



# Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Central Film School London Ltd

November 2016

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Central Film School London Ltd. The review took place from 31 October to 2 November 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Mark Irwin
- Dr Helen Corkill.

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

A check is also made on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) with the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.<sup>2</sup> A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#)<sup>3</sup> and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code).

<sup>2</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<sup>3</sup> Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) web pages: [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx).

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Central Film School London Ltd

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Central Film School London Ltd.

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

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Central Film School London Ltd.

- The focus on designing programmes that provide a wide range of practical and professional skills relevant to the filmmaking industry (Expectation B1).
- The quality of the training videos produced for staff, both in terms of production and content, which support their professional development (Expectation B3).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Central Film School London Ltd.

By March 2017:

- work with the awarding body to revise and expand current academic regulations to ensure they are fully comprehensive (Expectation A2.1)
- revise academic appeals and complaints procedures to meet regulatory and statutory requirements (Expectation B9)
- revise students' terms and conditions to meet statutory and regulatory requirements (Expectation C).

By June 2017:

- monitor and evaluate the impact of attendance patterns on the development and achievement of all students (Expectation B4)
- devise and implement a plan to extend library resources and study skills material to support students' academic development (Expectation B4)
- develop a more proactive approach to the identification and support for students with additional learning needs (Expectation B4)
- review and improve student representation within its deliberative structures (Expectation B5).

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

### Financial sustainability, management and governance

The financial sustainability, management and governance check has been satisfactorily completed.

## About Central Film School London Ltd

Central Film School London Ltd (the School) is located in East London and has been operating since 2008. Since 2013 the School has offered two undergraduate programmes in Practical Filmmaking and Screenwriting, both validated by the University of Gloucestershire. Two master's programmes have recently been validated by the University, which are now offered to students. Since 2012 the School offered a diploma accredited by City & Guilds, but this was discontinued from the start of the 2016-17 academic year. There are currently approximately 70 students studying at the School.

The School is a partner of the Bertha Foundation, a charitable organisation with a focus on using activism to bring about change in the areas of social and economic justice, and human rights. The School's mission includes supporting the Foundation's aims, with the intention to 'nurture talent and support content creation that can change things in our world'. This forms part of a wider mission to be a specialist media school that provides wide-ranging skills to students to enable them to become successful filmmakers.

The School underwent a successful QAA review in 2012, and was subsequently monitored through QAA's annual monitoring process. Since the last review in 2012 there have been significant changes in the senior management structure of the School, which have led to the merger of the roles of Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer into a Principal. This has impacted on how quality assurance at the School is managed and overseen.

The introduction of the two new master's programmes represents another significant change for the School in terms of the ethos in which the provision will be offered as it moves to be more aligned with the aims of the Bertha Foundation. At the time of the review it was too soon to see the full impact of this change.

The School recognises as its key challenges: competition from other film schools, as a relative newcomer; the swift pace of technological change within the film industry; the changes to UK Visas and Immigration rules and their impact on recruiting international students; and the introduction of sustainability awareness to its programmes. In addition, the School cites as a challenge the recent development of a master's programme on social impact documentary making, as it has traditionally focused on fictional filmmaking.

The QAA review in 2012, and the subsequent annual monitoring process, demonstrate that acceptable progress has been made by the School in relation to the maintenance of academic standards and quality. The School received a commendable outcome from QAA's monitoring visit in 2014. The recommendations from the 2012 Review for Educational Oversight report have been addressed, and there is evidence that the features of good practice have been built on.

## Explanation of the findings about Central Film School London Ltd

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#) is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Findings**

1.1 The School delivers two undergraduate and two postgraduate programmes as validated provision with the University of Gloucestershire. All programmes have been either newly validated or revalidated during 2016. Since 2012, an Industry Filmmaking Diploma has been run as accredited provision through City & Guilds, but this has been discontinued from 2016-17.

1.2 The School shares responsibility with the University for programme development and approval. The School uses processes designed by the University for the approval and review of programmes. These are operated in accordance with the academic framework and regulations of the School. The School is responsible for programme design and enabling alignment with the FHEQ, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and qualifications characteristics. The University provides ultimate oversight of these processes.

1.3 In order to confirm the School's understanding of its responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards, the review team tested the arrangements described in the self-evaluation document, submitted as part of this review, by considering the processes and documentation for the approval, revalidation and monitoring of programmes, and external examiner reports. Details were discussed with senior and teaching staff.

1.4 All programmes have been validated or revalidated by the University in 2016. The two bachelor's programmes, BA Practical Filmmaking and BA Screenwriting, were first approved in March 2013, and revalidated in July 2016. Two new master's programmes, MA Directing Fiction and MA Social Impact Documentary Filmmaking, were validated in July 2016.

1.5 The fast-track curriculum for each degree was designed by the School. The Validation Proposal was developed by the Programme Development Board and signed off by the Academic Board. An internal practice validation event was attended by an external quality assurance consultant.

1.6 Senior staff at the School have experience of programme development. They have a clear understanding of what higher education programmes should look like, informed by the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and qualification characteristics. Graduate attributes at level 6 and 7 are well understood, as is the importance of employability and understanding roles in employment. Teaching staff are less familiar with the use of Subject Benchmark Statements. Although programme committees advise on subject area content, senior staff oversee mapping to the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.7 Full programme specifications are available to staff and students for each course, and are presented within course handbooks. These demonstrate adherence to the FHEQ and other reference points for academic standards as contained within the Quality Code, Part A. Module guides specify learning outcomes, methods of assessment and assessment criteria. Partnership Board meetings are held with the University, together with Boards of Study, to discuss the delivery of individual programmes of study.

1.8 External examiners confirm that the academic standards of programmes are met. The consideration of documentation and discussions with staff confirmed that, in association with the University, the School understands and uses qualification frameworks effectively in its approval, review and assessment processes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

1.9 The governance of the School is overseen by the Board of Directors. Programmes are monitored through Boards of Study, the Academic Board and Partnership Board meetings.

