Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Creative Academy (Slough Borough Council)

November 2017

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Creative Academy Slough Borough Council. The review took place from 28 to 30 November 2017 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Janthia Taylor
- Mr Robert Saynor.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provision and to make judgements as to whether or not academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)[1] setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) the QAA review team:

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

The QAA website gives more information about QAA[2] and explains the method for Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers).[3] For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.
[3] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers):
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education.

Key findings

Judgements

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body **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**.

- The model of learning and teaching practice which successfully prepares students for employment (Expectation B3).
- The very high level of support for students that makes a significant positive contribution to their personal, professional and academic development (Expectation B4).
- The systematic commitment to provide a wide range of extracurricular activities that enriches the student experience (Expectation B4).
- The work of the Wellbeing Team and range of support provided, which enhances the quality of students' learning opportunities (Enhancement).

Recommendations

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

By April 2018:

- implement a formal process for the confirmation of assessment outcomes at key points in the academic year (Expectation B6).

By July 2018:

- review recruitment and selection procedures to ensure that prospective students have timely access to audition and selection information (Expectations B2 and C)
- clearly articulate the difference between the complaints processes of the individual organisations and the relationship between them (Expectation B9)
- develop and implement a public information policy which clarifies Academy responsibilities and stakeholder requirements (Expectation C).

By September 2018:

- formalise procedures to ensure more effective oversight of key quality assurance processes internally and within Slough Borough Council (Expectations B8 and B6).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students:

- the actions being taken to develop the online alumni network to promote professional opportunities, raise student aspirations and contribute to the currency of the professional environment (Expectation B4)
- the progress being made to formalise the enhancement process (Enhancement).

About the provider

Creative Academy (the Academy) was formed in 2003 out of a need to offer high quality, affordable vocational dance training in the Slough area. The Academy is a not-for-profit organisation managed through Slough Borough Council and sits within the Customer and Community Services Directorate. The Academy is based on one site in central Slough. The Academy aims to create confident and talented performers or teachers ready for the diverse dance industry and to position its programmes as an alternative to University and vocational school dance training. The Academy delivers a Foundation Degree in Dance and a BA honours top-up degree in Dance validated by the University of West London. The Academy also has approved centre status from Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing and has endorsed training from The Council for Dance Education and Training, of which it is an affiliate member.

The Academy has 84 students. There is one full-time member of teaching staff and 22 part-time staff who teach on specific modules of the programme and are employed under sessional contracts with Slough Borough Council. Many of these staff are industry professionals and some teach at other higher education institutions.

There have been a number of changes since the previous QAA review. The Academy relocated premises in 2016. The former building was earmarked by the Department of Education as a suitable location for a new school and development of a new community space and football stadium. A financial package was negotiated that paid for the renovation of existing Slough Borough Council premises in Stoke Poges Lane and this included the erection of five purpose-built dance studios, an office, student area, staff area and communal areas. The planning stages involved input from both Academy staff and students. In late 2016 the Chief Executive of Slough Borough Council, who is also the Accountable Officer, stepped down from the post. She was replaced by the Interim Chief Executive, who was Director of Customer and Community Services and, as such, was familiar with, and supportive of, the work of the Academy. The Head of Quality Assurance at the University of West London, who provided enthusiastic support for the Academy since its inception, retired in August 2017. The University has made provision for the Academy to be supported until a formal replacement is appointed.

The Academy's key challenges are focused around student numbers, workload and exceeding industry standards. Recruitment of students is challenging due to greater competition from dance schools offering similar provision. The Academy's tuition fees are set well below that of other providers; however, financial difficulties mean that some students are unable to accept offers. The Academy sits just outside London therefore students receive less financial support than those studying in a London borough; however, the cost of living and renting accommodation in Slough is similar to that of London. Over a number of years there has been an increase in demand for information from organisations within the higher education sector. The Academy is a small provider with a small team of staff and additional resources are needed to ensure accuracy and efficiency and safeguard quality and compliance. In response the Academy has developed a new job role that will provide support in these areas. The Academy faces constant challenges in ensuring that its provision exceeds industry standards and that graduates are ready for employment and have the right skill set. In a constantly changing and developing industry it is fundamentally important that the Academy knows what the industry wants. The Academy's industry partners, as well as freelance tutors who work in industry, play a pivotal role in ensuring these challenges are recognised and that the Academy embeds these in the delivery of its programme.

In the 2014 QAA Review for Specific Course Designation (RSCD), the review team identified four areas of good practice, one advisable and two desirable recommendations. The findings

from this were summarised in an action plan compiled by the Academy and this was subject to a QAA annual monitoring visit in 2016, which recorded judgements of acceptable progress. The Academy has responded in an appropriate manner to the recommendations of the RSCD and the areas of good practice have been built upon.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1   The Academy offers two programmes in dance across the FHEQ levels 4 to 6: a Foundation Degree Arts (FdA) and a BA honours top-up degree. The awarding body is the University of West London. The Academy enrolled 84 students in 2016-17.

1.2   The University is responsible for setting levels of the awards delivered at the Academy and for academic standards. The University has detailed processes for setting and awarding degrees which are described in its Quality Handbook. The Academy relies on the established procedures of the University for the positioning of its qualifications at the appropriate level of the FHEQ and for aligning programme learning outcomes to qualification descriptors.

1.3   The University's validation procedures require the completion of a detailed programme specification template that includes a mapping of learning outcomes to both the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. One of the conditions of the 2016 revalidation was the differential mapping of Subject Benchmark Statements and Qualification

Descriptors. The Academy fulfilled this by the deadline, confirming that the University ensures the Academy's programmes are set at the appropriate level. Detailed module study guides based on the University template set out assessment requirements in detail.

1.4   The above arrangements would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.5   The team tested this area by examining documentation provided by the Academy as well as by meeting with staff and students. In addition, the team examined student handbooks and module study guides, annual monitoring reports and external examiner reports.

1.6   External examiner reports indicate that academic standards meet levels set by the national qualification framework and align with Subject Benchmark Statements. Academic staff receive training in academic standards and assessment and this was confirmed at staff meetings. Academic staff and student meetings also clarified that knowledge of academic levels and qualification frameworks was understood across the Academy.

1.7   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

1.8 The Institutional Agreement between the Academy and the University and the Responsibilities Checklist set out academic governance arrangements. The University reviews the partnership annually with actions tracked systematically. Overall responsibility for academic standards rests with the University, with credit awarded on the basis of the University's academic frameworks and regulations.

1.9 The Academy follows the University's Quality Handbook, in particular, the Assessment Supplement. As set out in the Responsibilities Checklist, the Academy is responsible for setting, marking and moderating assessment.

1.10 These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.11 The team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of documentation, including programme handbooks, annual monitoring reports and external examiner reports and in meetings with staff and students.

1.12 There is in place the required regulatory arrangements to have confidence that academic credit is awarded securely. This is through verification by external examiners, the role of the Academic Partnership Course Leader and Module Award and Progression Assessment Boards.

1.13 University assessment boards oversee the award of credit. The Module Assessment Board receives marks for individual modules and also considers the comparability of standards and achievements across the Board's modules. Informed by Module Assessment Board outcomes, the Student Progress Board then carries out a 'health check' on continuing students and the Awards Board considers exiting students for awards.

1.14 Staff confirmed that that they were fully informed about assessment processes and the functioning of assessment boards. Students demonstrated a clear understanding of assessment processes.

1.15 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.2): 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

1.16   The production of a definitive record of each programme and qualification is shared jointly between the University and the Academy but subject to the University's formal approval.

1.17   Programme specifications provide a reference point for the delivery of curriculum, assessment of learning outcomes, development of course handbooks and the monitoring and review of programmes by the Academy and University. The Academy retains definitive programme documents on the intranet and in hard copy.

