged with maintaining strategic oversight for the development, monitoring, quality control and approval of the School's academic regulations. The School Registrar, working within the academic committee structure, undertakes the review and update of the academic regulations, which are presented to the Academic Board annually for approval. They are also circulated annually to all students as a component of student registration at the outset of the academic year. The academic regulations are predominantly concerned with the undergraduate programme but also include the regulations for the postgraduate programmes, in alignment with the processes and policies of the awarding body. The 2018-19 academic regulations also present the school-wide framework to be realised under its own degree awarding powers. The monitoring and review of the postgraduate programmes is managed through the committee structure.

22 During the scrutiny, policies and systems were under continuous review and development and Academic Board has therefore been regularly engaged with this work. However, some important policies and systems were not available for scrutiny until relatively late, such as the Quality Manual and the post-TDAP academic regulations. Academic Board has managed scrutiny of these as assiduously as possible given the urgency with which they were finalised although may have had opportunity to give more in-depth consideration with more time (see also paragraph 36).

Higher education activities take full account of relevant legislation, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and associated guidance

23 In general terms, the School is aware of relevant legislation and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) and current compliance is confirmed by the awarding body with regard to the Graduate School, and by the professional and statutory body for the Undergraduate School (see also paragraph 38). A review of its own regulations and practice against the Quality Code has been undertaken and responsibilities assigned for ensuring ongoing compliance (see paragraphs 36 and 41).

24 Internal expertise is being developed. The School Registrar provides the primary means of communicating legislative and Quality Code requirements to both the Senior Management Team and Academic Board. There is evidence that staff engage with the wider higher education sector, although predominantly with other Schools of Architecture, taking into account changes to the current higher education landscape, and its impact on the work

of the School. Many staff have experience of teaching in other higher education institutions, and several have external examining experience (see paragraph 107).

Academic risk and change management strategies are effective

25 Overall responsibility for risk management lies with Council. The School has an organisational Risk Register created in 2017 and superseding the previous Register of Risk and Risk Management, which was limited in scope. This followed the changes in the membership of the Council with several of the new members being instrumental in developing the risk framework and working with the Senior Management Team to ensure that the register is rigorous, monitored and understood. A joint workshop between the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee and the Senior Management Team was held to support these needs. The Association is developing its understanding of the need for effective academic risk and change management strategies and the current situation has moved from a point of little consideration of risk management to one where risk management is sound at strategic and organisational levels. The Senior Management Team contributes to the organisational Risk Register through maintaining each departmental risk register. Departmental risk registers were most recently updated and presented to Senior Management Team in November 2018.

26 The School has transformed itself in recent years, including its corporate and academic governance function and the installation of new processes for approving, monitoring and reviewing its higher education provision. This has, in part, been in response to external drivers and the application for degree awarding powers but has also been a deliberate and proactive shift for the School to regard itself as a higher education institution, which has the resilience, agility and internal controls to effectively operate and remain competitive in an increasingly complex environment.

Robust mechanisms are in place to ensure that the academic standards of the organisation's higher education awards are not put at risk

27 Undergraduate programmes are professionally accredited, but do not carry an academic award from a validating university. The School makes its own academic award, the AA Diploma, which is conferred on completion of the fifth year of the undergraduate programme. The School has a well established and long history of meeting the requirements of the relevant architectural professional bodies (RIBA and ARB). Undergraduate programmes have been regularly approved and monitored by these bodies and the most recent accreditation visit report confirmed that the current programmes meet RIBA accreditation requirements. The professional standards achieved by students are assessed by external examiners. The academic standards of postgraduate programmes have been under the oversight of the OU, the awarding body; the security of standards being assured through the processes of programme approval, external examining, annual monitoring and periodic review. The School has been assiduous in its compliance with the awarding body policies and procedures for assuring standards, the essential features of which have been exported to the most recent version of the Quality Manual.

28 A feature of the arrangements for assuring standards is the use of external expertise including that of external membership of Council, the Academic Board and the TLC. Membership of Council in particular includes senior-level managers and academics from a number of higher education institutions. Senior and expert advice was used in the development of the academic regulations and Quality Manual proposed for post-TDAP use. It is also a feature of the recently convened Ethics Committee approved by Academic Board in November 2018.

The organisation has the capability of managing successfully the additional responsibilities that would be vested in it were taught degree awarding powers granted

29 The School is seeking taught degree awarding powers to gain academic autonomy as a provider of higher education. In its preparation the Council commissioned several internal and external reviews of the operations and procedures of the institution. For example, The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education reviewed the governance structures, and a School Degree Awarding Powers External Advisory Group was established. As a result, a transitional plan was prepared identifying several significant changes necessary. This plan has been closely monitored by Senior Management Team and Council. The changes have proved challenging to the School as a significant cultural shift was required which many found difficult, but over the period of the scrutiny the suggested reforms have been made. Key to their implementation has been the role of the senior management team, in particular the role of the Interim Director and the new Director.

30 While there are areas that could have been developed and embedded earlier in preparation for degree awarding powers, notably the late development of the Quality Manual and the production of post-TDAP academic regulations, the School has become more aware of its responsibilities and role and of the need to ensure academic standards are not put at risk. The School's journey to deliver the policies and structures to support degree awarding powers continues: significant progress has been made in the last three years and the indications are that the institution will continue with the necessary developments.

B Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers has in place an appropriate regulatory framework to govern the award of its higher education qualifications.

The regulatory framework governing the organisation's higher education provision (covering, for example, student admissions, progress, assessment, appeals and complaints) is appropriate to its current status and is implemented fully and consistently

31 Academic Board has primary responsibility for academic governance, quality and standards, including the approval of the regulatory framework. The new Academic Committee, reporting to Academic Board, has a specific role in overseeing the development of policies. The academic regulations were consolidated in 2012, with advice from a consultant, and are reviewed and approved annually. The most recent approval was in July 2018, with provision for a working group to make further amendments relevant to the degree awarding powers application; a final version being available in December 2018. Review and approval by Academic Board is supported by quality assurance staff including the School Registrar, and review includes action in relation to recommendations for change. To support rigour, both Academic Board and Council include an external member with higher education expertise.

32 The academic regulations are supported by processes set out in the Quality Manual, which was substantially revised during 2018 as part of the alignment of undergraduate and postgraduate provision. The structure is drawn from the Quality Code, and examples from other higher education institutions were considered in its formation. The Quality Manual was approved by Academic Board in July 2018, subject to amendment by a working group of senior quality staff and is in use for 2018-19. While the Manual provides an overall guide to quality and standards processes, it lacks detail in some areas and there is limited cross referencing. The intention is that the Manual will be used as an online guide with links. Steps have been taken in this direction by putting the Quality Manual onto the website with accompanying documentation, but further work remains to be done.

33 The academic regulations and the Quality Manual outline the undergraduate and postgraduate policies and processes for admissions. Applicants suitable for consideration must provide a portfolio and are invited for interview. The admissions process is reasonably clear for applicants and students express satisfaction, although criteria for selection are not transparent. There is a right of appeal should the admissions procedure not be correctly followed. The academic regulations and the Quality Manual note that recognition of prior learning is available, but the process is not set out in detail.

34 The academic regulations and the Quality Manual include rules and processes for assessment and progression, which are distinctive for postgraduate and undergraduate provision. For postgraduate programmes, assessment rules are conventional and appropriate whereas for undergraduate provision, these are well established but are less conventional, with most work being assessed through a unit system on the basis of portfolios. The portfolios are also produced in response to the unit description in the programme guide, which includes each unit's aims, outline content, learning outcomes and basis for assessment. Such portfolios are produced in response to extended briefs and graded on a pass or fail basis, in addition to which students produce assessed work in four Complementary Studies areas (also assessed on a pass/fail basis, but with the possibility of

gaining a High Pass or Low Pass). The assessment processes are appropriately clear and detailed.

35 Complaints are dealt with through School and OU processes, with the School Registrar being central to internal processes. There is sufficient detail in the academic regulations and the Quality Manual, but in the latter complaints are dealt with together with appeals, which has the potential to be confusing (see paragraph 137). Policy and process for academic appeals are covered in the academic regulations and the Quality Manual, but while postgraduate appeals follow a conventional process, undergraduate appeals can only be made on very limited grounds and must be made and processed within a matter of days, with the possibility of the Review Panel needing to reconsider its decision. In principle Academic Board carries out an annual review, although there have been no formal appeals or complaints in recent years. There is provision in the academic regulations for mitigating or extenuating circumstances and extensions and students met by the team were satisfied with how such provisions worked in practice.