1.10 The University holds the definitive document for programmes. Its Academic Regulations govern how the School awards its qualifications. The Regulations, which contain sections on admissions, assessment procedures and academic organisation, cover all awards delivered. The University appoints external examiners to verify assessment results.

1.11 The School has developed its own Academic Framework for Quality Assurance and Standards, which is designed to align with the Academic Regulations of the University. The application of the frameworks and regulations would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.12 The review team explored the School's implementation of frameworks and regulations through discussions with staff and students, and a review of relevant documentation, including the terms of reference and minutes of the Academic Board, the minutes of Examination Boards, external examiner reports, and annual monitoring reports. Meetings allowed for the discussion of details with staff and students.

1.13 The Academic Board maintains strategic oversight for the development, monitoring and approval of the School's policies and academic regulations. The operation of University and School academic frameworks and regulations is discussed by the Academic Board, Boards of Studies, the Programme Development Board and the Partnership Board. Awards are determined using University regulations. Examination boards report to the Academic Board.

1.14 While the School has developed its own academic framework to align with that of the University, the School's regulations do not always reflect the breadth of activity required to safeguard its programmes. This is acknowledged by staff at the School, who recognise the need for these to be revised. An example of this are the procedures for academic appeals, academic complaints and non-academic complaints within the School's regulations, which is explored further under Expectation B9. The review team **recommends** that the School work with the awarding body to revise and expand the School's current academic regulations to ensure they are fully comprehensive.

1.15 The School updates its policies regularly, in line with awarding body practice. The University does not oversee or approve the academic policies of the School, although the University Partnership Office has indicated that in the future it would feed into policy development at the School.

1.16 The University is ultimately responsible for the academic standards of awards at the School, as governed by its academic regulations. In discussion with staff, and following scrutiny of the evidence provided, the review team found that the School's academic framework takes account of the University's academic regulations. Although it has been developed and implemented to enable the School to maintain academic standards and to



meet the expectations of the Quality Code in this area, the School's regulations are not yet fully comprehensive and do not cover all areas required. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**

**Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.**

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

**Findings**

1.17 All of the School's higher education programmes are approved through a collaborative relationship with the University. The University is responsible for maintaining definitive records of programmes, but the School is active in assisting the University with this expectation. Validated programmes are written by the School. The definitive programme document is the Validation Proposal, and the conditions and recommendations attached to it by the University. Definitive records are maintained for all programmes. Programme specifications are provided for students at the back of the course handbooks and on the external website.

1.18 The School issues transcripts and securely holds records for all students. It holds the records of the degrees for students and alumni, and makes reports of these to the University at the required stage. These are held dually in the 'cloud' and on local desktop computers. The processes and procedures in place would allow Expectation to be met.

1.19 The review team reviewed programme-specific documentation, including handbooks and validation reports, and met senior management and teaching staff to assess the School's adherence to delegated operational standards.

1.20 Definitive programme records are produced as part of every approval event. Programme specifications are provided for all courses. The programme specifications form part of the Validation Proposal and follow the University's mandated format. These are due for review and revision in 2017. The School contextualises the programme information for students and staff within course handbooks and module guides. These are made available for all staff and students on the School's virtual learning environment (VLE).

1.21 The School produces its own transcripts for all students. These are distributed via email to students, with a copy held in a secure Dropbox and on computer systems within the School.

1.22 Students reported that they are not always able to access programme and module information on the VLE, and that version control was not sufficiently regulated and clear on information provided. However, during the visit, the review team noted that all module guides were easily accessible on the VLE, and were clearly marked with the calendar year, the cohort and year reference, and the module code.

1.23 The ultimate responsibility for meeting this Expectation resides with the University. The School produces and holds records of study and provides all students with programme specifications. The School also issues and holds transcripts for students. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.**

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

## **Findings**

1.24 The School has a process for the internal scrutiny and approval of taught programmes that is implemented through meetings of the Programme Development Board, which reports to the Academic Board. Programme development teams work under the leadership of the Head of School, and draw on advice from external experts and feedback from students, staff and the Programme Development Board. The University has its own arrangements for the approval of validated provision as detailed in its partnership documentation, and the School has complied fully with the University's approval process. The School operates a process for the approval of taught programmes that would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.25 The review team met senior staff and managers responsible for the maintenance of standards and quality and the development of programmes. The team also met Programme and Module Leaders, teaching staff, and students at all levels within the School. The team examined the documents supplied and additional documentation requested during the visit.

1.26 Staff clearly articulated a comprehensive understanding of what was required of them in order to meet University and sector expectations for the approval of taught programmes, which ensure that academic standards are set at a level that meets UK standards. Teaching staff are less familiar with the use of Subject Benchmark Statements, as senior staff are responsible for mapping to the FHEQ and relevant Statements. The documentation provided by the School confirms that the design and approval of programmes meets expectations.

1.27 The School effectively manages processes for the development and approval of taught programmes and the setting of academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.28 The programmes provided by the School are developed around programme and level-based intended learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are mapped against relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and referenced against the FHEQ. Assessment is then mapped against threshold learning outcomes at module and programme level, guided by policy and regulation from the University and the School. Minutes from Examination Boards and external examiner reports indicate that assessment regulations and policies are properly applied. The process would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.29 The review team met senior staff and managers responsible for the maintenance of standards and quality and the development of programmes. The team also met Programme and Module Leaders, teaching staff, and students at all levels within the School. The team examined the documents supplied and additional documentation requested during the visit.

1.30 At module level there is a focus on outcomes relating to the demonstration of the practical and professional skills required by filmmakers. This approach is cognate with the ethos of the School in terms of assessing students for their role in team-based projects rather than the artefacts produced. Examination processes are consistent with School and University regulations. Staff use the FHEQ and Subject Benchmarks Statements in the design of programmes, and have an informed understanding of the importance of the link between programme and module threshold outcomes and the assessment of those outcomes.