1.18   Programme specifications and module study guides inform sections of the Academy's student programme handbooks covering structure and content and learning, teaching and assessment; the handbooks also contain information about student support and guidance and quality management and enhancement.

1.19   The University monitors the updating of all programme documentation including handbooks before publication through the Academic Partnership Annual Review and associated action tracker. This oversees documentation relating to programme delivery and assessment, its monitoring and review, and the provision to students and alumni of study records. The University's Academic Partnership Link Tutor is responsible for ensuring that following any changes to curriculum structure or the programme specification, for example in response to validation conditions and recommendations, the University Academic Registry receives updated documents. The Link Tutor also reviews programme documentation during regular visits to the Academy and records this in the Academic Partnership Link Tutor Visit Report.

1.20   The processes and procedures for the maintenance of definitive programme records would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.21   The review team considered their effectiveness by scrutinising relevant documentation and meeting with staff. Senior staff confirmed that the Academy stores definitive documentation on the intranet and that study transcripts are issued by the University. Students and external examiners confirmed that assessment and programme documentation is clear.

1.22   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

1.23   The University has overall responsibility for setting and overseeing the maintenance of academic standards through its Academic Regulations, which are also articulated through its Quality Handbook and Accreditation Handbook.

1.24   The Academy is responsible for implementing academic standards. The Academy follows the University course approval requirements, which involve formal validation and re-validation processes (undertaken most recently in 2016) and periodic review. The Academy responds to the outcomes from such events.

1.25   The University is responsible for establishing the academic standards for the Foundation Degree and BA honours top-up degree in line with the requirements of the FHEQ and other appropriate reference points. The Academy adopts all University procedures for course development and approval to ensure that the requirements of the awarding body for the defining and setting of standards are appropriately addressed. These are described under Expectation B1.

1.26   The Academy's processes in association with those of the University would enable Expectation A3.1 to be met.

1.27   To explore the arrangements for this Expectation the review team considered material and guidance produced by the University and discussed its use in programme design and approval, and in establishing standards for assessment. The review team met the University Academic Partnership Link Tutor, senior staff and teaching staff from the Academy.

1.28   The Academy complies with the processes for the design, development and approval of taught programmes specified by the University. The Academy follows the University's policy for development and approval of programmes, as well as its specifications. Responsibility for the monitoring of validated programmes at the University lies with its London College of Music. The Academy is also part of Slough Borough Council within the Learning and Community Services Directorate.

1.29   Overall, the evidence demonstrates the arrangements to be effective in practice. The validation reports and supporting documentation for the Foundation Degree and BA honours top-up degree confirm that the programmes are appropriately aligned to the FHEQ, takes account of the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and complies with the University's own academic frameworks and regulations.

1.30   Staff clearly articulated the awarding body's processes that are to be followed in programme approval, and commented on the consultation and modifications that resulted from the recent revalidation and approvals event. This included modifications to the Contemporary Techniques modules on the Foundation Degree to improve the integration of content and align with industry and professional skill requirements, and changes to the

assessment for the Jazz Technique and Creation module. Student, external examiner and Academic Partnership Link Tutor consultations also influenced these changes.

1.31   The review team found that the Academy, in association with its awarding body, has effective processes in place for the approval of programmes and the securing of standards. The review team concludes therefore 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

1.32   The University determines the credit value and status of modules, learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria. The University has detailed academic regulations and supporting Collaborative Handbook, and provides additional guidance on the teaching and assessment of the awards. Details of requirements are set out in the University Quality Handbook. The distribution of responsibilities is also included in the Responsibilities Checklist and elaborated upon in the Institutional Agreement.

1.33   Assessment boards ensure that credit and qualifications are only awarded where learning outcomes have been achieved. External examiners appointed by the awarding body are asked to confirm that standards are maintained at an appropriate level. The University also has detailed guidance on how to apply Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) to applicants.

1.34   The Academy is required to adhere to the University's frameworks and regulations in delivering and awarding the qualification. The Academy has responsibility for the design of assessments to meet the requirements of the University. The Academy's marking and internal verification process checks that learning outcomes are met at the threshold level and this is confirmed by the external examiner and Academic Partnership Link Tutor at annual meetings according to processes determined by the University.

1.35   The Academy's processes, in association with those of the University, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.36   In testing this Expectation, the review team considered documentation including module study guides, programme handbooks and assessment policies, procedures and their application. The team saw documentation developed by the Academy combined with reports from the University and external examiners. The team also met the University Academic Partnership Link Tutor, senior staff, academic staff and the programme leaders.

1.37   The evidence demonstrates the arrangements to be effective in practice. The Academy adopts all University processes and documentation and uses programme material, which defines learning outcomes for the programme and for modules. Assessment documentation and methods of assessment are set out in programme handbooks and detailed in module study guides. Assessment components and criteria are mapped to module learning outcomes to ensure that assessment schemes test the learning outcomes. Staff who met the team had a good understanding of the requirements of the University and of the standards expected of the awards.

1.38   The marking and assessment moderation process aligns with the University Quality Handbook, and Assessment Supplement. The Academy assessment process involves assessment initially undertaken by the module leader and second marked. This is verified by

the external examiner through a random selection of top, middle and bottom assessment outcomes.

1.39   The Academy module study guides provide details of module aims, intended learning outcomes, details of assessment including assessment criteria and a summative assessment grid that maps learning outcomes to the assessment tasks. The external examiner for the awards reports that the moderation system in place works effectively, and, there is a process of double marking and moderation carried out and this is clear and robust.

1.40   The Academy, in association with the University, has processes in place for the management of academic standards and the associated award of credit. The review team concludes therefore 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

1.41   The University ensures academic standards are met by carrying out regular reviews. Within the University, collaborative partnerships with the Academy are managed by the London School of Music.

1.42   The Academic Registry oversees and provides advice on quality assurance arrangements, maintains an up-to-date list of collaborative partners and prepares an annual report for the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC). The Collaborative Partnerships Steering Group (CPSG) monitors practice across the University.

1.43   The London School of Music undertakes an Annual Subject Review to monitor provision offered by partner organisations. The University has processes and procedures for the approval, management, review and ending of a partnership. The University also carries out Academic Partnership Annual Reviews. Module leader annual reports are completed which feed into the annual monitoring process. The Collaborative Handbook provides details of these arrangements. The Academy adopts all University policies and procedures for the monitoring and review of programmes.

1.44   The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.45   In considering this Expectation the review team examined documentation relating to programme monitoring and review and met the University Academic Link Tutor, senior and academic staff, and students.

1.46   The Academy undertakes annual reviews with the University, these are in addition to the required triennial periodic reviews undertaken by the University. The annual monitoring meetings include representation from external academics, University academics and quality staff, London College of Music and the Academy team. This forms part of the University quality cycle, the schedule for which is reviewed annually. The annual monitoring reports are compiled by the Academy Manager, reviewed by the Academic Partnership Link Tutor and includes the production of an action plan.

1.47   The University undertakes Academic Partnership Annual Reviews, which report positively on the partnership relationship. The Academic Partnership Annual Review monitors actions from the previous review; checks information held on the University's Academic Partnerships Register; reviews information on the University from the partner's website; checks programme specifications and handbooks; reviews external examiner annual reports and responses, Academic Partnership Link Tutor annual reports and visit reports as well as course annual reports from the Academy.

1.48   The annual report produced by the University Academic Partnership Link Tutor includes details covering review of previous actions; summary of external examiner reports; external audits/inspections; student satisfaction monitoring; enhancement; student progression, achievement and demographics; relationship to the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and to the Graduate Attributes Framework; learning

resources; good practice; and an action plan. By following University regulations and policies and ensuring all actions from periodic reviews are carried out, the student academic standards and learning opportunities always remain at the forefront of the Academy's work.