36 In general terms, all appropriate areas are adequately covered by the academic regulations and by the Quality Manual. Both are reviewed annually and re-approved by Academic Board in July each year. The Academic Board, and senior staff with responsibilities for quality and standards, work actively to develop and implement policies and processes effectively, although ongoing work is needed to develop detail and clarity. Senior staff accept that there are overlaps between the academic regulations and the Quality Manual that need to be addressed, not least to draw a clear distinction between formal rules and practical processes. After the conclusion of the scrutiny the Quality Manual was uploaded onto the School website, with each section accompanied by relevant additional documents and forms, improving availability for staff. However, coverage of all areas is still not fully comprehensive or systematic, and where an area is covered in more than one document some differences in wording can undermine full clarity. A few areas lack detail or relevant forms, for example in the case of periodic review and revalidation. These points are not a significant problem in a relatively small institution where advice from quality and administrative staff is easily available, but ongoing development is important to ensure clarity, consistency and systematic accessibility for staff and students.

It has in prospect a regulatory framework appropriate for the granting of its own higher education awards

37 The existing academic regulations are relatively well established. The academic regulations that would form the basis for its own degrees have been approved and include additions such as the processes for approval of awards, for conferring awards, for programme closures, and the undergraduate credit framework. Final post-TDAP versions of the academic regulations and Quality Manual were made available at the end of December 2018 and will be reviewed in July 2019 as part of a regular annual review. It is envisaged this will require revisions of the text, but no substantive changes. To streamline the provision of key programme and assessment information it is intended that the Programme Guides and the Prospectus will be presented together at the same committee, so both will be considered at Academic Board in July 2019. The Extended Briefs for units and the Complementary Studies Guide will follow in August 2019. This timetable is to be welcomed as there have been past difficulties with meeting deadlines. The School foresees that additional administrative staffing will be required to support its post-TDAP processes and relevant financial resourcing is included in the preliminary budget for 2019-20, to receive approval in June 2019.

Criterion B2

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for defining and securing the academic standards of its higher education provision.

Higher education awards are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the Qualification Frameworks

38 As noted in paragraph 18, the postgraduate programmes are delivered through a validating arrangement with the OU while the undergraduate programmes are validated by the professional body (RIBA) and prescribed by the statutory body (ARB), which have responsibilities for ensuring alignment. The academic regulations and Quality Manual set out the number and level of credits for each programme, together with the intended award that students would achieve upon successful completion: this is broken down for each year of the programme where appropriate.

39 A schedule of the awards the School intends to make with its own degree awarding powers can be inferred from the list of programmes in the Quality Manual, however it could be more clearly articulated in terms of the award characteristics; for instance, the credits, academic level and minimum and maximum periods of registration. The credits a student must accumulate to achieve the award of MArch vary depending on the programme, with the existing Master's provision requiring 180 credits over 45 weeks and the intended MArch Architecture, leading to ARB/RIBA Part 2 accreditation, requiring 240 credits over two years. Such differentiation follows sector norms for these awards.

40 The School has arrived at its determination of credit volumes and levels by mapping its existing provision to *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications* (FHEQ) in a high-level way that assumes its Intermediate and Diploma awards are equivalent to Bachelor's and Master's degrees, respectively. This equivalency has been confirmed by the professional body (see paragraphs 18 and 48) The programme level learning outcomes broadly map across to the corresponding levels of the FHEQ, but more work is needed to ensure whole programmes support this alignment. The School has not yet adopted a more forensic, technical approach to articulating teaching and learning activities in terms of notional learning hours so that it can be assured the workload is comparable for each credit achieved across units and programmes and is comparable to the effort required to achieve the same award at other providers. As the current undergraduate awards only carry professional awards and not academic, alignment with the FHEQ will be a function of its approval processes set out in the Quality Manual, which would, when operationalised, enable alignment to be assessed.

Management of its higher education provision takes appropriate account of the Quality Code, characteristics statements; credit frameworks; relevant subject benchmark statements; and the requirements of any relevant professional and statutory bodies

41 A project to map the School's regulations and practice against the previous Quality Code has been completed in recent years, much of which was confirmed as meeting the Code's expectations during the QAA Higher Education Review in 2016. Subsequently, the School has established and empowered the TLC, chaired by the Head of Teaching and Learning, to consolidate and strengthen oversight of the School's ongoing compliance with the Quality Code and similar external reference points.

42 All programmes have a programme specification based on a School template included as part of the programme guide and these include a breakdown of the credits the School intends to award for each unit. Undergraduate programme guides also include guides for each of the design and complementary studies units.

43 The School has a track record of meeting the requirements of validation by RIBA and prescription by ARB, of its intermediate (Part 1), diploma (Part 2) and professional practice (Part 3) programmes, with RIBA commending the School for 'creatively engaging with the criteria in the ongoing development at parts 1 and 2' in its most recent revalidation visit report.

In establishing, and then maintaining, comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level programmes, the organisation explicitly seeks advice from external peers and, where appropriate, professional and statutory bodies

44 The School uses external expertise in several different ways which cumulatively ensure standards are set and maintained and are comparable with other providers. This includes the membership of Council, Academic Board, TLC and Ethics Committee, each including independent members external to the School's staff, who bring senior-level expertise in managing higher education provision. This provided informed, impartial challenge to the School as it developed the academic regulations, Quality Manual and associated policies.

45 As new programmes are proposed within the regulatory framework, the TLC appoints external members to the Advisory Groups it establishes to scrutinise each proposal before deciding whether to recommend its approval to Academic Board. The School has introduced a requirement that all programmes be revalidated every five years and this process will be informed by an Advisory Group and a Final Assessment Panel, both of which will include external members. Additionally, three of the School's programmes are routinely assessed against the requirements of RIBA and ARB, through annual monitoring submissions, mid-point reviews and five-yearly revalidation.

Programme approval, monitoring and review arrangements are robust, applied consistently, have at all levels a broadly-based external dimension and take appropriate account of the specific requirements of different levels of award and different modes of delivery

46 Policy for programme approval, monitoring and review are detailed in the School's Quality Manual. Each activity is familiar in some guise to the School through its current validation arrangements with its awarding body and its engagement with RIBA and ARB. The School has more recently sought to internalise these policies and ensure a robust scrutiny is provided, which is beginning to materialise in some processes (see paragraph 48).

47 Postgraduate programmes have long been validated by, and subject to the approval processes, of the OU. The larger number of programmes at postgraduate level and more flexible nature of the portfolio has allowed the Graduate School to become familiar with the requirements and nature of programme approval processes. In recent years, these have been preceded by internal mock validations, which has enabled the School to both refine the quality of its proposed programmes and build internal capacity for reviewing proposals.

48 The School's undergraduate provision does not currently lead to higher education degrees and has therefore not been subject to the same kind of approval internally or by an awarding body. The provision has, however, been subject to validation by RIBA and prescription by ARB for a long time. This has included five-yearly validation events, which assess the programmes against the same validation (RIBA) and prescription (ARB) criteria

used to accredit level six and seven degrees delivered by degree awarding bodies, and which are embedded within the Bachelor's and Master's level Subject Benchmark Statement for Architecture. The School has agreed a schedule of revalidations and this includes an early focus on approving its undergraduate provision before it enrolls the first cohort that will be awarded degrees by the School.

49 Annual monitoring is the most developed of the School's processes for assuring and enhancing the quality of its programmes. The annual monitoring processes build on a long history of engaging with the awarding body's approach for its postgraduate programmes. Since 2016-17, programme teams have produced annual monitoring reports for all full-time programmes; typically informed by outcomes data, student feedback and external examiner reports. These include an action plan to inform the continuous improvement of the programme in the coming year. Notwithstanding this, there are some inconsistencies in the application of this process (see paragraph 64 and 71). Themes arising from these reports are in turn summarised in order to identify institutional level actions and opportunities to strategically enhance the provision. This cycle has started to mature and allow broad themes for quality enhancement to surface and be proposed for action by TLC to the Academic Board. If the School continues to apply its learning from the most recent cycle to the next, the processes have the hallmarks of providing a robust framework for maintaining the academic standards of the awards it will offer.

50 The Quality Manual sets out policy and a high-level process for the quinquennial review and revalidation of each of its programmes with oversight from Academic Committee and TLC. The process will be similar to the programme approval process in terms of panel composition and staged decisions, however, there will be a further reflection component informing the development and revision of the programme. The impact cannot yet be assessed as this process has not been made operational, or translated into detailed guidance, however the high-level process and principles are appropriate.

There is an explicit and close relationship between academic planning and decisions on resource allocation

51 A revised approach to financial planning has been implemented recently and includes a more systematic and granular approach to assessing and meeting the resourcing needs of different programmes and Units. Ahead of the 2018-19 financial year, each programme leader worked with their senior manager and the School's finance team to complete a planning template detailing the financial, staffing and space requirements. This enabled the Interim Head of Finance to make recommendations on resource allocations for the year, with a greater focus on parity between units and programmes. The recommendations were then considered by the Interim Director for subsequent inclusion in the budget plan. This approach also focused on determining the appropriate size and shape of programmes, rather than being driven only by the School's overall financial outturn and placed a greater emphasis on securing academic standards and delivering a good quality learning experience. The Senior Management Team are taking this work forward to model minimum, maximum and preferred student numbers over a longer time period for each programme which will help to produce more robust five-year planning, something that has primarily been produced to comply with regulatory requirements.