1.31 The School effectively ensures that credit and qualifications are awarded for the achievement of outcomes that meet UK threshold standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.**

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

**Findings**

1.32 The School has in place an appropriate system for the annual monitoring of its validated provision with the University. Annual monitoring reports are written by Programme Leaders, overseen by the Head of School. The School's Head of Administration also provides an institutional/collaborative annual report to the University. Programme annual monitoring reports, module reports and resulting actions are also discussed by Boards of Study and the Academic Board.

1.33 The University's Collaborative Provision Committee receives and comments on annual reporting, and the School responds with an annual monitoring report action plan. Annual monitoring is also discussed at partnership meetings between the School and University and written feedback is provided. Furthermore, the University operates a process of periodic review/revalidation of collaborative provision, consisting of a submission document and panel review. Outcomes of periodic review are also discussed by Boards of Studies and the Academic Board. The process would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.34 The review team met senior staff and managers responsible for the maintenance of standards and quality and the development of programmes. The team also met Programme and Module Leaders, teaching staff, and students at all levels within the School. The team examined the documents supplied and additional documentation requested during the visit.

1.35 The School's annual monitoring reports include both quantitative data - detailing recruitment, progression, retention and achievement - and a qualitative, evaluative commentary of the running of programmes. The evidence supplied by the School, and the discussions with staff, indicate that the quality of annual monitoring has improved since the programmes were validated and that reporting is in line with sector expectations. There is scope for further improvement, and staff training would be beneficial in terms of improving the quality of reports, alongside the production of more comprehensive data on progression, achievement and themes emerging from teaching observations, to allow for a more sophisticated analysis of trends and subsequent actions.

1.36 The University also maintains management oversight of the School's academic provision through the School/University Partnership Board, where minuted and tracked discussion of standards and quality takes place. The periodic review process also indicates a gradual improvement in the School's management of standards and quality, as do QAA's annual reviews.

1.37 The School, in partnership with the University, operates an effective process for the annual review of its provision, which specifically addresses whether academic standards are achieved and maintained. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.38 The School, in collaboration with the University, makes appropriate use of external independent industry and academic expertise in setting and maintaining academic standards. External advisers are consulted by the School during programme design, and external expertise is employed by the University at the approval stage and for periodic review. An external examiner is appointed by the University to oversee the School's programmes and modules. The current provision for the use of external independent expertise in the design, approval and monitoring of academic standards would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.39 The review team met senior staff and managers responsible for the maintenance of standards and quality and the development of programmes, and the Chair of the Academic Board. The team also met Programme and Module Leaders, teaching staff, and students at all levels within the School. The team examined the documents supplied and additional documents requested during the visit.

1.40 The review team discussed the use of external advisers and experts in the setting, delivery and achievement of academic standards with staff and students. Examples were given that included the effective use of the School's Industry Advisory Panel; the use of external academic and industry expertise through the course development process; and the use of link tutors and external examiners in advising on standards and quality. All stakeholders clearly articulated how the School draws on external expertise through the development, approval and delivery of its provision.

1.41 External expertise is effectively used in the design of programmes and the maintenance of academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

1.42 In reaching its judgement about the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.43 The Expectations in this area are met and the associated levels of risk are low in each instance, with the exception of Expectation A2.1, which has a moderate level of associated risk. A recommendation is made in this area to revise the School's academic regulations to avoid ambiguity for staff and students. The School acknowledges that this is required.

1.44 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body at the School **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.1 The School has a detailed process and policy for setting academic standards through the process of programme design and internal approval of programme proposals. This process is overseen by the Programme Development Board, reporting to the Academic Board and led by the Head of School. The process for devising, developing and enhancing programmes is fit for purpose and would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.2 The review team met senior staff and managers responsible for the maintenance of standards and quality and the development of programmes. The team also met Programme and Module Leaders, teaching staff, and students at all levels within the School. The team examined the documents supplied and additional documentation requested during the visit.

2.3 Programme development includes appropriate external input and takes account of the views of industry and students. There are internal processes for the scrutiny of programme proposals and amendments to existing programmes and modules, and a rigorous external process for programme approval and review. Staff at the School were well aware of their responsibilities in terms of programme design and approval, providing appropriate examples of the process of curriculum design, development and enhancement. It is also clear that the School has a very effective practice-based ethos underpinning its provision that clearly reflects the practice of the industry it serves. It also goes beyond the training young filmmakers and scriptwriters might receive if they went directly into the industry. It provides students with in depth and practice-based understanding and knowledge of all the roles within the film production industry. The focus on designing programmes that provide a wide range of practical and professional skills relevant to the filmmaking industry is **good practice**.

2.4 The School fully discharges its responsibilities in terms of a rigorous approach to the design, development and approval of programmes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**



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

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

**Findings**

2.5 The School is responsible for conducting the recruitment, selection and admission of students. Each programme has clearly defined entry criteria set out by the University and this information is available to prospective students on the School's website.

2.6 The School has appointed a dedicated Admissions Manager, who will hold responsibility for recruitment and admission. The new role is currently being supported by the Principal. The School has introduced a new Admissions Representation Policy and Procedure, which outlines the formal processes involved in a single document. The recruitment policies are expressed in the respective master's and bachelor's selection criteria, and admissions policy and procedure. The application of these policies and associated processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.7 The review team reviewed relevant recruitment admissions documentation, including the external website, School policies and applicant information. The team also met teaching and support staff who participate in the admissions process, and asked students about their application experience.

2.8 Representatives of the School's management team keep up to date with admissions matters by attending relevant briefings provided by UCAS, and by subscribing to email updates from Supporting Professionalism in Admissions.