1.49   The Academy has processes that ensure appropriate monitoring of the provision is in place and enable academic standards to be 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

1.50   The University has ultimate responsibility for using external and independent expertise in the design and approval of programmes, with additional specialist contributions from the Academy's network of professionals. Responsibility for appointing external examiners to oversee the maintenance of academic standards also resides with the University. External examiner reports, and reports from the University Academic Partnership Link Tutor, are considered by the programme team and by senior management as part of the Academy's annual monitoring arrangements.

1.51   The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.52   The review team tested the effectiveness of the processes for the use of independent external expertise by examining procedural documents and external examiners' and consultant reports. The review team also held meetings with the University Academic Partnership Link Tutor, senior and academic staff and students.

1.53   Overall, the evidence demonstrates the arrangements to be effective in practice. The academic standards of University-validated awards are set, delivered and achieved using input and research undertaken by external expertise, and this is supported by additional guidance on programme design and standards provided by subject specialists. The external examiner and Academic Partnership Link Tutor provide independent verification of the Academy's processes and maintenance of standards.

1.54   During the development of the Foundation Degree award, the Academy engaged with 'Foundation Degree Forward', sought other external academic expertise and researched dance companies to identify industry needs. Owing to strong industry links the Academy continues to monitor the currency of the offer to ensure students benefit from industrial partnerships and professional industry-based tutors and practitioners.

1.55   External referencing is also achieved through extensive links with industry to inform the provision and ensure content reflects the needs of the sector. This includes professional body associations and employing practising professional artists. Projects are delivered within a 'realistic working environment' and in partnership with professional agencies. The Academy engages with an extensive range of professional expertise in the delivery and quality assurance of the awards within the specialist fields of dance and associated disciplines to assist with academic development and monitoring. This confirms that the programme's comparability with professional standards is appropriate and current.

1.56   The Academy's overall provision is accredited by the Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET). Reports by the CDET cover the extent to which the Academy complies with published educational standards and on the quality of outcomes and provision.

1.57   Overall, external and independent expertise is used fully at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that 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

1.58   In determining its judgement on the setting and maintenance of academic standards of awards at the Academy, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this area are met and the level of risk is considered low. There are no areas of good practice, recommendations or affirmations in this section.

1.59   The approach to maintaining academic standards at the Academy is defined by the degree-awarding body. The Academy uses the established University academic frameworks, regulations and procedures. The Academy relies on the established procedures of the University for the positioning of its qualifications at the appropriate level of the FHEQ and for aligning programme learning outcomes to qualification descriptors. There is oversight of standards through the awarding body and through the use of external examiners.

1.60   Staff are familiar with the responsibilities that are assigned to the Academy with regards to academic standards and there is significant external engagement through extensive links with industry. This includes professional body associations, a range of professional expertise within the specialist fields of dance and associated disciplines and employing practising professional artists. This confirms that the programme's comparability with professional standards is appropriate and current.

1.61   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body at the Academy **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 As reported in Expectation A3.1, the Academy conforms to the processes for the design, development and approval of taught programmes specified by the University. The University provides guidance and templates to the Academy, which support the various stages of approval, from initial concept to the approval event.

2.2 The University conducts the approval events and ensures appropriate involvement of independent and external experts. The Academy is responsible for developing the programme including the programme specifications and module study guides and the programme handbook.

2.3 As reported in Expectation A3.3, the University Academic Registry oversees and provides advice on quality assurance arrangements, maintains an up-to-date list of collaborative partners and prepares an annual report for the AQSC. The London School of Music also monitors provision at the Academy through the Academic Partnership Link Tutor and through undertaking Annual Subject Reviews.

2.4 The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.5 In considering this Expectation the review team examined programme approval documentation and reports and relevant committee minutes. The team also met the University Academic Partnership Link Tutor, senior and academic staff, and students of the Academy.

2.6 The Academy has in place an Institutional Agreement valid until 2019, and an Academic Agreement for the approved awards, which is valid until 2018. The Academy confirmed that it follows the University policies and procedures for the design, development and approval of awards. Staff confirmed that the design and development of the awards were also informed by the University Academic Regulations, Quality Handbook and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy. Modifications are implemented in line with University approvals processes and the Academy works closely with a University Academic Partnership Link Tutor and external examiner to approve these.

2.7 Senior staff reported that the provision was developed through research commissioned by the Academy and was undertaken by a number of external organisations. This was also informed by the overall findings from the Institute of Education for the European Commission 'Equal' programme. The outcome of this work influenced the Academy developing a structure comprising two streams in Dance and Performance.

2.8 The Academy maintains industrial currency by collaborating with industry partners and its professional industry-based tutors. Additionally, existing staff are supported in maintaining their professional practical skills and knowledge, including membership of

various professional and occupational standards organisations. The Academy has extensive specialist input from practising expertise to be able to inform programme design and development.

2.9   Minutes of the Annual Subject Review meetings undertaken by the London School of Music confirm appropriate oversight of curriculum development and report that the Academy has produced some excellent collaborative work and should be commended for their efforts.

2.10   The Academy reports that there are no plans to increase the number of awards offered, although confirmed that there is the potential for growth in student numbers to existing awards. To achieve this the Academy will require support from Slough Borough Council in relation to additional facilities and accommodation.

2.11   The Academy has appropriate processes in place that support curriculum development and the approval of programmes by the awarding body. The review team concludes that Expectation B1 is met and that the 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

2.12   As described in the Responsibilities Checklist, the Academy has responsibility for student recruitment and admissions to its programmes. The Institutional Agreement notes that students will be admitted on the basis of both the University's and the programme's admissions criteria with interviews being conducted by Academy staff.

2.13   Applicants can apply to the Academy through UCAS or directly using an Academy application form. The application process consists of a formal application, audition and interview. This is in accordance with the University's Admissions Policy which stipulates that selection should be supported by transparent procedures and carried out by appropriately qualified staff. It also specifies that applications should be based on an application form, including evidence of qualifications and experience, and may include other mechanisms including an interview and audition. Additionally, it states that interviewees should receive clear information about interviews and auditions, which should be conducted in a timely and standardised manner and articulated in a clear structure with decisions recorded in writing.

2.14   Reflecting the University's Admissions Policy, the Academy's validation documents and programme handbooks set out the entry requirements for each programme. The review team noted that the admissions criteria had been further clarified as a condition of revalidation in April 2016.

2.15   Specified entry requirements for the FdA include 72 UCAS points and GCSE English (grade C or above) and for the BA a relevant FdA, HND or equivalent is needed together with evidence of ability to tackle written assignments. Additionally, applicants participate in an audition and interview, with an invitation outlining the day, extended by letter and outcomes recorded formally on an audition form. In the case of applicants for whom English is not a first language, they must have International English Language Testing System (IELTS) level 6 or achieve IELTS 5.5 and take extra English for Speakers of Foreign Languages classes.

2.16   In line with the equality and diversity policies of the University, Slough Borough Council and the dance professional and statutory body, CDET, the Academy seeks to widen access to non-traditional learners. In keeping with this, mature applicants lacking formal qualifications but who have relevant experience may also apply to the FdA. Additionally, the Academy follows the University's procedures for admissions process complaints and for APL.

2.17   These arrangements would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.18   The review team considered their effectiveness by scrutinising the admissions process and relevant documents, including the Academy's website, and through discussion with staff and former students.

2.19   Staff confirmed that they were knowledgeable about the recruitment process and that they received an advance briefing on the selection procedure. Those present at the

meeting were already experienced at evaluating the standard of audition performance. Students said that they had access to relevant information through the prospectus which was available on the website and through attendance at a UCAS fair, which enabled them to speak to staff and students and 'get a feel for the Academy'. However, from a student perspective, the transparency of the audition process was only clear once an applicant had engaged in the application procedure. Students advised that they learned about the format of the interview and audition by email at the point of being invited to attend the selection process. It was not possible for the review team to review the admissions process complaints procedure because there had been no previous complaints; likewise, there had been no former APL applications.