52 Overall, the Senior Management Team's management of resource allocation processes has matured significantly in the last two years and has benefited from more robust challenge and support from the strengthened Finance and Resources Committee. The consolidation of the progress made to date in a recently revised Financial Framework, together with the work underway to improve student number planning and long-term financial planning, prepares the School well for ensuring an even closer relationship between academic planning and decisions on resource allocation.

Criterion B3

The education provision of an organisation granted taught degree awarding powers consistently meets its stated learning objectives and achieves its intended outcomes.

Strategies for learning and assessment are consistent with stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes

53 Oversight of learning and teaching strategy is the responsibility of Academic Board. This has two subcommittees, the TLC and the Academic Committee. The TLC seeks to ensure excellence in teaching, focusing on programme approval and monitoring and is chaired by the Head of Learning and Teaching. The Academic Committee focuses on policies and resourcing matters. This structure is designed to support a School-wide strategic approach to learning and assessment.

54 The School sees itself as providing a distinctive approach, educating architects to the highest professional and creative standards within a unique environment that encourages individual development. It sets a challenging and ambitious agenda for students by encouraging experimentation and innovation. Consequently, much learning is project and portfolio driven. Students are well aware of this distinctive approach, and value it highly. The approach has been guided by the Strategy Plan 2015-20, but a new strategic plan is being devised by the new Director, which will include a review of academic provision. A Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy was approved in 2015, and is reviewed annually, but this describes provision rather than setting goals and provision of an action plan.

55 Learning outcomes are set for all programmes in the Programme Specifications. At undergraduate level the learning outcomes fit directly with the RIBA and ARB professional requirements and have been reviewed. Detailed information about learning and assessment strategies and learning outcomes is provided in Programme Guides, which are updated and reapproved each year by Academic Board and are seen as definitive course documents. The format of Programme Guides has been reviewed by the Head of Teaching and Learning. Overall, academic objectives are distinctive and clear, and fit coherently with learning objectives, though actions for the strategic development of learning and teaching could be more clearly articulated.

Relevant staff are informed of, and provided with guidance on, its policies and procedures for programme design, monitoring and review

56 Policies and procedures for programme design, monitoring and review are outlined in the Quality Manual. This does not yet fully articulate review policies. In practice, the School currently follows OU requirements for postgraduate programmes and at undergraduate level, review is undertaken by the external professional bodies RIBA and ARB. The Quality Manual has been provided to all staff in electronic form, and there is guidance material on the website. As noted in paragraphs 30, and 142-143, the current position is not entirely satisfactory as cross-referencing between relevant documents, and website coverage, is limited. Staff induction draws attention to the Quality Manual and academic regulations, but mainly as regards day-to-day practicalities. In practice, within a small institution, the Head of Teaching and Learning and other senior staff provide guidance and support for academic staff if needed. However, there was evidence that some staff were not fully aware of quality processes or where to find them, and given that many staff combine professional work with teaching, the proposed further development of online and other support is important.

Responsibility for amending or improving new programme proposals is clearly assigned and subsequent action is carefully monitored

57 The School created internal procedures for the approval of new awards in 2016, and these are included in the Quality Manual, this process being used at postgraduate level prior to OU approval. There is provision for oversight by TLC, and an Advisory Group including an external scrutineer, with amendments being made before the TLC refers the proposal to Academic Board for approval. Responsibilities for development and amendment are clear. Students see proposals through committee membership only. School undergraduate provision does not currently carry an academic award, but should degree awarding powers be granted, the School intends to immediately approve current undergraduate provision for the award of BA (Hons) Architecture, followed by approving other existing courses as its own awards. The current process would be used, with external involvement more fully articulated. While the position is satisfactory, there is room for improvement in terms of providing more detail on the process for the tracking and sign off for conditions and recommendations.

Coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained

58 Postgraduate programmes are individually defined in programme specifications, and do not have multiple elements or alternative pathways. While undergraduate provision has one pathway, a major element is the unit system (see paragraph 89), under which each year a range of design-based studio group activities is available to students. Coherence is maintained through a process for the definition and approval of units, and for individual students to be allocated to Units. The unit system is set out in the academic regulations, and the process for the approval of units is outlined in the Quality Manual. Staff put forward proposals, which are considered by the Director and the Head of Teaching and Learning, and any comments from the external examiner are also considered. Shortlisted applicants are interviewed, and criteria include strategic, academic and student interests. Following approval by the Director, final approval is part of Prospectus approval by Academic Board.

59 The process for allocating students to units has been challenging to students but a revised process in the academic regulations has been implemented this year. This provides greater transparency, and students met by the team were very positive about the process and the range of units available, while noting that the system can be a bit challenging to new students.

Close links are maintained between learning support services and the organisation's programme planning, approval, monitoring and review arrangements

60 As a relatively small institution, with most work completed in unit groups, learning support for students is provided primarily by relevant teaching staff, with weekly work and review meetings. At institutional level, links relating to facilities, library and technological support for learning are provided primarily through the Senior Management Team. Links are also maintained through annual monitoring and student feedback. Historically, budgeting and resource management were primarily a matter for the Director, but there is now a three-year budgeting process, and effective oversight of budgets, with ongoing development of financial processes. A resource allocation model was approved by Academic Board in summer 2018 and has been incorporated into the Quality Manual. In principle this seeks to ensure appropriate levels of resourcing for new programmes and established courses, with review of the cost effectiveness of provision. In practice the position is satisfactory, though there might be more specific articulation of the links between resourcing and programme approval, monitoring and review. There is ongoing investment in facilities, including substantial Digital Prototyping facilities in London, and further development of the Hooke Park site in Dorset

(see also paragraph 125). Students are generally very positive about the teaching and other resources available to them, though they suggest there might be more support for international students completing a thesis, and there are some issues regarding space availability.

Robust arrangements exist for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to those students that may be studying at a distance from the organisation are adequate

61 Most students study higher education programmes on site in London, with a small number of students studying at Hooke Park in Dorset. No students study at a distance.

Through its planning, approval, review and assessment practices, the organisation defines, monitors, reviews and maintains its academic standards

62 Academic standards for postgraduate programmes are set and mapped as part of programme validation. The process for internal programme approval includes consideration of a relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, review of the FHEQ level descriptor against programme learning outcomes, and the production of a course specification that includes assessment criteria, process and credits, with input from an external adviser. Academic standards are defined in the approved Programme Guides. Assessment practice is set out in the Programme Guides, the Assessment Regulations and the Quality Manual, and in the Assessment and Examiners Handbook (which apply to all provision). For postgraduate programmes School exam boards are held twice a year, attended by the OU Academic Reviewer and confirm standards of assessment and awards. Annual monitoring has been standard at postgraduate level for some years, including consideration of external examiner reports, and achievement data. Revalidation following OU processes includes consideration of academic standards and practice.

63 At undergraduate level the provision is designed to meet the criteria and standards of the professional bodies. Academic standards are defined in the approved Programme Guides with programme outlines and learning outcomes that express the RIBA and ARB requirements. There is further definition of assessment requirements in the extended brief for each unit, which is expected to fit within the established approach to standards and assessment. The process for approval of these Briefs is not noted in the Quality Manual and therefore lacks some transparency, though there is School wide discussion of project development, and cross-attendance at juries where staff and students from different Units mix during the year, which assists in monitoring standards. The Director attends unit introductions, juries and assessment activities to help avoid undue variation and check that learning outcomes are met. Following internal assessment, student work is presented to external examiners (see paragraph 70). Outcomes are confirmed at an examiners' meeting, chaired by the Director, and successful candidates are recommended to the ARB for professional recognition. External examiner reports, and the professional bodies, endorse assessment practice and the maintenance of standards.

64 Monitoring of standards at undergraduate level is through the oversight of the ARB and RIBA, whose reports confirm that standards are met. Internal annual monitoring was only introduced at undergraduate level in January 2017. The pro forma includes addressing comments from external examiners and achievement data, and reports go to TLC for discussion, with a resulting report to Academic Board. The process is, therefore, capable of monitoring assessment practice and standards, though this is not yet systematically embedded. Undergraduate provision has not yet been subject to internal periodic review, but should degree awarding powers be granted, academic standards will be set as part of programme approval and quinquennial review will follow in due course. A degree awarding system of Assessment Committees, Panels, and Boards has been approved for use with its own awards.