2.9 During 2016 the School introduced a new Admissions Representation Policy and Procedure, developed with reference to the Quality Code; the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions good practice statement; and Competition and Markets Authority guidance on admissions for higher education providers. Guidance relating to the Consumer Rights Act 2015, and to Competition and Markets Authority requirements, is referenced throughout the School's newer documentation, but implementation has not been fully achieved as yet. Terms and conditions for students have yet to be updated to be fully compliant with statutory requirements. This is explored further under Expectation C.

2.10 The Principal currently has ultimate responsibility for recruitment, working with members of the senior management team, especially the new posts of Marketing Manager and Admissions Manager. Recruitment targets for each academic cycle are set by the Board of Directors, in conjunction with the senior management team. Updates on recruitment targets are provided for the Board of Directors on a regular basis.

2.11 The School has revised its selection and admissions policies during 2016, and both are now clearly documented. Staff noted that the School is heavily oversubscribed for the number of places available, particularly on the BA Practical Filmmaking course. The Head of School is responsible for selection, assisted by other members of the senior management team. Selected students are interviewed by two members of staff, whether in person or by an interactive video call. Careful consideration is given to applicants' ability to succeed on a fast-track degree course. Around 90 per cent of students submit a creative portfolio as part of the selection process, but the School recognises that this is not possible or appropriate in

all cases. As a result of a recommendation from UK Visas and Immigration in 2015, interview record keeping has been strengthened through the introduction of specifically designed interview forms.

2.12 Students presented a mixed picture of their experiences of the recruitment and admissions processes. Information about the School and courses, and the application form, is clear. However, while UK students reported that application through UCAS procedures was straightforward, this was not always the case for international students. Current students were unaware of what the selection criteria for the School were, with the exception of English language requirements. Students voiced some concern about the lack of receipt of confirmation paperwork post acceptance of a place. Through its relationship with the Bertha Foundation the School is able to award some bursaries in cases of financial need. However, clear information about this is not provided on the School's website.

2.13 The School has appropriate policies and processes in place for the recruitment, selection and admission of students, and through these adheres to the principles of fair admission. There are some matters to be addressed in terms of information, in particular in relation to students' terms and conditions, which is explored further under Expectation C. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

### **Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching***

#### **Findings**

2.14 The School's approach to effective learning and teaching is set out in the Teaching and Learning Strategy. The School has responsibility for setting teaching and learning methods. The School has oversight of the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices through the Academic Board. The University maintains oversight of the School's provision through annual monitoring, Boards of Study and Partnership Boards. The School regularly reviews its approaches to learning and teaching through course committees. The review team found that the School, in conjunction with the University, has in place appropriate policies and processes in relation to learning and teaching that would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.15 To test the effectiveness of the School's policies and procedures, the review team examined policy documents and course handbooks. It also looked at committee minutes and items related to teaching staff and the learning environment. The review team met staff and students to discuss matters related to teaching and learning.

2.16 The School's approach to teaching and learning is to reflect professional film industry practices as closely as possible. The School promotes a 'master/apprentice' approach to pedagogy, with a stated aim of delivering a student-focused learning environment.

2.17 The School has a deliberate policy of employing practising professionals from the film industry, which regularly brings strong industry experience to the School and enhances students' exposure to professional ways of working. Students were appreciative of the exposure to the expertise of practising professionals. While many industry professionals have experience of teaching, some do not. The School has a defined process for employing professionals to teach sessions. All CVs are scrutinised prior to engagement, and all teaching staff have to be approved by the University. There is no expectation for staff at the School to hold or acquire a teaching qualification, but there is sufficient support and training for staff to fulfil their teaching obligations.

2.18 The School and the University share responsibility for staff development. Discussions are underway with the University to permit staff to access the postgraduate awards in academic practice from January 2017. The School has no engagement with the UK Professional Standards Framework and is not currently a subscriber to the Higher Education Academy. One member of the teaching staff holds Associate Fellow status but no other members of staff were currently engaged with the process of obtaining Fellowship.

2.19 The School provides a variety of in-house training activities throughout the year for both academic and administrative staff, including health and safety, compliance and recruitment. The School has implemented a series of staff development events called Training Thursday, which have covered a variety of areas including preparation for Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers). A consultant working with the School provides some training for staff, both in person and by email. A particular focus was on helping staff to prepare for the revalidation and review of programmes.

2.20 The Head of School provides regular training activities in different formats for new and existing teaching staff. This includes the development of a series of well-produced and engaging information videos for staff. These include explanations of the approval and reapproval processes for courses, and changes brought about as a result. Others focus on more generic areas of teaching and learning. New staff commented that the videos were well used and particularly helpful. The quality of the training videos produced for staff, both in terms of production and content, which support their professional development, is **good practice**.

2.21 New staff are supported in their role by senior staff. The School has a well-defined tutor mentoring programme, and mentoring is in place to support new staff through the first months. Specific training is given on amending lesson plans, using the assessment grids and VLE. Teaching observation is used as part of the induction process for new staff, which staff find helpful and reassuring. Teaching staff commented that they enjoyed teaching at the School, and that there was a good feeling and sense of enjoyment within the School.

2.22 The system of scheduled teaching observations involves staff being observed by Programme and Module Leaders. Observers are trained by a consultant working with the School. Those being observed are given notice, but no written guidance on the process. There is no formalised expectation for peer observation to take place, but staff offered some examples of where this had been arranged informally. While the School documents the teaching observation scheme, it was not clear how the collective results from observations were fed into the quality cycle of the School and used to enhance the quality of learning opportunities.

2.23 Information on learning opportunities is provided to students through a variety of media, including in person at the beginning of the year and via delivery of courses verbally, in print and online. Students commented favourably about the practical resources to which they had access, and also about the information available to them in their course handbooks and module guides. This information related to courses, intended learning outcomes, assessment methods and practical learning resources. Although the School has only a single film studio, most students commented that this provided well for their practical requirements. A minority of students paid for additional studio space outside the School.