2.20   The review team also observed that neither the prospectus nor the website provided detailed guidance about the interview and audition day. The review team therefore **recommends** that by July 2018 the Academy review recruitment and selection procedures to ensure that prospective students have timely access to audition and selection information. This recommendation is linked to Expectation C, Information.

2.21   Nevertheless, the review team found that the Academy's recruitment, selection and admissions processes work effectively in practice. The Academy promotes its widening participation agenda by offering fair access to its programmes to applicants from a wide range of backgrounds. 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

2.22   The Academy's two programmes focus on practical learning which is contextualised and underpinned by theoretical learning and designed to prepare learners from a diverse range of backgrounds to go 'straight into employment in the dance field'. The programmes enable students to develop as professional practitioners who have a portfolio of essential skills including performance, choreography, and teaching capability as well as awareness of commercial business and personal well-being needs. Benefiting from 30 hours per week contact time, students not only study prescribed modules covering these areas but are also encouraged to achieve additional external qualifications; for example, Pilates mat work which enables them to teach Pilates, and British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat fight choreography certification affording entry to the Equity Fight Directors' Register.

2.23   Additionally, students have access to a range of extracurricular classes which they select according to individual personal development plans (PDPs) enabling them to focus on individual strengths and areas for development. Extracurricular classes include Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing; supplementary technique classes, from ballet and contemporary to hip hop and urban; and additional skills classes such as study skills, acting and singing. The Academy has developed a concept for identifying and approving this type of enhancement activity. It is termed 'The Golden Thread'. Students evidenced a clear understanding of how they can access curricular and extracurricular activities to pursue the development of personal needs. They explicitly referred to 'The Golden Thread', describing how each student threads his or her way through a rich range of options. That the model is effective is evidenced by the achievement of 100 per cent graduate employment within a month of graduation.

2.24   The Academy Manager is the only full-time academic member of staff. All others are part-time practitioners who, following an interview and scrutinised teaching of a class, ensure the presence of a vibrant creative and professional ethos and are strongly networked with professional dance companies and professional bodies. Professional and pedagogical development is supported with staff having access to Slough Borough Council and University of West London staff development events and opportunities for funding to study for a higher qualification.

2.25   Learning and teaching takes account of learner diversity through adherence to learning styles theory and also through the offer of individual study skills support. Staff undergo annual peer observation based on the Ofsted graded model and this provides a basis for annual review and personal development. Any themes or issues of interest are recorded by the Academy Manager and inform individual development. Each August the Academy holds its Annual Staff Training Day, attended by all teaching staff, which includes issues relating to institutional updates, Prevent, the Quality Code for Higher Education, and marking and standardisation.

2.26   There are two student representatives each year who chair termly student meetings that run to an open agenda. Third year students ably supported first and second year students in making sense of particular modules and the demands of the programmes

stemming from high contact hours. Students also meet regularly with staff when they can discuss new developments, budget and timetable issues and propose potential changes such as the provision of additional classes. In 2012-13, students' request for weekend usage of studios for independent learning resulted in the Academy negotiating access with Slough Borough Council.

2.27   Students also meet privately with external examiners and other external stakeholders including representatives from the CDET, the University's periodic review panel, visiting partners and Slough Borough Council management. The outcomes of student and stakeholder meetings are referred to the programme and staff teams for further discussion.

2.28   The Academy follows the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy which is based on six themes: creativity and core skills, research-informed learning, teaching and assessment, employability, application of useful knowledge, technology-enhanced learning and student engagement. In response to this, Academy programme specifications set out the Academy's Learning, Teaching and Assessment focus in detail including teaching methods and the tracking of student progress.

2.29   A detailed review process is in place, which is overseen by the University. The Academy Manager completes a Module Review Form annually for each module, which is then considered as part of the annual monitoring process. The University's Academic Partnership Link Tutor and the Academy Manager provide separate annual reports which, along with external examiner reports, highlight good practice and are received by the Annual Partnership Annual Review meeting which determines an action plan.

2.30   The processes described above would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.31   The review team held meetings with staff and students who confirmed the implementation of the processes outlined in the documentation. The review team also examined records of teaching observations, notes on the annual conference, staff appraisal and development documents and a wide range of policies, plans and committee minutes.

2.32   Senior staff confirmed the Academy's commitment to 'The Golden Thread' which is a central concept in the Academy's emerging Quality Enhancement Strategy. Teaching staff and students confirmed this with students clarifying that they were '… the needle going through everything …' in order to fulfil individual potential in the dance profession. Teaching staff and students also explained how student requests for improvements are listened to, giving the example of how tumbling and extra ballet were added to the list of supplementary classes and how resource issues are addressed, for example through the provision of pegs for clothing and bags and a television.

2.33   Although the Academy does not yet have a virtual learning environment (VLE), it makes use of a password-protected intranet giving access to programme and module handbooks, key policies and anonymised student module grades. Nevertheless, staff noted with enthusiasm that tutors can now upload video clips illustrating dance techniques once they have been introduced in class. Students confirmed how they use and value these clips citing one on commercial dance techniques. Staff and students also referred to the use of social media for staff and student communication.

2.34   Student and staff meetings evidenced that students are well supported from the beginning of their programme. Students described how during induction week they underwent diagnostic tests; received and signed the learning contract; participated in sessions on study skills including plagiarism, Harvard referencing and essay writing; learned how to use the intranet, including access to the timetable and a personal diary and the location of the complaints procedure. During the academic year, in addition to being able

to discuss issues with student representatives, students also have regular tutorials with an academic tutor and access to the newly-established Wellbeing Team. The latter is informed by Slough Borough Council objectives and is becoming a one-stop-shop for student support including learning difficulties, study skills, pastoral care, physical wellbeing and nutrition. Although the Academy does not operate regular student satisfaction surveys beyond the National Student Survey (NSS), which recorded 100 per cent student satisfaction, the wellbeing team issues surveys from time to time.

2.35   The Academy does not offer formal work placements as part of the academic curriculum although some students successfully find paid summer employment in dance companies. However, opportunities for engagement with industry are pervasive; initially through the employment of professional practitioners as tutors, through regular masterclasses, and through the Academy's simulated professional environment and informally organised placements.

2.36   Of particular note is that each Friday, different invited industry specialists, often including alumni, provide masterclasses, which reinforce professional standards, introduce contemporary fusion dance styles and techniques, and, importantly, work with students as fellow practitioners, thus simulating a professional environment. From time to time the visiting specialists give students the opportunity to audition for their respective companies. Students recognised how this simulated professional environment enhances their skills and self-confidence.

2.37   Students also gain industry experience formally through a Community Dance module, with the opportunity to set up their own dance company as part of the top-up degree and through working with schools belonging to Slough School Sport Network where they have to meet real world requirements such as needing a Disclosure and Barring Service check. Additionally, students perform regularly at Slough Borough Council events, for example 'Dance in the Park' and 'Creative Horizons'.

2.38   The review team considers as **good practice** the model of learning and teaching practice that successfully prepares students for employment.

2.39   In practice, the Academy's approach to learning, teaching and assessment ensures that student achievement is well supported. Teaching staff enthusiastically deliver teaching, sustain a strong professional culture and offer effective tutorial support. Students develop professional values through a simulated professional environment and achieve excellent employment outcomes. The Wellbeing Team addresses a wide range of personal and professional student support issues. There are robust review processes that recognise good practice and support development. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B3 is met and the 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

2.40   The Academy's approach to supporting student development and achievement is informed both by the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which stresses personalised learning and effective monitoring of student progression and retention, and by Slough Borough Council's values: being ambitious and innovative while also being responsive and empowering to participants and accountable to stakeholders. The programme specifications of both courses reflect University and Slough Borough Council priorities.