65 Overall, at postgraduate level, standards are effectively set, monitored and reviewed. Assessment practice is appropriate, and externals confirm standards. At undergraduate level the review and standardisation of Programme Guides, clearer articulation of the process for approving Units, and the introduction of annual monitoring have provided an appropriate basis for defining and reviewing standards. The oversight of reports by external examiners and professional bodies indicate no significant concerns. However, much of this development is relatively recent and while it is bedding in, it will be important to continue to build rigour in monitoring undergraduate assessment practice. While annual monitoring is sufficiently effective in identifying issues and cross course themes and routinely considers external examiner reports, the quality of reports varies, and not all include a critical review, or systematically pick up and address external examiner comments. Action plans and tracking are in place, but could be dealt with more efficiently, and the review of progression and achievement data could be more explicit.

Assessment criteria and practices are communicated clearly to students and staff

66 Assessment practice is set out in the academic regulations and the Quality Manual. Guidance and mentoring are provided for staff designing units and assessment briefs. The assessment briefs are made available to students at the start of each unit. For each programme an annually updated and approved Programme Guide sets out the programme structure and content, including unit descriptors, assessment criteria and learning outcomes, and this constitutes the definitive document for each award. For undergraduates, each level (First Year, Intermediate and Diploma) has a separate Programme Guide, including ARB-prescribed and RIBA validated learning outcomes. Processes have been significantly tightened so that Programme Guides are reviewed and approved by TLC and Academic Board, prior to being made available to staff and students in hard copy and online. Students expressed the view that assessment processes are reasonably fair and the criteria and processes generally clear.

Assessment practices fully cover all declared learning objectives, learning outcomes and modes of delivery

67 Assessment practice is strongly established on all programmes. At undergraduate level review by RIBA and ARB check that assessment practice allows students to meet the professional learning outcomes, and this would continue should degree awarding powers be granted. At postgraduate level, annual monitoring and periodic review include consideration of assessment practice. Learning objectives and outcomes are made available to external examiners, and any comments made are considered in preparing for the following year. Together these processes ensure that assessment practices have appropriate coverage.

68 As most assessed work is project based, with a significant level of collective work (though students produce individual portfolios), staff are required to ensure alignment with the learning outcomes for the programme in designing unit agendas and assessment briefs, with mentoring being available. Briefs are provided to external examiners. At undergraduate level, formative assessment takes place across the units involving other tutors and Studio/Unit Masters. There are also reviews comprising the January Progress, March Preview and June end of year, and the teamwork in these processes helps to ensure transparency and consideration of the coverage of student learning. For complementary studies, assessment is by essay or project marked on an ongoing basis through the year, and it is envisaged in future this will be double marked. In the Graduate School, coursework and final dissertations are double marked, or if a project is assessed there is a review panel. These overlapping processes ensure that learning outcomes and objectives are fully covered.

Appropriately qualified external peers are engaged in the organisation's assessment processes and consistency is maintained between internal and external examiners' marking

69 In 2018 the School reviewed the use of external examiners and a more unified approach was approved by Academic Board and is now part of the academic regulations, with oversight of policy by Academic Committee. An Assessment and Examiners Handbook outlines the process. For postgraduate provision, external examiners are nominated by the School and appointed by OU, with one or two per programme. Examiners see samples of work and attend Examination Boards and Joint Assessment Boards with their reports and responses being considered by Academic Committee and by the OU. For undergraduate provision there are criteria for the appointment of externals, and appointments are now recommended by the Director and approved by Academic Board, although this is an area where the wordings of the academic regulations and the Quality Manual do not fully align. In general, external examiners must be consulted on and agree to changes to approved assessment procedures or programme content and must have sight of all relevant work for assessment.

70 For undergraduate provision the role of the external examiner is essentially that of an external assessor for a unit rather than carrying a full programme oversight role. The primary role of the external is to confirm that the standard of student portfolios meets professional body requirements (including standards and learning outcomes). At least 10 externals are appointed, and each can serve up to five years with one acting as Chair of Examiners. They work in pairs to review the student portfolios of year three (Intermediate) and five (Diploma) students who have been passed by internal examiners. They can overrule an internal decision that a student should pass. They also see work that has been marked internally as failing, but there is no process for failed work to be passed by the externals. In addition to seeing a presentation of each student's work they meet with the Unit Masters, and report results to the Director, Head of Teaching and Learning and the Registrar. A meeting of the external examiners is then held to confirm results. The Chief Examiner prepares a summary statement and report, and each external provides a report that should follow a template. The School provides responses to these reports.

71 All external examiner reports go to TLC as part of annual monitoring and are also seen by Academic Board. While most external reports are full, some are relatively short and do not cover all the expected areas, and not all expressly confirm that standards have been met. Academic Board has noted there is variability. External examiner comments are expected to be addressed in annual monitoring reports, and where relevant in action plans although annual monitoring reports do not always systematically pick up external examiner comments. Student members of relevant committees see external examiner reports, but the reports are not routinely made available to the wider student body.

72 There is some inconsistency between provisions in the academic regulations, the Quality Manual and the report template as to precisely what the external examiners confirm, and whether this relates to meeting ARB and RIBA criteria, and/or whether the standards of the award are comparable to similar awards at other UK universities. The team also noted some variations in how pairs of external examiners performed their task in reviewing student presentations and portfolios. For example, whether students were seen alone, the time spent with each student and whether questions were asked. The final meeting with the Director does not necessarily comprise a fully systematic reporting back by the externals. While these variations do not threaten standards in themselves, they show a need for more consistency, and the School is aware of the need to ensure that the use of externals is fully robust.

73 Overall the use of external peers is adequate. A range of peers with experience of practice give significant time to the process, which is well established and is valued by staff and students. External examiner reports make many very positive comments about the quality of teaching and of student work, and support the view that standards meet professional requirements. However, at undergraduate level the focus is primarily on externally assessing units, and there is limited external oversight at programme level to ensure consistency across units and comment on the programme as a whole. The proposed policy for appointment of external examiners post-TDAP does not formally require an external examiner to have knowledge of UK higher education standards, noting rather that all external examiners will be briefed and inducted in relation to these standards, and that an international examiner will be partnered with a UK examiner to ensure compliance with UK standards. Senior staff accepted that in theory this could mean up to 50 per cent of external examiners would not have direct knowledge of UK standards, seeing this as positive given the international standing of the School.

The reliability and validity of the organisation's assessment procedures are monitored, and its assessment outcomes inform future programme and student planning

74 At postgraduate level, oversight of assessment procedures is using external examiners as outlined above, and the use of assessment boards attended by an OU representative. At undergraduate level there are external assessors and the assessment board meeting with the Director and the School Registrar at the end of years three (Intermediate) and five (Diploma). For students in other years there are end-of-year Panels. The annual cycle of Progress Reviews, Previews and Juries provide opportunities for monitoring and discussion. External examiners are asked to report on units as well as confirming the achievement of individual students, and these comments are considered by the Director in taking decisions about units for the coming year, and by units in planning assessment briefs. External examiners make robust comments about units and generally, but not universally, these are taken seriously, with tracking through the annual monitoring process. Overall the reliability and validity of assessment processes are monitored.

75 The School is still developing rigour in its use of achievement and progression data following a HER (AP) recommendation. Such data may be of less value than in some institutions because of the substantial use of pass or fail grading, but more could be done to monitor and reflect on levels of higher achievement where this is formally recognised. In practice the high staff-student ratio, the small group work and the approach to Progress Review and Previews means that the progress of individual students is tracked, but the use of institutional level data could be taken further.

Clear mechanisms are in place for use when a decision is taken to close a programme or programme element, and in doing so, students' interests are safeguarded

76 It is a rare event for a programme to be closed. In 2018 the process for programme closure was reviewed and a revised process approved. The process provides criteria for a decision to be taken, including the financial viability of the course, and the quality of the student experience. If a programme does need to be closed it is most likely to be due to a small postgraduate programme having very low recruitment. Students' interests would be safeguarded by ceasing recruitment, and so far, as possible providing teaching for any left on the programme. At undergraduate level different units will be available as elements of the programme each year, but the process for deciding which units will run, includes consideration of student interests, and the position is made clear to students.

Criterion B4

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers takes effective action to promote strengths and respond to identified limitations.

Critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the organisation's higher education provision and action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review

77 Within the School, there are now corporate and academic governance structures in place which oversee and facilitate the regular monitoring and review of its higher education provision. Increasingly, these structures operate at School-level to ensure all parts of the provision benefit from challenge and support, and in turn that good practice is embedded widely. The execution of monitoring processes is continuous as programme teams and committee members learn from each academic cycle and build learning into the next cycle; however, the process is beginning to identify clear opportunities for improvement within and across programmes. Processes for periodic review are yet to be made operational.

78 The School has also been subject to external review for many years and in addition to the necessary engagements with the OU, QAA, RIBA and ARB among others, it has from time to time commissioned additional consultancy to help reflect on and evolve as an organisation. Most notably, the scrutiny for degree awarding powers commenced as the School was taking significant action in response to a report by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education on its governance structures and their relationship to the Executive.

Clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny, monitoring and review of agreed learning objectives and intended outcomes

79 TLC maintains the Quality Manual and provides a coordinating role to ensure full coverage and engagement across the School. Now in its second full year of operation, the Committee has primarily focused on establishing and strengthening the annual monitoring of programmes, which this year produced several themes for enhancement that were proposed to Academic Board and agreed as actions for members.

80 Processes for re-approval and periodic review are still to be fully operationalised and it is, therefore, not possible to comment on how actions are assigned and discharged.

81 The School's extensive engagement with external review and scrutiny has resulted in a large and complex range of actions relating to the management of its higher education provision, as detailed in section A of this report. The School maintains and widely shares overarching action plans that draw together the various projects underway and enables a coordinated approach to sequencing, delivery and resourcing. The School has a good track record in assigning and discharging strategic actions relating to organisational development.

Ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation (for example on programme design and development, on teaching and on student learning and assessment) are drawn into its arrangements for programme design, approval and review

82 The School is well connected into both the architecture industry and the academic discipline of architecture, which enables it to draw upon ideas and expertise from a wide range of sources when designing and developing its programmes. More systematically, feedback from students and external examiners is used to inform annual monitoring reports for each programme, which includes an action plan to improve the quality of the programme in the following year. Going forward, these annual monitoring reports will be considered as

part of a wider critical reflection on each programme during a five-yearly review and revalidation, which will also draw upon the expertise of an external member appointed to the review panel.

Effective means exist for encouraging the continuous improvement of quality of provision and student achievement

83 In addition to the formal mechanisms for programme monitoring and review, the School has well developed informal mechanisms that promote a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. In particular, the School places a lot of emphasis on the routine interactions between the Director and each programme or Unit Master, and with students from each programme or unit. This enables the Director to remain aware of and engaged with the creative and pedagogical direction of the programme or unit, and to ensure the School is providing the necessary support to enable this. More recently, the appointment of the Head of Teaching and Learning has added senior capacity to share this work and engage with a wider range of programmes and units more regularly.

C Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff

Criterion C1

The staff of an organisation granted powers to award taught degrees will be competent to teach, facilitate learning and undertake assessment to the level of the qualifications being awarded.

All higher education teaching staff have relevant academic and/or professional expertise

84 Staff are required to have relevant academic and/or professional expertise to deliver across the full range of levels within the broad discipline of architecture. At the outset of 2018-19, the School had 255 academic staff contracted to support teaching and assessment. When the scrutiny commenced, most staff were employed on annual renewable contracts or consultancy agreements which the School believed gave it flexibility and allowed a managed turnover of staff expertise. In practice, most academic staff had their contracts renewed (for example 80 per cent in 2014-15). A staff survey by external consultants in 2016 reported less than a third of academic staff were satisfied with these arrangements. From 2017-18, following a school-wide consultation process, the School introduced a new academic contract for full and part-time teaching staff. This acknowledged that staff are employed on a permanent basis, but retains flexibility for it to change their roles, hours and pay each year, in accordance with the needs of the School. At the beginning of 2018-19, the teaching establishment comprised 15 full-time permanent staff, 168 part-time permanent staff, and 72 Associate/Visiting Lecturers employed on consultancy contracts.

85 In 2018-19, 21 per cent of academic staff held doctorates while 70 per cent of staff were qualified to Master's level. In addition, 58 per cent hold professional qualifications in architecture and related fields. Just over a half of academic staff teach at Level 7 and the vast majority hold at least a Master's level qualification. In most cases, those who do not have a Master's-level qualification have both an undergraduate academic and a professional qualification.

86 Most academic staff combine teaching with professional activity related to architecture. Staff data shows 71 per cent engage in professional practice, 65 per cent in

creative work, and 52 per cent in consultancy. The School's international profile results in it receiving a high number of internal and external applications to teach. This has the potential to enrich teaching through exposure to a range of different cultural contexts.

87 There is no requirement for academic staff to hold a teaching qualification. In 2018-19, under 10 per cent held such a qualification. In its updated Transitional Plan, the School noted there are currently no opportunities for staff to undertake teacher training external to the School, but that the opportunities would become available to staff now that the School has become a member of Advance HE (see paragraph 100).

88 The School has a large staffing establishment with contracts that give it flexibility in deployment while safeguarding the employment rights of established staff. Staff are well qualified academically and professionally, and most have relevant external professional experience. The exception to this is the low proportion of staff holding teaching qualifications. The School has recognised this weakness and is seeking to address it by working with Advance HE, albeit this will still leave most staff without a formal teaching qualification.

All higher education teaching staff have relevant engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline (through, for example, membership of subject associations, learned societies and professional bodies)

89 The School has developed its own pedagogic approach to the teaching of architecture; the unit system, first developed in the early 1970s. Learning is project and portfolio driven, with students learning for the whole academic year in small design groups, working on a single design portfolio facilitated by a Unit Master and other staff.

90 The School believes the wealth of academic and professional expertise is a valuable resource which it can tap to support and develop new and existing staff. There are several mechanisms through which the sharing of good pedagogical practice is promoted including Open Juries, the Graduate Design Meeting and the Visiting School Global Summit (see paragraph 97). Academic staff are encouraged continuously to engage with pedagogic development in the field of architecture through various opportunities offered internally by the School. These include the Public Programme and Visiting School. Publications, exhibitions and attendance at conferences provide an input to staff pedagogical engagement. Over 80 per cent of academic staff have published articles and 35 per cent have published a book. The existence of the Architectural Association Publication section, which publishes texts recognised internationally, contributes to an environment where engagement with scholarly activity, discipline specific and pedagogic, is readily enabled. The School's adoption of a studio approach to learning is supported by this close engagement with scholarly work.

91 The Annual Staff Induction Day provides an effective platform for the Head of Teaching and Learning to provide new staff with an introduction to pedagogy. In 2017-18, the School introduced Research Publication Fellowships to support a small number of staff to develop research outcomes into published work, and also a staff PhD programme which provides financial and study time support for up to two staff each year to register for a doctorate. Staff are appreciative of these opportunities. Notwithstanding the opportunities, the rate at which the proportion of doctoral staff will increase will necessarily be slow, though it will be enhanced when staff undertaking doctorates outside the School successfully complete their studies. The option of a PhD by Design or Publication has a particular fit with staff pedagogical development. For 2018-19 AASA is introducing support for staff-led exhibitions, symposia and publications. In the Undergraduate School, external examiners provide verbal and written feedback, which contributes to the pedagogic development of design units and their associated staff. Periodic reviews by professional bodies also contributes to staff pedagogical development.

92 All academic staff are members of learned societies, 35 per cent are members of professional bodies, with a small number being members of subject associations (4.7 per cent), and 19 per cent as members of other (relevant) activities. Only a small proportion (2.4 per cent) of staff have membership of the Advance HE (formerly HEA) Professional Recognition Scheme and the Institute for Learning (1.2 per cent), though the number of staff with Advance HE recognition should increase as the School's Advance HE Membership becomes more embedded (see paragraph 100).

All higher education teaching staff have relevant knowledge and understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline area and such knowledge and understanding directly inform and enhance their teaching

93 It is School policy to support the aspirations of staff to advance their scholarly activity and to encourage its integration within teaching and learning. The School adopts a broad definition of research/scholarship including the professional practice of architecture; the design, management and construction of innovative built projects; publication of articles and books across print and digital platforms; and curatorial practice. In the return of staff research and scholarship activities, staff report that 65 per cent are engaged in creative work, 52 per cent consultancy, 71 per cent professional practice, and 17 per cent other relevant work activity. In the three years preceding the return, staff reported 58 per cent had articles published, 37 per cent contributed book chapters, 23 per cent had books published, 58 per cent made conference presentations, and 27 per cent had other research outputs. In addition, 2 per cent were studying for Master's level qualifications and 8 per cent were undertaking doctorates. Additionally, 10 per cent of staff reported secondment to associated industries, and 20 per cent other relevant study activity. Higher education teaching staff are highly practice-orientated and the majority are engaged in current professional practice as well as teaching for the School. As such, teaching is reported by students to be current, engaging and informed by professional practice.

94 To 'focus on increasing research activity' is a Strategic Aim in the School Strategy Plan 2015-20. The School established a Research Working Group in 2014-15, with the remit to identify the priorities for consolidating the wide-ranging expertise within the School. Four areas for development were identified: establishing an externally-facing School Research Database; capturing the breadth and extent of research being carried out by staff and making it available to a wider public; making an application to attain UK Research Council 'Independent Research Organisation' status; and increasing MPhil and PhD by Design and PhD by Research registrations. The School indicated the Staff Research Database was 90 per cent completed, and that it would be made publicly available with a key word search facility. The website now contains brief research profiles for School staff. Submission of the application for UK Research Council 'Independent Research Organisation' status was deferred to 2018, although the website contains no reference to this having been accomplished.

