



Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of Cambridge Arts and Sciences Ltd (Cambridge School of Visual and Performing Arts), October 2018

Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that Cambridge School of Visual and Performing Arts (the School) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the October 2017 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 The School currently has 177 students registered on a range of higher education programmes of study at levels 4-7 of The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. The programmes of study are validated by four awarding bodies: the University of the Arts London, Kingston University, Falmouth University and Trinity College London. Several programmes of study initially validated by Kingston University, were revalidated by Falmouth University in 2017-18, including its Level 7 MA Art and Design programme. BA Fashion Design is being transferred progressively to Falmouth University. The School has over 60 members of academic staff, most of whom are employed on a part-time/fractional basis.

Findings from the monitoring visit

3 Over the past year, the School has systematically reviewed and enhanced its operations in accordance with the requirements of the published action plan. The benefit derived from these actions is yet to be fully realised and additional time is required before the School can evaluate and understand their impact on student experience and achievement. The longer term plan for enhancement is outlined in the Strategic Plan, and recently published Teaching and Learning Strategy, and the School intends to link the strategies to defined measures of success. The actions taken are appropriate and the School is making acceptable progress.

4 The School's October 2017 Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) (HER (AP)) made six recommendations that were addressed in the School's 2017-18 Action Plan. The Action Plan is detailed and, at the time of the monitoring visit, all actions had been completed to schedule. The School was able to implement some of them before the end of the academic year 2017-18, such as establishing an Academic Board to oversee the revision of its committee structure, and revising its policy for programme design, development and approval. Other actions could not be operationalised before the start of the academic year 2018-19, as a result of which the School has not yet had the opportunity to fully evaluate their impact.

5 The School's internal policy for the design, development and approval of new programmes is initiated by a product proposal that incorporates market research and stakeholder feedback, before proceeding to programme development and validation. The policy, which maps accountability for each stage, is well constructed and robustly supported by the School's new awarding body, Falmouth University.

6 The School has consolidated its programme monitoring and review processes to support improved oversight and enhancement of the student experience. Information contained within the annual monitoring reports informs the construction of separate Faculty Enhancement Action Plans for undergraduate and postgraduate provision. The process provides a robust and cyclical monitoring tool which will facilitate a more strategic approach to the development of enhancement activities at School level. However, at the time of the visit, the process had yet to complete a full cycle and consequently the School could not yet evaluate its impact for strategic enhancement purposes.

7 The School continues to develop its governance and has embedded a committee structure with clearly defined terms of reference. The new structure includes an Academic Board supported by three committees: Academic and Student Affairs Committee, Academic Planning and Resources Committee, and Research and Enterprise Committee. The Board of Studies and Student Staff Consultative Committees continue to meet three times a year with unchanged membership and terms of reference, as does the school-wide Student School Forum. The School encourages student representation in all meeting forums but, at the time of the visit, a number of committees had not yet identified student representatives. The effectiveness of the revised governance structure will be reviewed over the coming year.

8 The School has developed a Teaching and Learning Strategy which articulates five strategic priorities and a series of actions designed to improve the teaching and learning environment for staff and students alike. The Strategy has only recently been published and consequently it is too soon to assess its impact on the learning environment and overall student achievement. The School confirmed that the Strategy will be developed further to incorporate targets that will assist with the systematic approach to higher education staff development and monitoring.

9 Staff development is a strategic priority in both the School Strategic Plan and Teaching and Learning Strategy. The School schedules regular staff development workshops, encourages engagement with the HEA fellowship scheme for full-time, part-time and fractional staff, and part-funds staff to undertake a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education that is delivered by its new awarding body, Falmouth University.

10 On the basis of progress made against its action plan, the School has effective processes in place to maintain academic standards and, in doing so, is supported effectively by its new awarding body, Falmouth University.

11 The School has an inclusive admissions policy that outlines the principles and processes that are managed by the Cambridge Education Group central admissions team. Criteria for admission are agreed with the awarding body during programme approval and are published at a course level on the School website. School input is provided by academic staff who review applicant portfolios and feed back on their suitability to the central admissions team. For continuing students who fall short of the published entrance criteria to higher awards, there is a process to review individual cases and seek approval to admit from the central compliance team.

12 Marketing materials are overseen by the Academic and Student Affairs Committee and monitored to ensure compliance with the School's policies and procedures for approving public information. These policies and procedures align with Competition and Marketing Authority guidelines and with the relevant sections of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). For international students, the recruitment process relies on the use of in-country agents. These agents receive regular training to ensure the reliability of information provided to prospective students.

13 English language entrance criteria vary with course level but for all programmes at level 6 and 7, international applicants must achieve language competency that aligns with

stipulated visa requirements. International students on courses with outcomes below FHEQ Level 6 are required to attend English language training sessions that are delivered alongside their academic study. Overall, the admission, selection and recruitment policies and practices are robustly managed between the School and central marketing and admissions teams.

14 Programme learning outcomes are scrutinised at validation and assessment briefs are submitted to the awarding body for continuous review and approval. Assessment and grading criteria are detailed in course handbooks and module guides, and students confirmed that the tutor network and assessment documentation ensured that they understood what was required of them. Detailed and well-constructed formative and summative feedback forms map assessment criteria to learning outcomes and outline how marks are awarded. The assessment processes at the School support student learning and achievement.

15 All written assessments are submitted via plagiarism detection software. The nature of the course is such that many assessments are portfolio-based and integrity is maintained through constant monitoring of student progress via regular contact with academic staff. Students are made aware of the relevant awarding body rules and confirmed their understanding of academic malpractice. Assessed work is internally moderated and externally reviewed by the appointed external examiner. Assessment Board information is anonymised in accordance with the requirements of the awarding bodies. During the inaugural year of the newly-validated Falmouth University programmes, link tutors provided additional oversight with all assessments subject to moderation.

16 Retention averages in excess of 90 per cent across all courses, and this is reflected in high pass rates among students who complete their studies. The School monitors retention rates on individual courses and takes steps to address issues identified. For example, in response to students on its BA courses encountering progression difficulties because of weakness in the English language, the School has introduced compulsory English for Academic Purposes (EAP) workshops within the undergraduate curriculum from the academic year 2018-19.

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

17 The School took on board the recommendations from the October 2017 QAA HER (AP) when drafting its new academic governance and committee structures. It also based a range of staff development workshops on initiatives arising from the report and its attendant action plan. The workshops developed staff awareness about a range of reference points including the expectations of the Quality Code and the guidance available from the Competition and Markets Authority. School policies and procedures in respect of annual course monitoring and enhancement, and the admission and assessment of students, align with the Expectations of the Quality Code, and course approval and review processes make use of The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, Subject Benchmark Statements and, for Master's degrees, QAA's Qualification Characteristics Statement. Other reference points include the Higher Education Academy, staff external examinerships and staff membership of professional bodies and subject associations.

Background to the monitoring visit

18 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider

of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

19 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Neil Lucas, Reviewer, and Professor Derrik Ferney, QAA Officer, on 17 October 2018.

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