2.41   Students practise dance in five purpose-built dance studios fitted with Harlequin flooring and mirrors and have access to Wi-Fi and a student library with DVDs, periodicals, magazines and books. Off-site, they can make use of Slough Borough Council facilities at the Curve, a community cultural centre, which houses a public library with a developed dance section and offers the Academy priority use of a 201-seat theatre. Students also have access to Slough Gymnastics Club. Students receive a programme handbook at the beginning of their programme, which is normally available on the Academy intranet. Each module is also supported by a detailed module study guide. Students have opportunities to discuss their views about the quality of physical and academic resources at a termly student meeting and at staff-student meetings, the minutes of which are referred to academic and staff teams for further consideration and action.

2.42   The Academy places particular emphasis on student support and wellbeing, reflecting a strong commitment to retaining and empowering students from non-traditional backgrounds. Dance students pose particular challenges since physical injury can readily occur, accounting for a proportion of retention issues. As noted in Expectation B3, the Academy has recently established a well-being team, which offers a student support service covering bespoke nutrition and exercise plans as well as overseeing access to a discounted chiropractor, counselling, study skills and disability support. The Wellbeing Team reviews its activities supported by online student surveys and addresses any issues raised through wellbeing team meetings.

2.43   These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.44   The review team tested the effectiveness of the Academy's approach to supporting student development and achievement at meetings with staff and by reviewing relevant documentation.

2.45   Students confirmed that physical and academic resources are continuously reviewed through termly student meetings and staff-student meetings with appropriate actions being taken. They also recognised the value of induction, in particular, diagnostic tests which resulted in students being streamed for practical work yet given specific development goals. In pursuance of personalised learning, the Academy's use of PDPs enables the student to take early responsibility for setting goals for personal development and improvement. Students noted that when they reflected on the previous term's goals they could see what they had already achieved; this left them feeling motivated and increased their confidence.

2.46   Students also praised the work of the Wellbeing Team, pointing in particular to the support available in nutrition, chiropractic treatment and mental health. Regarding the latter, the wellbeing team was able to offer coping strategies for stress, including time management, or additional support for those with more challenging emotional difficulties.

2.47   The review team considered as **good practice** the very high level of support for students that makes a significant positive contribution to their personal, professional and academic development.

2.48   As noted in Expectation B3, students are encouraged to achieve additional qualifications which may in future help them further their professional careers; for example a Pilates teaching qualification and fight choreography certification facilitating entry to the Equity Fight Directors' Register. Students also participate in a comprehensive range of extracurricular classes which include Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing qualifications up to and including the Diploma in Dance Instruction and Diploma in Dance Education; supplementary technique classes such as ballet, break, contact, contemporary, hip hop, jazz, street, release, tap, tumbling and urban; and additional skills classes covering study skills, acting and singing.

2.49   Although there was evidence when the review team met students that the physical and time demands of the programme, together with extracurricular activities, were initially experienced by some as nearly overwhelming, third year students were able to contextualise the activities and to help less experienced students grasp their significance. For example, tumbling was considered by some to be too much like gymnastics whereas for others it was a means of developing strength and agility which would later support safe articulation of ambitious 'show-piece' choreography and give Academy graduates an edge at auditions. The review team considered as **good practice** the systematic commitment to provide a wide range of extracurricular activities that enriches the student experience.

2.50   In addition to offering personal, physical and academic support, alumni highlighted how the Academy continues to support them professionally in their careers. Alumni praised tutors for the honest and realistic manner in which they had prepared them for employment and for the opportunities tutors and the curriculum gave them to enhance their skills and take responsibility for their own learning and develop as independent learners and creatives. Alumni recognised that through their learning experience at the Academy they were able to develop resilience and emotional intelligence as well as practical understanding of finance for freelance workers.

2.51   As noted in the previous Expectation, the Academy is closely linked to the dance industry through its part-time practitioner staff, through its many partnerships with dance companies and professional and statutory bodies and through its regular masterclasses run by specialists. These elements in combination simulate industry practice and create a highly professional learning environment.

2.52   Although there is no formal system of dance industry placements, many students achieve these informally while also engaging with local schools and community groups to develop dance projects, thus enhancing their professional skills. These factors together with the industry-focused nature of the curriculum contribute significantly to student motivation and aspiration and to the Academy's impressive employment outcomes.

2.53   Academy careers support does not end with graduation. Alumni noted that of particular help to them in sustaining a dance career is an Academy graduate network. This is a closed social media platform overseen by the Academy Manager and available to Academy graduates, which posts job opportunities and ensures that successive cohorts

support one another in seeking employment. The review team **affirms** the actions being taken to develop the online alumni network to promote professional opportunities, raise student aspirations and contribute to the currency of the professional environment.

2.54   The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B4 is met, with a low level of associated risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.55   The University has guidance within the Quality Handbook to demonstrate how the Academy and partners engage with the student body. The Academy uses a range of methods for engaging the views of students, including student surveys, discussing issues with student representatives, student/staff meetings, and addressing issues through an open-door approach.

2.56   Student representatives are selected to represent the student body. To capture the student experience the Academy has student representatives who chair termly student meetings. Students have private meetings with external examiners, the CDET, periodic review panels, visiting partners, and representatives of Slough Borough Council management. These all feed into programme team and staff team meetings to ensure that the Academy is meeting the needs and aspirations of its student body.

2.57   The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.58   In considering this Expectation the review team examined relevant policies and procedures, minutes and student survey results. The team also met students and their representatives, and senior, academic and professional support staff.

2.59   Staff and students report that the small size of the higher education student body and open-door culture of the Academy successfully encourage students to raise any concerns directly, which ensures they are resolved quickly. Students are satisfied that their voice is heard this way and that the Academy is responsive to their comments. The Academic Partnership Link Tutor Annual Report and external examiner and CDET reports include details of student engagement and overall satisfaction.

2.60   The Academy responds in a timely manner to student feedback. Students the review team met reported a number of examples including the Academy providing storage facilities for clothes and bags, installation of a television, providing additional courses such as tumbling and access to a professional gym. The students also reported that if any request was not possible they were informed of the reasons.

2.61   The minutes from staff and student meetings and student representative meetings indicate the main formal process for obtaining student feedback. Topics included NSS, student finance, health and safety and course content. The selected student representatives receive coaching from the Academy Manager to ensure they are prepared for their role, which they reported was helpful and supportive.

2.62   Students met by the review team reported that they are happy with the overall structure and content of the programme, and access to the new facilities and the opportunity to participate in additional qualifications. The Academy recognises that its approach to student engagement could be more consultative. However, it is clear that students are part of the Academy community and able to participate as partners within an educational and supportive environment.

2.63   The Academy reports that the only student survey undertaken during the 2016-17 academic year was the NSS. The 2017 NSS results are very positive, with an overall satisfaction rate of 100 per cent, with responses based on a cohort size of 25.

2.64   As part of the CDET accreditation visit in 2015 students completed an anonymous online evaluation with an 83 per cent response rate. The report states that 'Students are very well represented at all levels of decision making and the open-door policy ensures that all issues are dealt with effectively as soon as they arise' and 'The students clearly understand what is expected of them and through the expert teaching and individual care given are actively encouraged to have "thinking minds" and to contribute to their own learning and creativity'.

2.65   In the programme specifications the Academy reports that students undertake to maintain a PDP. This is an opportunity for students to assess where they are in terms of their learning and skills on entry to the programme, and to reflect upon and manage their learning process, performance and achievement. This is to enable them to plan their personal, educational and career development. The students reported that the PDP and learning portfolio produced as part of their studies enabled them to reflect on current skills and set personal improvement targets.

2.66   The Academy has adequate systems in place for student engagement. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk to quality and standards 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

2.67   The Academy adopts all University policies and procedures for assessment. The Academy has responsibilities for setting assessments, first marking and moderation or second marking of student work and providing feedback to students on their work. The University, through the London College of Music, has responsibilities for key formal quality assurance mechanisms. These responsibilities include monitoring course validation; annual and periodic review; annual monitoring and reporting; external examiners; assessment boards; student consultation; internal and external audits and arrangements for academic partner provision.