2.24 Much of the assessment for the BA Practical Filmmaking course is centred around reflective practice, as the nature of the qualification places little emphasis on contextual studies, academic writing or the development of study skills. The School has identified this as a weakness, and has brought in tutors to work on plagiarism and academic referencing.

2.25 The library resource at the School is very small, and students do not have access to electronic resources at the University. The School provides a limited borrowing facility through an arrangement with the Close-Up Film Centre. Some students use the reference library at the British Film Institute, which is free (see also Expectation B4).

2.26 The School provides learning opportunities and teaching practices that enable students to achieve the award for which they are registered. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement**

**Findings**

2.27 The School's Teaching and Learning Strategy emphasises that a high-quality student experience is delivered by making students' academic, personal and professional development a priority. The School's ethos is one of a 'master/apprentice' approach, intended to permit students to fulfil their potential. The Head of Administration, working with Programme Leaders, has overall responsibility for student development and achievement, overseen by the Academic Board. The School has processes in place to monitor and evaluate the necessary arrangements, and provision of resources to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. This would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.28 The review team evaluated the arrangements in place through scrutinising minutes of meetings, student guidance information, programme specifications, course handbooks, module guides and VLE materials, and through discussions with staff and students.

2.29 The School does not have a formal careers or employability strategy. However, employability is a strategic aim within the School's Teaching and Learning Strategy. Career management skills are a key objective within the strategic aim for employability. Careers guidance is provided by way of informal tutorials by the Head of Production for filmmaking students. Students maintain a personal development portfolio, which is not explicit but is integrated into their courses.

2.30 The School does not have a formal strategy or processes in place to support students with additional learning needs. Prior to admission to the School, students are required to self-assess learning needs. No screening for dyslexia or other learning support is undertaken during the initial weeks at the School. The School does not have any linked or financial arrangements for referring or supporting students, although assistance with finding the appropriate agency is offered should the need arise. Any form of referral would be at the student's own expense. No member of staff is trained in providing learning support and there is no formal mechanism to support dyslexic students or those with other learning needs in taught sessions. Some staff make informal arrangements to help students on an individual basis. The review team **recommends** that the School develop a more proactive approach to the identification and support for students with additional learning needs.

2.31 Pastoral support is organised through the Head of Administration. The School employs a full-time, front-of-house Student Support Officer, who is the first point of contact for students with personal issues. Programme Leaders also provide support for students with concerns.

2.32 The School discontinued its personal tutor scheme in 2015-16, due to a drop in attendance levels. The School was reassessing the student appetite for this, in consultation with student representatives, for reinstatement in 2016-17. A personal tutor scheme is not currently in operation. In cases of need, the Head of Administration facilitates personal support for students.

2.33 A scheduling system that supports resource allocation has been implemented at the School. The purchase of new equipment is discussed with the Head of School and the Principal. The practical nature of the BA Practical Filmmaking course necessitates continued

access to up-to-date resources, and the School allows students unrestricted access to equipment and IT resources to practise and develop their skills outside of the curriculum.

2.34 The library resource at the School is small, consisting of some 300 books and a collection of DVDs. One copy of most of the recommended texts is held in the library, and reading lists are revised annually. No academic journals are held on site, and the School does not currently provide a subscription to online journals or e-books. Some students pay for their own access to academic journals. Library stock can only be borrowed for use on site. The library is managed by the School's resources team, rather than a dedicated librarian; the School does not currently have the human resources to be able to check books in and out of the premises.

2.35 The School has an access arrangement with a local specialist film centre, which houses a large library of arthouse movies and study books. This permits good study opportunities at the centre itself, although a total of only 15 loan items can be taken off site at any one time on the School's borrowing cards. Tutors use the VLE to place essential book chapters and scripts. The School is considering options for introducing online book and journal access, prompted by the introduction of master's degrees, and has budgeted for this.

2.36 There is no systematic provision of generic academic study skills materials at the School. There are no materials currently provided on the VLE. The School's library stock does not include books on general areas such as developing information sourcing and critique, critical thinking, reflective practice, essay writing, research methods or personal development planning - although all of these areas are included in the courses. The review team **recommends** that the School devise and implement a plan to extend library resources and study skills material to support students' academic development.

2.37 The School has an existing and long-standing problem with student attendance. The School has a clearly articulated policy for attendance requirements, yet acknowledges that this may need to be revised in the light of ongoing problems. The terms and conditions, which are published on the external website and signed by all students prior to commencement of their course, stipulate that students must maintain an attendance record of at least 90 per cent. Attendance and absence requirements are clearly outlined in the Student Handbook and Course Handbooks.

2.38 Students are extremely frustrated by the impact that the absence of peers is having on the large amount of group and teamwork that is integral to the two BA courses. Staff are aware of the issue and discussions are documented. New staff have commented on the low levels of attendance. During 2016, it was noted that the attendance requirements were only being achieved by 50 per cent of students on the BA Practical Filmmaking course and 33 per cent on the BA Screenwriting course.

2.39 Registers are taken in every class, and a collated record of individual attendance is maintained on a spreadsheet by the Student Welfare Officer. The Student Welfare Officer monitors individual attendance on a weekly basis, and monthly attendance data are sent to students. The School acknowledges attendance as a problem, and has considered introducing an electronic system to record and monitor attendance. The current system makes it more difficult to produce detailed and frequent reports for monitoring and evaluating the impact of absence on modules and courses. The School is therefore only monitoring attendance at a personal level, and in terms of average attendance per term by programme.

2.40 The senior management team discusses attendance at least monthly. However, as the School is not monitoring the situation on a more frequent basis by module or programme, it cannot evaluate the immediate impact this is having on teaching and learning, and how the group dynamic is impacted by low attendance. Student representatives are well aware of the sensitive issues around this area and are

helping to make processes work. The review team **recommends** that the School monitor and evaluate the impact of attendance patterns on the development and achievement of all students.