95 The School has also recently introduced several initiatives to encourage a focused group of staff to undertake research and publication. In 2017-18, the School introduced a policy to support up to two staff each year to pursue a PhD at the School. Teaching staff who have been on a contract of employment for a period of at least four academic years can apply to undertake full time PhD studies at the School while remaining an employee and benefiting from a fee reduction. The School has also introduced a Research Publications Fellowship to support staff in developing their research outputs for publication. The first two Fellowships were awarded in December 2018.

96 The majority of staff are engaged in some form of research or scholarly activity which is relevant to the curriculum they teach. While this tends to be skewed towards professional activity, with relatively fewer staff being engaged in research and theoretical

academic activity, the School has innovated several schemes to enhance staff research, higher qualification and publication but, inevitably, they only touch a small proportion of the overall staffing.

All higher education teaching staff have relevant staff development and appraisal opportunities aimed at enabling them to develop and enhance their professional competence and scholarship

97 The School recognises its staff are fundamental to its success, and that a strategic and professional approach to staff development is needed to attract and retain high calibre staff. The School facilitates several career development opportunities for staff: publication, internal and external exhibitions, participation in the Visiting School and presentation of research work through the Public Programme. The wealth of academic and professional expertise is a valuable resource in the support and development of both new and established staff. Best practice is shared across academic staff in a variety of ways. Open Juries provide a public review of student projects/units and allow reflection and debate on work being produced across the School. The Graduate Design Meeting is a forum for directors of Graduate School design programmes to deliver presentations on their programmes, focussing on pedagogy and the curriculum. While the Visiting School Global Summit is an annual opportunity for Visiting School staff to share good and innovative academic practice, there is also an annual Staff Induction Day, which supports new but also existing staff in understanding pedagogical and other developments.

98 The School also recognises that the financial pressures it has faced over the last few years has put pressure on its ability to support staff development activities. For example, the training of staff to make more effective use of the School's website in the delivery of teaching and learning has been constrained by the limited budget available to support it. In the School Risk Register staff recruitment and retention are a medium risk requiring better staff development and succession planning.

99 The new post of Head of Teaching and Learning created in 2017 supports academic mentoring for staff and students. This is a senior academic role which promotes the individual and collective development of teaching staff, the induction of new staff, and supports the Director with the annual academic staff review process. Individual mentoring continues to be the primary form of training and support across the School and supporting new and existing academic staff development is a key part of the Head of Teaching and Learning's responsibilities.

100 The School has taken up membership of Advance HE. This provides a pathway for staff to gain the HEA Fellowship, and tailored research portfolio guidance and course provision have been commissioned to support staff wishing to apply. The Head of Teaching and Learning has responsibility for mentoring staff and managing the HEA Fellowship process. In the first year of operation, 15 staff were supported to prepare an application for HEA Fellowship. The first cohort of HEA fellows submitted their applications in autumn 2018 and the second cohort of academic staff are receiving guidance from an Advance HE consultant to submit their fellowship applications in autumn 2019.

101 A Working Group set up in 2018 has developed the 'AA Staff Development Framework - Action Plan 2018-19', which was presented to Academic Committee at its November 2018 meeting and received support. The framework seeks to provide development opportunities designed to enhance teaching, learning and professional skills in the School, and it brings together recent staff development initiatives already implemented in 2017-18, (HEA Fellowships, the Staff PhD programme and the Research Publications Fellowships), together with new initiatives such as the Staff-Led Exhibitions, Symposia and the Publications scheme.

102 Traditionally, staff performance has been reviewed annually by the Director. The review process is a year-long series of activities led by the Director and is now supported by the Head of Teaching and Learning. However, revised appraisal procedures to operate from 2018-19 are contained in the Employee Handbook. The Director will conduct reviews with all administrative and academic Heads, and they in turn will conduct reviews for all the staff within their remit. The 'AA Staff Development Framework - Action Plan 2018-19' introduced draft staff appraisal templates which, subject to approval through the committee structure, will be implemented for all staff in 2018-19. This will formalise the staff appraisal process, and it will be the first time School administrative and support staff have been brought into the staff development and appraisal process.

103 Despite staff development and retention being classified as medium in the School's risk register, there is ample evidence of activity designed to foster staff development. Moreover, through such very recent initiatives as the 'AA Staff Development Framework - Action Plan 2018-19' and the new staff appraisal system, the School is showing a significant commitment to having effective staff development and staff appraisal systems in place.

Staff with key programme management responsibilities have experience of curriculum development and assessment design

104 The Undergraduate School has a single programme, but new units are added and removed each year, so staff in the Undergraduate School are regularly involved in curriculum development as Unit Masters and Unit Team Members. Applications for approval of new Units are considered by the Director and the Head of Teaching and Learning. Following approval, mentoring for new unit staff is provided by more experienced academic staff, the Director and the Head of Teaching and Learning. The School has a formal process, located in the Quality Manual, for the design and development of units to ensure each new Unit meets ARB and RIBA criteria. In the Intermediate and Diploma Programme Guides, each Unit has its own section which must be updated by the individual Unit Masters annually.

105 In the Graduate School, programme approval and change are currently managed within the academic regulations of the validating University, but School staff are the predominant means through which the curriculum is developed and modified.

106 In the School's return of academic staff activities, 53 per cent regarded themselves as actively involved in curriculum development and/or assessment design. There is ample opportunity for staff with key programme management responsibilities to have experience of curriculum development and assessment design in both the Undergraduate and Graduate Schools.

Staff with key programme management responsibilities have engagement with the activities of providers of higher education in other organisations (through, for example, involvement as external examiners, validation panel members, or external reviewers)

107 Twenty three per cent of academic staff have experience of external examining, 6 per cent experience as external validators in other institutions, 1.2 per cent held reviewer contracts with the QAA, 17 per cent participated in other external events (for example lifelong learning networks and regional development forums), and 38 per cent in other external activity (for example teaching in other institutions, external consultants and advisers to other institutions, research supervisors and assessors). By the nature of these activities, the academic staff involved in them are the more experienced and the staff with key programme management responsibilities at the School.

108 Administrative staff are encouraged to attend events and training opportunities with higher education bodies such as QAA, HESA, UKNARIC, and other events that would benefit their role. These events are not only beneficial from a content-specific perspective, but also help the School to stay up to date and engaged with the higher education sector as a whole.

D The environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes

Criterion D1

The teaching and learning infrastructure of an organisation granted taught degree awarding powers, including its student support and administrative support arrangements, is effective and monitored.

The effectiveness of learning and teaching activities is monitored in relation to stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes

109 The School is wholly responsible for academic quality and standards in the Undergraduate School but with the effectiveness of teaching and learning outcomes externally verified through professional bodies. In the Graduate School, quality and standards are the responsibility of the OU, but management of them is devolved to the School's Academic Board. The School also monitors the effectiveness of its teaching and learning activities internally and, post-TDAP, this will be the sole mechanism for postgraduate programmes, though professional body accreditation will still apply in the Undergraduate School.

110 The School's quality assurance systems, from programme design through to assessment, seek to assure, monitor and enhance effectiveness of its learning and teaching activities. The arrangements are outlined in the Quality Manual and academic regulations for current taught provision, and revised arrangements post-TDAP are in the equivalent documents for 2018-19. The academic committee structure takes responsibility for managing the effectiveness of the School's quality assurance systems. Following internal review, some significant changes have been made. Academic Board has ultimate responsibility, but TLC initiated in 2017 is charged with ensuring excellence in teaching. It monitors development of taught provision and appropriateness of quality assurance procedures; creation, validation and revalidation of programmes; and annual monitoring by reviewing annual monitoring reports and providing a summary of key issues for Academic Board. The new Academic Committee receives and approves the annual monitoring report before these are presented to TLC. The Academic Committee held its first meeting in November 2018 (see paragraph 8).

111 External examiners review the standard of student assessed work and provide verbal comments at Examination Boards and written reports. Comments and reports are discussed in staff teams and analysed in academic committees, with appropriate action taken by Academic Board as necessary. Interplay between studio activities and supporting Complementary Studies is central to the School's provision. Development of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy has strengthened understanding of the interplay between studios and their supporting environment.

Students are informed of the outcomes of assessments in a timely manner

112 Undergraduate School design units provide formative assessment through portfolio reviews during the year leading to the summative assessment. Students present their work to a panel of staff and receive oral and written feedback. Regular unit tutorials provide

weekly progress monitoring. Supporting the design units is the Complementary Studies Programme. End of term coursework is submitted with tutors providing feedback and results no later than week one of the following term. In the Graduate School, in-course assessments have an assessment sheet, are double-marked and students receive feedback through individual tutorials. Students in both Schools have a positive view of the assessment process. National Student Survey (NSS) results for 2017 and 2018 show around three-quarters of students expressed satisfaction with timeliness of feedback on their assessed work, broadly in line with results across the higher education sector.