2.68   The University Academic Regulations, which include the regulations relating to assessment, are available on the University website. The University has in place the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee to oversee policies and procedures relating to assessment. The University Quality Handbook includes general guidance to programme teams on assessment and feedback strategies, examples of good practice, and minimum requirements for sampling, double marking, and moderation. Details are contained in the University Assessment Policy and Assessment Supplement.

2.69   The Academy Manager has overall responsibility for ensuring the suitability of teaching, learning and assessment activities. The University manages all Assessment Boards and produces student transcripts.

2.70   The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.71   In considering this Expectation the review team examined assessment policies and strategies, external examiner reports, Assessment Board minutes, student feedback and programme monitoring reports. The team also met senior and academic staff, and students.

2.72   Students are assessed through various methods including written essays; portfolios (mood-books); live performance; technical exam; choreography; work-based learning; presentations and continuous technical assessment. The 2015 CDET accreditation visit panel reported that 'Students are encouraged to develop an articulate critical vocabulary and are expected to provide reasoned and constructive peer evaluation and reflection on their own work. This was seen by the Panel in almost all the classes and projects observed'. The review team was able to confirm this when meeting with students, who demonstrated a range of attributes including confidence, ambition, perseverance and resilience.

2.73   Staff reported that changes to assessment have been made following student feedback. These include changes to assessment requirements for the commercial techniques module from all essay to a combination of reduced essay requirements and online Blogs, and changes to the assessment for the Jazz Technique and Creation module.

2.74   Staff reported that performance work is formative in that it provides an opportunity for students to be given feedback on their level of attainment, but also often counts towards the credit being accumulated for a summative statement of achievement. For example,

students will receive instant formative feedback during rehearsals for action to be taken during these practical sessions.

2.75   End-of-module or end-of-programme examinations are designed primarily to result in a summative judgement on the level of attainment the student has reached. Evidence of the module assessments can be found in the programme specifications and summarised within the programme handbooks. The Academic Partnership Annual Review for 2016-17 undertaken by the University reported that 'It was noted that such positive efforts around the assessment process had been reflected in external examiner reporting'.

2.76   The Academy provides feedback to students in line with University policy. Feedback on work is provided within 15 working days of the hand-in deadline. To ensure consistency of providing assessment feedback this was discussed at the annual staff away day as part of the standardisation agenda.

2.77   The monitoring of assessment marks is completed through populating a master assessment spreadsheet by academic staff, which is centrally controlled through the Academy Manager and Quality and Business Manager. Assessment outcomes are moderated by the external examiner prior to submission to the University Assessment Board. The review team was unable to identify evidence that there is a formal record of agreeing final assessment decisions within the Academy prior to submission to the University. The team therefore **recommends** that by April 2018 the Academy implement a formal process for the confirmation of assessment outcomes at key points in the academic year. The recommendation in Expectation B8 includes reference to formalising procedures to ensure more effective oversight of key quality assurance processes internally and within Slough Borough Council.

2.78   Assessment Boards are managed by the University and include contributions from external examiners and the Academic Partnership Link Tutor.

2.79   Students are engaged in placements as part of the Foundation Degree Community Dance module which is delivered in the community dance industry and facilitated by dance professionals and community workshop leaders. Students have the opportunity to put together individual learning plans, programme and session plans and facilitate workshops in various venues. In addition, the BA honours students, through the Dance in Education module, are enabled to undertake either practical teaching within a school or set themselves up as a theatre-in-education company and perform in several schools.

2.80   The Academy has reliable assessment processes in place that enable students to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes. While the Academy needs to implement a formal process for the confirmation of assessment outcomes, the overall approach is equitable, valid, and reliable. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the 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

2.81   The University has responsibilities for the management and appointment of external examiners and has in place detailed policies and procedures that align with the Quality Code. The Academy is also accredited by the CDET, which involves an accreditation visit and annual monitoring visits to maintain accreditation status.

2.82   The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.83   In considering this Expectation the review team examined external examiner and annual monitoring reports and relevant committee minutes. The team also met senior and academic staff and students.

2.84   The external examiner submits a written report to the University on a prescribed template. The external examiner reports are considered by the Academy Manager and Quality and Business Manager. They are also considered as part of the University's partnership annual monitoring processes. The outcomes from the external examining process are captured within a range of monitoring systems, including the University Academic Partnership Link Tutor annual reports, annual monitoring reports Academic Partnership Annual Review and London School of Music Annual Subject Reviews.

2.85   Students the review team met reported some awareness of the function of the external examiner and student representatives have met with external examiners and the CDET consultant. Staff receive copies of these reports electronically and students are made aware of relevant sections of the reports at student meetings, and if requested, can obtain copies of the report. The most recent external examiner reports state that 'The Academy are a forward-thinking institution and are always willing and take any recommendations seriously. The course leader is rigorous in his approach to maintaining standards and improving the quality of the course'.

2.86   External examiners may be asked, at their discretion, to play an advisory or developmental role, for example in module or programme development or preparation for annual and periodic reviews.

2.87   The Academy works with external examiners to ensure that they are able to perform the function of independent expert review of the assessment process for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to the accuracy, comparability of standards (internally and externally), compliance with regulations, and the validity of the output from that process.

2.88   The Academy is accredited by the CDET that involved a two-day accreditation visit in 2015, with the result that the Academy has accreditation until 2019. In addition, the Academy has annual monitoring visits undertaken by the CDET to maintain the accreditation as a member. These annual monitoring visits are undertaken by consultants who report on performances undertaken by the students. The most recent annual CDET monitoring visit reports that the Academy encourages individuality and responsibility in all the students that embark on their diverse programme of study and it is clear that students have determination and will address continued professional development after graduating.

2.89   The outcomes from the external examining and CDET annual reporting are shared with staff as part of the annual away day and at team meetings.

2.90   The review team concludes that the Academy makes good use of the external examiners. 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

2.91   As noted in Expectation A3.3, the University ensures academic standards are met by carrying out regular reviews. The Academy confirmed that they adopt all University processes and procedures to meet the University's requirements.

2.92   The University undertakes an Academy Partnership Annual Review. The awarding body is also responsible for conducting periodic programme reviews and the London School of Music undertakes annual Subject Reviews. The Academy annual quality cycle sets out a staged process of quality assurance with regard to the monitoring and review of programmes, which is overseen by the Academy Manager.

2.93   The contractual agreement with the University requires the Academy Manager to report academic standards and quality of students learning opportunities through the University management system. Annual programme monitoring is led by the Academy Manager who completes an annual programme monitoring report and action plan using the awarding body's template. The module leader report also captures information to feed into the annual monitoring process. As reported in Expectation B7, the Academy has achieved CDET accreditation, and as part of this process CDET undertakes annual visits to enable the Academy to maintain accreditation.

2.94   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.95   In considering this Expectation, the review team examined the annual programme monitoring report and action plan, and relevant committee minutes. The team also met senior and academic staff, and students.

2.96   The Academy confirmed that all University programmes are monitored and reviewed using University processes and documentation. The annual monitoring report is prepared by the Academy Manager, with contributions from staff and students and is informed by external reports, Academy data and supporting documentation.

2.97   The review team examined the Annual Subject Reviews undertaken by the London School of Music, which were comprehensive, and the most recent report for 2015-16 included student representation from the Academy at the meeting. It also reported on the Academy having produced some excellent collaborative work.

2.98   Module leader reports are also undertaken which feed into the annual monitoring and review process. As part of the Academy's internal review and monitoring process it has been decided that the responsibility and accountability for the approval of module leader reports has been assigned to the Academy Manager. These reports draw on the evaluations of students, the experiences of teaching staff on the module, analysis of student performance and factors affecting student performance, comments by external examiners, and includes actions for improving the module.