2.41 The School has in place arrangements and resources that enable students to develop academic, personal and professional potential. However, there are weaknesses in the provision and evaluation of sufficient and appropriate resources with which to develop academic and study skills. The School has insufficient processes for screening new students for additional learning needs, and insufficient mechanisms for providing additional learning support. While the School does have in place appropriate mechanisms for monitoring attendance on an individual basis, these do not permit rigorous scrutiny of attendance issues at a class level, which is impacting on the quality of learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is not met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Not met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement**

**Findings**

2.42 The School has policies and processes in place to collect feedback from students, and engages with its students both individually and collectively. As a small specialist provider, most student engagement is informal and dealt with through discourse between staff and students. However, there are also more formalised structures in place providing a good range of opportunities for students to raise concerns, and to share their views on the curriculum and its development, the quality of learning opportunities, and the enhancement of their experience at the School. The range of opportunities for students to engage with the School would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.43 The review team met senior staff and managers responsible for the maintenance of standards and quality and the development of programmes. The team also met Programme and Module Leaders, teaching staff, and students at all levels within the School. The team examined the documents supplied and additional documentation requested during the visit.

2.44 Although the School has a good record of engagement with its student body - in particular the broad range of ways in which it collects and responds to student feedback - this appears to have recently become less effective. Students have raised a number of issues through curriculum meetings and the student submission to this report, and it is not clear to the students how these concerns have been considered and acted upon. This view from students is reflected in the discussion of the School's own student satisfaction survey by the Academic Board, which has resulted in a consultation exercise with students, followed by a Student Feedback Action Plan addressing issues around student attendance, communication and organisation, the refurbishment of the School's premises and management of its resources. While this represents progress, the review team **recommends** that the School review and improve student representation within its deliberative structures.

2.45 The School is taking deliberate steps to engage its students in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**



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

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

**Findings**

2.46 The School operates a process for assessment that is aligned to the framework provided by the University, and there is a shared responsibility for the moderation of student work to ensure assessment is properly aligned to criteria and marking schemes. Assessments are set by the School and its academic staff, overseen by the Head of School, the University's link tutors, and formal assessment scrutiny panels. Assessment briefs are issued in Student Handbooks and module guides, with additional and more detailed briefs being released prior to assessment deadlines. Assessment modes are varied and include essays, presentations, exams, vivas and practice-based assessments. All written work is processed electronically through plagiarism-detection software, and advice on and procedures addressing cases of plagiarism are in place.

2.47 The School employs an extremely rigorous marking, moderation and verification process at levels 4 and 5, and double-blind marking for all level 6 assessments. The University also moderates work from the School prior to its presentation to the external examiner. Marks and feedback are released to students within four weeks, and triannual Examination Boards process and ratify grades, progression and awards. The School has appropriate policies and processes in place for the accreditation of prior learning. The School's policy, regulations and processes for the assessment of students and recognition of prior learning would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.48 The review team met senior staff and managers responsible for the maintenance of standards and quality and the development of programmes. The team also met Programme and Module Leaders, teaching staff, and students at all levels within the School. The team examined the documents supplied and additional documentation requested during the visit.

2.49 External examiners have raised concerns over the operation of vivas, a lack of formative assessment, and issues with the moderation process at the University. The University has also raised concerns regarding moderation, timing of feedback and the management of the external examiner. However, the review team's discussions with staff and students indicate that, on the whole, these issues have now been addressed - although students felt that the four-week period for the return of feedback is still exceeded on occasion. Students are also concerned that some assessment feedback is overly subjective in nature and also felt that assessment feedback could be more developmental. However, teaching staff clearly articulated an approach to providing formative feedback that appears to contradict this view; the School may wish to consider this issue further to determine how student satisfaction with feedback can be improved, and how students can be supported in making better use of the feedback they receive.

2.50 The recognition of prior learning and the design and conduct of assessment at the School meets expectations, as does the marking and moderation process, which is both clearly articulated and rigorous. The School operates an equitable, valid and reliable process of assessment that enables students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining**

**Findings**

2.51 The University appoints a suitably qualified external examiner to the School to cover its validated provision. The School works closely with the external examiner, with the Head of Administration acting as the primary contact, working alongside the University's Partnership Manager to ensure the process is properly conducted. The University receives external examiner reports and passes them on to the School, where they are received by Boards of Studies and the Academic Board, and shared with students via the VLE. The School then produces overarching annual action plans that draw on external examiner reports and other annual monitoring processes, and the Head of School works with Programme Leaders to implement actions and recommendations. The procedures for external scrutiny of the assessment and examinations process at the School would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.52 The review team met senior staff and managers responsible for the maintenance of standards and quality and the development of programmes. The team also met Programme and Module Leaders, teaching staff, and students at all levels within the School. The team examined the documents supplied and additional documentation requested during the visit.

2.53 The University has raised concerns over the School's management of the previous external examiner but does not appear to signal any enduring issues. The new external examiner also examines courses at the University. In discussions with staff and students it was clear to the review team that there is a good understanding of the importance of the external moderation process, and that Programme Leaders and the senior management team are well versed in terms of external examiner feedback. However, although external examiner reports and actions in response to those reports are discussed by Boards of Study, and the reports posted on the VLE, teaching staff and students appear to be unaware of this. The School may wish to publicise the location of external examiner reports more widely.