Constructive and developmental feedback is given to students on their performance

113 The learning model of the Undergraduate School provides effective developmental feedback. Students receive weekly progress monitoring in their design unit, and periodically through formative portfolio reviews. Postgraduate students receive both written feedback on assessments and individual tutorials. NSS results for 2017 and 2018 showed over 90 per cent satisfaction with the helpfulness of comments on assessed work, well above the average for the higher education sector. The new Head of Teaching and Learning role includes a strong focus on student support, and students struggling academically can now be referred by tutors to the Head of Teaching Learning or can request support themselves.

Feedback from students, staff (and where relevant) employers and other institutional stakeholders is obtained and evaluated, and clear mechanisms exist to provide feedback to all such constituencies

114 The student voice is central to the School's culture, with students regarded as full partners in their education. Unique to the organisation is the School Community which is influential in advising the School, and current students have automatic membership. For example, the School Community allowed for student involvement in recommending the appointment of the new Director.

115 The School has a well developed student representation system. Since 2016-17 Council includes a student representative. Academic Board has four student representatives, for the Undergraduate and Graduate Schools and all other academic committees now include student representatives. The QAA Higher Education Review in 2016 noted an absence of process, identifying representatives with no formal support or training, and recommended clarification of the role and the introduction effective training. The School responded by introducing nomination and election arrangements for representatives, and a new induction process to aid preparation for the role. Student representatives met by the team considered themselves prepared for the role, while regretting they did not meet to share experiences. The Council student representative has undertaken training courses in preparation for the role.

116 Student Forum comprises all registered students of the School. As well as its social role, some students act as Student Forum Representatives who provide a point of contact with the student body, have collective responsibility for administering the Forum's budget, and have an annual meeting with Academic Committee to review arrangements for the upcoming Student Survey and to input on annual academic calendar planning.

117 Outside the system of student representatives, the Director meets twice yearly with students of both the Undergraduate and Graduate Schools: early in the first term with the School Registrar and during term three with the Head of Teaching and Learning. These meetings provide specific feedback on the students' academic experience and help define areas of focus for the next academic cycle. Annual student surveys provide an anonymous mode of student feedback covering academic and support issues. For the School-wide Annual Student Survey, proposed questions are agreed at the joint Academic Committee and Student Forum, with the results presented to the July meeting of Academic Board. The

Postgraduate Programme evaluation is undertaken annually, and participation is compulsory as an OU requirement. Fifth year undergraduate students complete the NSS. Academic Committee received analysis of results from all three student feedback sources. There was concern with the low response rates and a working group was set up to review this. The School's high staff-to-student ratio and school-wide open-door policy results in close professional relationships within a culture of staff and student engagement. The School believes this allows prompt identification and rectification of any issues.

118 Students reported feeling empowered by the School and their experience suggests that the School was responsive to student feedback. Examples of the School responding to feedback were cited, including improvements to the unit choice process in the Undergraduate School, introduction of more integration and 'cross-pollination' between Graduate School programmes, and the introduction of Mental Health First-aiders (see also paragraph 133). In the NSS, questions relating to the student voice evince somewhat different levels of satisfaction. Over 80 per cent in 2017 and 2018 were satisfied with their right to provide feedback and that staff valued their views, broadly in line with the sector average. However, the statement 'it is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on' had barely half responding positively, with satisfaction declining in 2018 compared to 2017 and well below the sector average. Academic Board has discussed the 2018 NSS results, particularly the low satisfaction concerning action, although it is not yet clear how the School will address this issue.

119 Staff feedback their views to the School in a variety of ways. All staff are members of the School Community which continues to be an influential source of advice to the School. There is also staff representation on all academic committees, termly staff meetings and an annual staff meeting with the Director. In 2016, the School commissioned a staff survey seeking views on key issues, which led to several changes notably the introduction of permanent staff contracts. This appears to have been a one-off survey, and there are no current plans to repeat it. The School works closely with the architectural professional bodies, and this indirectly gives insight into the requirements of employers.

Students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way, and account is taken of different students' needs

120 The School uses the 'Study' and 'Apply' sections of its website as the primary means of providing information to prospective students. For the Undergraduate School, there is comprehensive information about the Intermediate and Diploma School, including detailed and helpful information about currently available design units. It does not, however, inform students they may not gain a place on their first-choice design unit. For the Graduate School, the website has detailed information on the Master's programmes offered (as well as the research degrees). The apply section offers prospective students information on applying to a programme in the Undergraduate or Graduate Schools, and on fees and financial assistance. Additionally, the School publishes a School Prospectus and Course Booklets for the Undergraduate and Graduate Schools, and all such information is available in electronic and hardcopy formats. However, the hardcopy prospectus for the following year is not available until July with the School unable to bring this date forward.

121 Potential students have sufficient information upon which to make decisions and further information is available through open days (actual and virtual), the Summer School and other short courses (part of Visiting School). The School is becoming more proactive in recruitment and outreach attending education fairs and visiting secondary schools with support from current students. The Annual Student Survey and Graduate School Programme evaluation provide feedback about the helpfulness and adequacy of the information received prior to enrolment. The School believes this can be improved as questions on pre-admissions information are not asked until the second term survey and

there is no clear route whereby feedback leads to action. Students met by the team were very positive about the quality and value of information received as part of the application process and confirmed engagement in activities such as open days and contacts with local schools as current students.

122 All students receiving a conditional or unconditional offer receive a student offer pack' containing information to assist in the transition from applicant to student. New students have an Introduction Week at the commencement of the academic year, which provides an induction programme to London, the School, and to its learning resources. Continuing students (Intermediate and Diploma) go through a process of unit selection. The HER (AP) 2016 report recommended that the School develop and publish clear criteria for the allocation of students to units. The School responded by developing a guidance document for students and staff outlining the allocation criteria. Once enrolled, students have written information in the form of the academic regulations and Programme Guides. Information previously provided through the Student Handbook is now covered by various sections of the website. To some extent this is compromised through the current limitations of its website, with information sometimes being difficult to find for both students and staff. The School has identified the need for a new website completion, which is expected during 2018-19.

123 Students are encouraged to notify the School of disability or special needs when they apply. Where students declare a disability, the School Registrar ensures any necessary arrangements are in place, and those entitled to a disability allowance are aware of this. The School now collects information on disability about all its full-time students. This approach relies on students self-identifying and does not incorporate any proactive diagnostic assessment.

Available learning support materials are adequate to support students in the achievement of the stated purposes of their study programmes

124 The School has some high quality and valued learning resources. Re-shaping the London campus has enabled co-location of all London-based staff and students in Bedford Square, and improved facilities for students and staff, including studio space and provision for students with a mobility disability. However, space available at Bedford Square remains a restriction on growth. The current location is considered too valuable an asset for a move elsewhere to be considered desirable, notwithstanding the very significant uplifts in rents anticipated and provided for in the 2018-19 budget. Insufficient space and effective management of available space have been recurrent themes in annual programme monitoring and committee discussions. There has been increased emphasis on staff-student ratios and space utilisation in the budgeting process, and there is a Space Working Group, but this remains work in progress.

125 Hooke Park is a woodland site in Dorset containing an educational facility for design, workshop, construction and landscape-focused activities. It is used by visiting groups of London-based students, and is the location of the MArch, MSc Design and Make programme, and for short courses. Following the School taking ownership in 2002, the campus development masterplan was redrawn, and construction restarted in 2011. The School believes Hooke Park has been under used, there has been a lack of investment and a need for it to be more embedded into the curriculum across the School. Outline planning permission for the development plan lapses in 2020, and a decision is needed on requesting an extension to the planning permission or resubmitting a new masterplan reflecting the School's ambitions for the site. Provision has been made in the 2018-19 budget for the ongoing capital projects: the new Director has indicated that Hooke Parke is a significant asset of the School and a Hooke Park Working Group has been established.

126 During 2017-18, the School initiated a project for expansion of its Digital Prototyping Laboratory (DPL). This significantly increased the facility for staff and students and created a potential income stream from external clients. The DPL project is a valuable addition to student learning resources, but it experienced significant over-spend against budget and ran well behind schedule. Weaknesses in the management of the DPL project and lessons to be learned have been widely discussed in Council committees and in the Senior Management Team.

127 The School houses a long-standing and significant library and information resource in the field of architecture. Students have full access to its collections including borrowing rights, and access to the full range of e-books, digital journals and information sources. In the Student Survey 2017-18, the Library and Information Service at the School received a strongly positive response. In the NSS survey in 2017, library resources received a satisfaction score of 88 per cent and, in 2018, this had risen to 97 per cent, well above the sector average.