2.99   The Academy has an extensive range of mechanisms to monitor and review the quality of the student experience throughout the year. These include close monitoring by the Academic Partnership Link Tutor; module leader reports; external examiner reports; the CDET annual visit reports; student surveys and feedback. The Annual Academic

Partnership Course Reports are produced by the Academy Manager and include a review of previous action plans; student satisfaction monitoring and student engagement; student progression and achievement; changes made to curriculum structure and content; responses to external examiners; learning resources; and a resulting action plan.

2.100   Staff confirmed that they contributed to the review process, particularly through team meetings and, once approved, had access to the final report. The Academy Manager reported that the completed Annual Academic Partnership Course Report is approved by the Head of Learning and Community of Slough Borough Council prior to submission to the University. The review team was unable to identify an internal formal approval process within the Academy for key academic quality reports being 'signed off' by an overarching management group. As reported in Expectation B6, the Academy also does not have a formal approval process for the confirmation of assessment outcomes at key points in the academic year. The review team **recommends** that by September 2018 the Academy formalise procedures to ensure more effective oversight of key quality assurance processes, internally and within Slough Borough Council.

2.101   The Academy has adequate processes in place for the regular monitoring of programmes. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the level of risk is moderate due to some weaknesses in the operation of management processes.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.102   The University has in place detailed complaints and appeals procedures. Slough Borough Council also has details concerning complaints procedures, which are available through the Council's website. Academic appeals can be lodged based on clear grounds set out in the University policy and follow several different stages including informal resolution. The Academy adopts both the University and Slough Borough Council complaints and appeals policies and processes, depending on individual circumstances.

2.103   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.104   In considering this Expectation the review team examined the Academy's, Slough Borough Council and the awarding body's policies relating to academic appeals and complaints. The team also met with Slough Borough Council and University representatives, senior, academic and professional support staff and students.

2.105   Students have two routes through which to make a complaint. One through the Slough Borough Council process specifically relating to facilities, health and safety, staffing and equality of opportunity; and secondly through the University for complaints relating to the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities, and academic appeals. Both routes of complaint are made clear to students at induction. In the first instance students use the procedures that are in place at the Academy. Once the student has exhausted the Academy procedures, they can either raise a formal complaint with the University at stage two of the University procedure or by contacting Slough Borough Council.

2.106   The Academy has not had any academic appeals or formal complaints in the last three years therefore the effectiveness of the management of the procedures could not be tested. Given the small scale of the higher education provision and the open-door culture of the Academy, most issues are resolved informally. Staff and students reported an understanding of the appeals and complaints policies and procedures.

2.107   The Academy Complaints Procedure is brief and lacks specificity concerning types of complaint and procedures to submit a complaint. The team examined relevant documentation and found that the information available to students may cause confusion. The example module study guide makes reference to the Complaints Procedures and signposts the student to additional information in the student programme handbook. The submitted programme handbooks do not include further details although do include a link to the University Student Handbook.

2.108   The Academy has produced a Complaints Procedure that endeavours to capture the relevant procedure for students. This is a summary document outlining Slough Borough Council's complaint stages, and signposting to the awarding body/organisation. There is potential for confusion regarding the use of the complaints policies of the Academy, Slough Borough Council and the awarding body.

2.109   The review team concludes that there is a lack of clarity in differentiating between the Academy, Slough Borough Council and University procedures. The review team therefore **recommends** that by July 2018 the Academy clearly articulates the difference

between the complaints processes of the individual organisations and the relationship between them.

2.110   The University has robust policies in place to govern the management of appeals and complaints. The relationship between Slough Borough Council, the Academy and the awarding body formal complaints procedures is in need of clarification. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.111   The Responsibilities Checklist assigns responsibility for managing relationships with partner organisations to the Academy. However, there are no arrangements in place at the Academy for delivering higher education learning opportunities with other organisations, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

Expectation: Not applicable
Level of risk: Not applicable

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

2.112   The Academy has no research degree provision, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

Expectation: Not applicable
Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.113   In determining its judgement on the quality of student learning opportunities at the Academy, the review team considered the findings against the criteria outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this area are met. The level of risk is considered low in all Expectations apart from B8, where the review team considers there to be a moderate risk to the quality of learning opportunities. The review team identifies three areas of good practice; one in Expectation B3 and two in Expectation B4 and a total of four recommendations for action pertaining to Expectations B2, B6, B8 and B9. There is one affirmation in Expectation B4.

2.114   The Academy does not offer formal work placements as part of the academic curriculum; however, there are extensive opportunities for engagement with industry. This is through the employment of professional practitioners as tutors, through regular masterclasses, and through the Academy's simulated professional environment and informally organised placements. Students also gain industry experience formally through a Community Dance module, through working with schools belonging to Slough School Sport Network and students perform regularly at Slough Borough Council events. The review team notes as good practice the model of learning and teaching practice that successfully prepares students for employment.

2.115   Physical and academic resources are continuously reviewed at the Academy through termly meetings, with appropriate actions being taken. Students recognised the value of induction, and in particular diagnostic tests that resulted in students being streamed for practical work yet given specific development goals. The Academy's use of personal development plans enables the student to take early responsibility for setting goals for personal development and improvement, thus facilitating personalised learning and leaving students motivated and with increased confidence. Students praised the work of the wellbeing team and in particular to the support available in nutrition, chiropractic treatment and mental health. The review team considers as good practice the very high level of support for students that makes a significant positive contribution to their personal, professional and academic development.

2.116   Students at the Academy are encouraged to achieve additional qualifications which may help them further their professional careers, such as a Pilates teaching qualification and fight choreography certification. Students also participate in a comprehensive range of extracurricular classes which include Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing qualifications, a wide range of supplementary dance technique classes, and additional skills classes covering study skills, acting and singing. The review team recognises as good practice the systematic commitment to provide a wide range of extracurricular activities that enriches the student experience.

2.117   Students have access to relevant recruitment and selection information through the prospectus, which is available on the website and through events that enable students to speak to staff. However, from a student perspective, the transparency of the audition process is only clear once an applicant engages in the application procedure. Students learn about the format of the interview and audition by email at the point of being invited to attend the selection process. The review team noted that neither the prospectus nor the website provided detailed guidance about the interview and audition day. The review team therefore recommends that the Academy review recruitment and selection procedures to ensure that prospective students have timely access to audition and selection information.

2.118   Assessment feedback is provided to students in a timely manner and consistency of feedback is discussed by academic staff as part of the standardisation agenda at the annual

staff away day. The monitoring of assessment marks is completed by academic staff through populating a master assessment spreadsheet, which is centrally controlled, and assessment outcomes are moderated by the external examiner prior to submission to the University Assessment Board. The review team was unable to identify a formal record of agreeing final assessment decisions within the Academy prior to submission to the University. The review team therefore recommends the Academy implement a formal process for the confirmation of assessment outcomes at key points in the academic year.

2.119   The Academy has an extensive range of mechanisms to monitor and review the quality of the student experience throughout the year. The Annual Academic Partnership Course Report is produced by the Academy Manager and staff confirmed that they contributed to the review process and had access to the final report. The Annual Academic Partnership Course Report is approved by the Head of Learning and Community at Slough Borough Council prior to submission to the University. The review team was unable to identify an internal formal approval process within the Academy for key academic quality reports being signed off by an overarching management group. The review team recommends the Academy formalise procedures to ensure more effective oversight of key quality assurance processes, internally and within Slough Borough Council.

2.120   Students at the Academy have two routes through which to make a complaint; one through the Slough Borough Council process specifically relating to facilities, health and safety, staffing and equality of opportunity, and secondly through the University for complaints relating to the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities and academic appeals. However, in the first instance students use the procedures that are in place at the Academy and once these have been exhausted, students can either raise a formal complaint with the University or contact Slough Borough Council. The Academy has produced a Complaints Procedure that endeavours to capture the relevant procedure for students. This is a summary document outlining Slough Borough Council's complaint stages, and signposting to the awarding body. There is potential for confusion regarding the use of the complaints policies of the Academy, Slough Borough Council and the awarding body. The review team therefore recommends the Academy clearly articulates the difference between the complaints processes of the individual organisations and the relationship between them.