2.54 The School makes effective use of its external examiners. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review**

**Findings**

2.55 The School has a clear process and policy for the annual review of its provision, which is overseen by the School's senior management team. Module Leader reports feed into annual monitoring reports written at programme level by Programme Leaders; this is augmented by an institutional monitoring report prepared by the Head of Administration. The School reviews annual monitoring reports and action plans at its Academic Board, and plans to extend this process further with an annual monitoring event. The School has also undergone periodic review by the University in June 2016. The policy and process for annual and periodic review of the School's provision would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.56 The review team met senior staff and managers responsible for the maintenance of standards and quality and the development of programmes. The team also met Programme and Module Leaders, teaching staff, and students at all levels within the School. The team examined the documents supplied and additional documentation requested during the visit.

2.57 As referenced under Expectation A3.3 the quality of annual reporting has improved, however there is still some work to be done, particularly in the provision and analysis of data, and staff development, to ensure that reports are reflective and self-critical. Furthermore, the University notes that the School's action planning and reporting could be further enhanced by ensuring that action plans include clear indications of what would be done and evidence of actions taken. Discussions with staff and students at the School revealed that staff are aware of the need to improve the process of annual monitoring. In addition, annual monitoring reports are not currently made available to teaching staff and students on the VLE. The School may wish to implement this in future to ensure greater transparency in its monitoring of standards and the quality of learning opportunities.

2.58 The School makes effective use of the annual monitoring process, although there is room for improvement to ensure the School continues to maintain academic standards, and assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints**

**Findings**

2.59 The University has a clear policy covering how academic appeals and complaints should be dealt with by the School. Academic appeals are dealt with by the University; academic complaints are dealt with by the School and then by the University at the review stage, with the option for the student to appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator in both cases. The School also has policies and procedures for handling academic appeals and complaints, made available to students and staff on the VLE and in the Student Handbook. The Academic Board oversees academic appeals, with the Head of School dealing with academic complaints, and the Head of Administration dealing with non-academic complaints. The process described in the School's documentation would allow for the Expectation to be met.

2.60 The review team met senior staff and managers responsible for the maintenance of standards and quality and the development of programmes. The team also met Programme and Module Leaders, teaching staff, and students at all levels within the School. The team examined the documents supplied and additional documentation requested during the visit.

2.61 During the review visit, and in discussion with senior managers, it became clear that the School's academic appeals and complaints procedures do not comply fully with the collaboration agreement or with the operations handbook. For example, the School does not include all relevant references to the appeals and complaints policies within the students' terms and conditions. The wider issue relating to students' terms and conditions is explored further under Expectation C.

2.62 Documentation and procedures are not always clear and accessible, with no explicit reference as to which students University procedures apply to, as opposed to the School's. Students were not clear on the processes for making an academic appeal or complaint, and were unsure as to where this information might be available. This impacts on whether the School's complaints and appeals procedures align with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's Good Practice Framework, the Consumer Rights Act and the Quality Code.

2.63 The School's procedures for handling academic appeals, academic complaints and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities require updating. The review team **recommends** that the School revise academic appeals and complaints procedures to meet regulatory and statutory requirements.

2.64 While current procedures provided to students are not sufficiently clear, the size of the School, and the close relationships between staff and students, allows for relevant information to be made broadly accessible to students. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

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

**Findings**

2.65 The School does not currently deliver learning opportunities with other organisations. Students do not undertake placements or work-based learning as integral components of their programmes. While some learning activity does take place in commercial premises external to the School, this activity is always under the direction of staff from the School.

2.66 The review team tested the relevance of the Expectation by talking to staff and students and by considering programme documentation. The team also spoke to an industry representative, who is also a member of the Board of Directors.

2.67 The majority of teaching is undertaken on the School premises. The School has made connections with selected professional and industry venues. Visits are sometimes made to these to undertake specific activities, which are always carried out under the direct supervision of the School's own staff.

2.68 External workplace experience is not a mandatory or credit-bearing part of any of the programmes at the School. The School encourages students to undertake work opportunities where relevant and where they do not conflict with the extensive study hours on the accelerated programmes. The School helps to publicise paid and unpaid work experience opportunities through the use of an opportunities board on the VLE, and also helps to assess appropriate opportunities for students.

2.69 The review team confirms that this Expectation is not currently applicable to the School.

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

**Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees***

### **Findings**

2.70 The School does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

## The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.71 In reaching its judgement about the quality of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.72 All relevant Expectations in this judgement area are met, with the exception of Expectation B4. Expectation B4 relates to how the School enables student development and achievement. There are a number of recommendations in this area, which relate to: addressing the impact of attendance; improving library resources and study skills material; and providing support for students with additional learning needs. However, there is enough evidence of effective practice against this Expectation for the risk level to be rated as only moderate.

2.73 A recommendation is made under Expectation B9 in relation to student complaints and appeals. There is a need to update the School's procedures in relation to the area of academic appeals and complaints in particular, to ensure it is clear to students what the procedures are, and that they are fair. The level of risk for this Expectation is moderate.

2.74 A further recommendation relates to the need to review and improve formal student representation within the School, as current arrangements are impacting on student learning opportunities.

2.75 There are two areas of good practice in this judgement area. The first relates to the way in which programmes are developed to ensure they are relevant to the filmmaking industry. The second focuses on the effective use of videos in the training of staff as part of an initiative to increase the professional development of those teaching.

2.76 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the School **meets** UK expectations.



### **3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities**

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

#### **Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision**

##### **Findings**

3.1 The School provides a range of information for an external and internal readership, in both electronic and paper formats. An online prospectus is published annually. The School has a policy and approval procedures for publishing information. The School evaluates the accuracy and effectiveness of the information it produces through a range of formal and informal means. Policies are in place to manage public information.

3.2 The Head of Administration holds general responsibility for information, working with the senior management team. The Principal and the Marketing Manager check information published on the website and available for prospective students. The Head of Administration has responsibility for publishing information for current students. The Academic Board has ultimate responsibility for meeting statutory requirements and sector expectations. Regular dialogue with students provides general feedback on accuracy and completeness of information. Annual student survey and postgraduate course evaluations ask specific questions regarding accuracy of information. These measures would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.3 The review team examined a range of published information including the prospectus, external website, course handbooks, module guides, assessment briefs, information for applicants and the VLE. A draft social media policy has just been produced. The team discussed information at meetings with students and staff, the principal and an advising consultant.