128 NSS results for 2017 indicated satisfaction with IT facilities (75 per cent) below the average for the higher education sector, and satisfaction fell further in 2018 to 64 per cent. The School has discussed this and believes it reflects lack of space within the School's IT facilities coupled with out-dated software, and it has updated software as a result. Students now regard IT resources as good with updates in the facilities available. The School's Student Survey showed an increase in satisfaction with IT facilities across all students between 2016-17 and 2017-18. Currently, there are two areas of concern with IT facilities. Firstly, growth of staff micro-sites outside the control of the School, which has been tackled, reminding staff of their legal position and either closing or bringing sites within control of the School. Secondly, the School's website has not been updated in line with good practice, and an external consultant's report suggested it was subject to serious vulnerabilities. The 2018-19 budget includes funding for development of a new website to be in place by the end of 2018-19.

129 Student learning is also supported by a range of other facilities including the Digital Photo Studio, Digital Prototyping Laboratory, Print Centre, Model shop, Wood and Metal Workshop and Photo Library. The Student Survey showed these facilities had a good and rising level of student satisfaction. NSS results show a stable pattern of satisfaction with course-specific learning resources, on a par with results for the sector.

130 Introduction of weekly meetings of the Senior Management Team has created a forum through which allocation of resources may be better managed and planned between different departments, and issues resolved in a timely manner. It also means members of staff have a clear reporting line for feeding back issues on resources.

The effectiveness of any student and staff advisory and counselling services is monitored, and any resource needs arising are considered

131 As a small institution, the School cannot sustain the extensive advisory and counselling services found in large institutions. However, its ethos of learning with groups of students working in design units facilitated by the unit staff team creates a supportive culture. First-line advice and guidance come from Unit Masters/Programme Directors with referral on to the School Registrar as the next step.

132 The role of Head of Teaching and Learning has, within its terms of reference, 'Providing academic mentoring and pastoral support for currently enrolled students' and 'Meeting with students and provision of guidance and advice throughout the year'. With its strong focus on student support, the post provides an additional layer of support to students struggling academically or personally. In addition, the Director, the School Registrar and

teaching staff have an open-door policy which allows students to seek support on a range of issues.

133 The School's website provides information on pastoral care, including counselling, disability and learning difficulties, health care, and financial aid and assistance. The academic regulations contain information on withdrawal, interruption and suspension of studies, attendance monitoring, and mitigating and extenuating circumstances. The School provides access to an external psychotherapist, and to mental health first-aiders, staff trained as a point of contact for someone with mental health issues or emotional distress.

134 For special learning needs, the School relies on students making a declaration of their needs when they make application, and now also termly through the registration process. For students with a disability, the School is committed to considering what adjustments it could reasonably make. The School will always seek to admit such students provided it can resource any support required. The academic regulations have advice for students with Dyslexia or Dyspraxia.

135 The 'Staff Well-being and Benefits' section of the Employee Handbook details advisory and counselling support available to staff. This includes referral to off-site psychological counselling services and referral by the Head of Human Resources to Occupational Health, where adjustments need to be made because of illness, injury or disability. Staff also benefit from assistance by the mental health first-aiders (see paragraph 133).

Administrative support systems are able to monitor student progression and performance accurately, and provide timely and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs

136 The School Registrar has responsibility for circulation of information relating to progression and retention. Historically, student data was produced to meet the needs of the School's accrediting professional bodies and its validating university. Going forward, first data capture for the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) was undertaken by the Registrar's Department, in preparation for which the School's database was further developed, and induction and training were provided for an expanded database workforce. Currently, student progression data is reported to Academic Board, but discussion about how to best use this data is ongoing and will be progressed by Academic Committee. This area continues to be reactive to external reporting requirements.

Effective and confidential mechanisms are in place to deal with all complaints regarding academic and non-academic matters

137 Student complaints, academic and non-academic, are covered in the Quality Manual and academic regulations with the latter covering the detailed procedures for making and escalating a complaint. Students can access the complaints procedure in the academic regulations through the Study section on the website. For all complaints, students are encouraged to seek informal, internal resolution prior to initiating the formal process. Current procedures for complaints differ between the Undergraduate and Graduate Schools since, in the latter, students also have recourse to the OU if dissatisfied with the way the complaint has been handled by the School. In all cases, once all internal procedures have been exhausted and the student is still dissatisfied, they may take their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). For its own awards, the School will adopt a unified approach to complaints based on current procedures in the Undergraduate School and detailed in the new academic regulations. There is a separate complaints procedure for potential students whose application for a place on a School programme is unsuccessful, and where this is believed to have resulted from some irregularity. The procedure is

overseen by the Head of Admissions and is communicated to students through the 'Apply' section of the website (see also paragraph 33).

138 Student complaints are monitored by the School Registrar, in compliance with the School's membership of the national scheme operated by OIA and the annual reporting requirements. It is not clear how this is carried out or where the reporting line is. The School also receives an annual report from the OIA on complaints received from the School. In practice there have not been any formal student complaints.

Staff involved with supporting the delivery of the organisation's higher education provision are given adequate opportunities for professional development

139 The Head of Teaching and Learning is a senior academic post, central to delivery of staff development, promotion of individual and collective development for teaching staff and induction of new staff. Individual mentoring continues to be the primary form of training and support across the School.

140 The School's membership of Advance HE enables staff to gain HEA Fellowship, and tailored research-portfolio guidance was commissioned to support staff applying for HEA Fellowship. The Head of Teaching and Learning has responsibility for mentoring staff and managing the HEA Fellowship process. In its first year 15 staff were supported to prepare an application for HEA Fellowship.

141 A Working Group formed in 2018 to develop a framework for development opportunities designed to enhance teaching, learning and professional skills in the School. It brought together recent staff development initiatives already implemented and planned, together with new arrangements for staff appraisal (see Section C). Overall, the School is giving adequate and appropriate opportunities for professional development to its staff.

Information that the organisation produces concerning its higher education provision is accurate and complete

142 A range of material is produced for students most of which are available digitally and in hard-copy, with the website being the major source of public information about the School's academic provision. Students had a very positive view of the information available to applicants to the School.

143 An internal review of its information management policies and practices against the Quality Code concluded that they were broadly in line with the expectation, but several detailed issues were identified. For example, currently the prospectus is not finalised and printed for the following year until July, and the website is not well organised with information sometimes difficult to find. The HER (AP) report from 2016 recommended documenting processes for managing and reviewing information, including sign-off procedures. The School responded with its Information Management and Review Policy, together with an information review schedule. This Policy includes a checklist of responsibilities for staff producing information about the School's provision, a content management process including signing-off responsibility, and a review process and schedule. For the Prospectus, an Editorial Board has been approved by the Academic Board to oversee production of the Prospectus. An issue for the School has been timeliness and a tendency for deadlines to be missed. The Quality Assurance Officer takes responsibility for ensuring information is authorised for publication and regularly reviewed, and acts as the locus for version control by storing and archiving all past and current documents with a timetable of review for major documents.

144 The Digital Platforms Team in collaboration with content owners are responsible for the main areas of content on the website (Study, Apply, AA School and Portfolio) while areas

where content changes regularly are managed through a Content Management System. As noted above, the website has lacked development for more than a decade and provision has been made to replace the website during 2018-19.

145 Over the years, a substantial number of programme microsites owned by academic staff members have been developed which are an important source of student information on academic units and facilitate a digital dialogue between staff and students. However, there was no minimum standard and sites were unregulated despite bearing the School logo. The School has sought to bring these microsites within the policy frameworks or close them, and staff have been reminded of their legal position. There is now provision for regulation of Microsites in the Information Management and Review Policy.

146 Information provision has needed to be aligned with external requirements, notably key information sets on UNISTATS, and HESA data and HESA data futures returns. This is the responsibility of the School Registrar. The School participated and received a provisional rating in the 2017 Teaching Excellence Framework. Participation in the full award over the coming years will make a range of additional data on the School's teaching practices available to the public. The School has an Information Security and Data Protection Policy designed to safeguard the data it holds.

Equality of opportunity is sound and achieved in its activities

147 The duties of the School's Council include ensuring it has systems and procedures to meet all legal obligations including equal opportunities. Academic regulations confirm the School's commitment to equal opportunities and list the School's expectations of the behaviour and conduct of students and staff.

148 The School actively promotes a culture of diversity and inclusion. Students are encouraged to declare disabilities or special needs, and the School aims to make appropriate adjustments to secure equality of opportunities. The Strategy Plan 2015-20 made provision for enhanced physical access for students with disabilities. The widening access and participation policy provide talented students with opportunity to study irrespective of gender, age, disability, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion, sexual orientation or personal circumstances. Around one in five students receive financial assistance from the School's Scholarship, Bursary and Assistantship programme. The five-year Strategy Plan 2015-20 prioritises increased student financial assistance, enabling more students to afford the costs of studying at the School.

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