3.4 The School's external website makes good use of visual material, including both photographs and film clips. The website is easy to navigate and information is clearly presented. Course information includes a summary of highlights and list of modules, and provides access to the full programme specification. The University, as the awarding body, is clearly indicated on each set of course information, including use of the University logo. The website provides a concise and helpful account of application and admissions processes. Students confirm that the online application form is easily accessible. Total course fees are indicated, and identified as inclusive of all materials and filming budgets. However, students report having to purchase additional books, journal access and studio space in order to complete assessment requirements. The website does not indicate that incidental expenditure might be incurred.

3.5 The School is aware of the statutory changes to the provision of information brought about by the Consumer Rights Act 2015. A consultant advises the School on policy change. The School acknowledges that there is further work to be done to provide accurate and complete information on matters such as attendance. However, the current terms and conditions, which students have to accept prior to admission include, for example, onerous cancellation policies, including the right to cancel any course up to and including the start date. The School has recently been made aware of the issue through interacting with UCAS and Supporting Professionalism in Admissions, and has contacted legal advisers.



3.6 In addition, the University's Operations Handbook requires the School to ensure that the procedures for non-academic complaints are made clear to all students within the terms and conditions. This is not currently the case within the terms and conditions displayed on the School's website. Processes for academic appeals and academic complaints also need to be made clear to students. The review team **recommends** that the School revise students' terms and conditions to meet statutory and regulatory requirements.

3.7 The School has introduced a VLE, and is developing it gradually over time. The VLE functions as a comprehensive repository for information for both staff and students, but is not used as an interactive teaching and learning facility. Information is very clearly laid out, and is easily accessible on mobile devices as well as computers. Students and staff commented on experiencing some difficulties of access to the system, especially remotely, but this was not evident during the review visit. Staff are provided with training in the use of the VLE.

3.8 All courses have their own section of the VLE, and all course information is easily accessible within these. Timetables and production schedules, both of which change frequently at the School due to use of industry professionals and the nature of filming opportunities, are included. Students are able to upload all assessment work through the site, including video submissions.

3.9 A section on policies, procedure and quality assurance includes all course handbooks, student forms and documentation, in addition to clear links to the University's academic regulations and Quality Handbook. This section also provides discrete and clear sections dedicated to external examiner reports and QAA reports. The VLE provides information on activities of interest locally and work experience availability through an opportunities board.

3.10 The School has in place processes for checking and monitoring information. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The level of associated risk is moderate, however, as there are some deficiencies within the contractual information provided for applicants. The School recognises the need to take action and has sought legal advice in relation to this area.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

3.11 In reaching its judgement about the quality of the information about learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.12 The Expectation in this judgement area is met, with a moderate level of associated risk. The School's processes in this area are, on the whole, effective. The increased level of risk is reflected in the recommendation made by the review team, which highlights the requirement for the School to revise students' terms and conditions to meet statutory requirements. This is an issue that the School has acknowledged needs addressing.

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

## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

### Findings

- 4.1 The School has a defined quality cycle, which enables the enhancement of student learning opportunities to be considered. Enhancement is considered formally at the Academic Board and discussed at senior management team meetings. Enhancement measures are cascaded down to staff.
- 4.2 Recent changes to the School's Board of Directors and senior management team have enabled a more active contribution to the enhancement of learning opportunities. The School has recently set up an Industry Advisory Board to enable further enhancement of provision.
- 4.3 Enhancement is discussed by the Board of Directors, Academic Board and senior management team. The School adheres to the University's new enhancement-led continuous process of quality review. This would enable the Expectation to be met.
- 4.4 The review team reviewed the Quality Assurance Enhancement Strategy 2016-19 and minutes of board meetings. The team also talked to staff, students, the Principal and the Chair of the Board of Directors to explore how provision of learning opportunities is developed and enhanced.
- 4.5 The School welcomes the University's change to focus on a continuous process of quality review, led by enhancement. The School considers that this will be useful in its future revisions of processes. The School has evaluated its processes for annual monitoring, which it considers to be thorough and to work well. Teaching staff engage well with the process, but freelance tutors have experienced difficulty in this area.
- 4.6 The recently revised Board of Directors has started to play a more prominent role in the School, enabling new investment and wider corporate interest and opportunities to support student learning. The validation of the new MA Social Impact Documentary Filmmaking course is one example of enhancement resulting from this.
- 4.7 The School has instigated an Industry Advisory Board, which consists of experienced industry professionals. The Board provides advice to the management of the School, including on recent curriculum development and review activity. The development is as yet too recent to evaluate impact on enhancement activity.
- 4.8 The strategic approach to enhancing the provision of student learning opportunities at the School is continually developing. Improvements to the School's quality cycle have allowed for enhancement to be considered more formally. Changes to the Board of Governors and the senior management team, and the instigation of the new Industry Advisory Board, permit a range of enhancement measures to be introduced at a strategic level. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.9 In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.10 The Expectation in this area is met, with a low level of associated risk. The School demonstrates commitment to improving the experience of students, and has processes that enable the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

4.11 The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the School **meets** UK expectations.

## Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 30 to 33 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#).

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

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

### Academic standards

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

### Award

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

### Blended learning

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

### Credit(s)

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

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

### Dual award or double award

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

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

### **Enhancement**

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

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

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

See also **distance learning**.

### **Framework**

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

### **Framework for higher education qualifications**

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

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

### **Programme (of study)**

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

### **Programme specifications**

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

### **Public information**

Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

### **Quality Code**

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

### **Reference points**

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

### **Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

### **Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

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

### **Threshold academic standard**

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

### **Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

### **Widening participation**

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

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