2.121   Alumni highlighted the continued support they receive from the Academy in their professional careers after graduation. They noted that of particular help to them in sustaining a dance career is the Academy graduate network, which is a closed social media platform overseen by the Academy Manager and available to Academy graduates that posts job opportunities and ensures that successive cohorts support one another in seeking employment. The review team affirms the actions being taken to develop the online alumni network to promote professional opportunities, raise student aspirations and contribute to the currency of the professional environment.

2.122   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the Academy **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 Academy is responsible for ensuring that information it publishes is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy and that there are clear processes in place to fulfil this responsibility.

3.2   The Academy publishes information about its higher education provision through its prospectus; its website, which fulfils local authority accessibility regulations; social media platforms (including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo and Pinterest); the CDET Careers Conference; Move It and UCAS, including UCAS Compose London and UCAS Compose Manchester.

3.3   The website places the following in the public domain: the Academy's Mission Statement; Prospectus; Student Charter; a VLE statement and documents relating to academic offences, appeals and complaints and Harvard Referencing.

3.4   Although the Academy does not yet have a VLE, documents relevant to the student experience are available to staff and students through an intranet requiring an individual log-on. This normally includes programme handbooks, module study guides, anonymised module grades, and video clips demonstrating dance techniques.

3.5   Although the Academy lacks an over-arching Public Information Policy, it adheres to Slough Borough Council and University information protocols. Course information is reviewed by the Academic Partnership Course Leader before being formally signed off by the University; a record of this is kept in Academic Partnership Annual Review meeting minutes.

3.6   The processes in place would enable this Expectation to be met.

3.7   The review team tested this Expectation by meeting students and staff and by scrutinising published materials, relevant documentation, the intranet and the website.

3.8   Staff observed that the Academy complies with University and Slough Borough Council information policies. Staff described the approval process for the Complaints Procedure where the document had to go to a University validation panel where it was also considered by external academics; it was additionally reviewed by the Slough Borough Council's Directorate Management Team and finally sent to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. The Slough Borough Council Head of Services noted that the only Council policies which take priority over University protocols relate to health and safety, equality and diversity and human resources.

3.9   Students advised that they first found out information about the format of the interview and audition by email as part of an invitation to attend. As noted above in Expectation B2, although there is a useful outline of the audition and selection process on the website, the review team considered that applicants would benefit from more timely access to such information and more detailed guidance.

3.10   Students also confirmed that course information in handbooks was accurate and accessible and praised the online video clips. The review team found that programme handbooks were missing from the intranet at the time of the visit, although this was identified by the Academy as the result of a technical fault that gatekeeping procedures had unfortunately not identified.

3.11   In view of the inconsistencies identified and the challenges of complying with both University and Slough Borough Council information policies, the review team **recommends** that by July 2018 the Academy develop and implement a public information policy that clarifies Academy responsibilities and stakeholder requirements.

3.12   The review team nevertheless considers the quality of information provided to prospective students and stakeholders to be accurate and reliable. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.13   In determining its judgement on the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the Academy, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The review team considers that the Expectation in this area is met and that the risk to student learning opportunities is low. There is one recommendation in this area.

3.14   The Academy is responsible for ensuring that information it publishes is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy and that there are clear processes in place to fulfil this responsibility. The Academy publishes information about its higher education provision through its website and a range of media. Course information is reviewed by the Academic Partnership Course Leader before being formally signed off by the University. Although there is a useful outline of the audition and selection process on the website, students advised that they first found out about the format of the interview and audition as part of an invitation to attend. As noted in Expectation B2, the review team considered that applicants would benefit from more timely access to such information and more detailed guidance.

3.15   The Academy does not have a VLE, but documents relevant to the student experience are available to staff and students through an intranet requiring an individual log-on. The review team found that programme handbooks were missing from the intranet at the time of the visit, although this was identified as a technical fault that procedures had not highlighted. Although the Academy lacks an over-arching Public Information Policy, it adheres to Slough Borough Council and University information protocols. In view of the inconsistencies identified and the challenges of complying with both University and Slough Borough Council information policies, the review team recommends that the Academy develop and implement a public information policy that clarifies Academy responsibilities and stakeholder requirements.

3.16   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the Academy **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   As noted previously, the Academy adopts the University's policies and procedures including the influence the University has on enhancement within partner institutions. This is through a range of interventions that are included within the Academic Partnership Handbook and through the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and Quality Handbook.

4.2   The Academy Manager and University Academic Partnership Link Tutor contribute to quality assurance and enhancement, and programme leads and module leaders liaise with teaching staff over the provision of learning materials, including annual updates to programme specifications and module study guides. The University provides support on programme developments and quality enhancement of the subject in line with University expectations of the student experience and sector developments.

4.3   The overall purpose of the periodic review is to consider the operation of the academic partnership, the procedures in place for quality assurance and enhancement and the maintenance of academic standards. The outcomes of these formal activities include identification of good practice for wider dissemination and areas for enhancement. The Academy team meetings also provide opportunities to share good practice and promote enhancement initiatives.

4.4   The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.5   In considering this Expectation the review team examined relevant strategies, policies and minutes, as well as annual monitoring reports, and met with senior, academic and professional support staff and students.

4.6   There is an ethos of continuous improvement at the Academy. It is expressed in Slough Borough Council's Five-Year Plan 2017-2021 with a vision of 'Growing a place of opportunity and ambition'. This is supported by five priority outcomes to 'put people first'. This ethos is embodied in a culture of informal and formal reflection on teaching and learning.

4.7   At Academy level, the Academy Manager is responsible for the development, implementation and review of the Academy's systems, policies and procedures for enhancing the quality of students' learning experience. The Academy uses a range of activities to identify opportunities for enhancement, particularly the annual programme monitoring process, and shares good practice identified in staff meetings. The Academy has also developed a concept for the identification and approval of enhancement activities which students are able to access in addition to their study programme. This concept is called 'The Golden Thread'.

4.8   The responsibilities checklist states that the Academy has responsibility for enhancement. The Academy reports that it identifies and delivers enhancement, which consists of additional classes and subsidiary qualifications such as Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing qualifications, Pilates Diploma, and Anatomy and Physiology. The main way in which these enhancements are identified is through staff and student feedback and consultation. The main criteria used is through student and staff identification and support of

the enhancement, cost effectiveness, how it adds to 'The Golden Thread' and usefulness in the workplace or within employment in the creative industries.

4.9   The student experience is enriched and enhanced through a series of partnerships including: the dance professional body (CDET); creative institutions (London College of Music); dance networks (DanceFusion; London College of Dance Network); dance agents (Dancers Inc; LoveRudeye); professional associations (British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat; Multi-Trax UK: School of Pilates teacher training); dance and theatre companies (ΛVΛ Dance Company, Lost Dog Dance Company; Company Wayne McGregor; Rambert Dance Company; Rifco Arts; Schobana Jeyasingh Dance Company; Stopgap Dance Company); and local Slough-based organisations (Active Slough; Slough School Sport Network).

4.10   Relationships with these organisations support the student learning experience. For example, CDET accreditation ensures the professional quality of Academy programmes. The relationships with local Slough-based organisations provide opportunities for community and school-based projects for the community dance modules. The audiences of Academy performances include dance agents and potential employers and relationships with professional associations and dance networks ensure that the Academy continues to be recognised by the professional dance world. Feedback from partners shows that the Academy is held in high regard.

4.11   During the review, the review team heard and saw evidence that the quality of the student learning experience is being enhanced through the mechanisms described above. Students spoke positively regarding their experience at the Academy. Students also reported that they are very appreciative of the various enhancement activities that the Academy has put in place, and they were complimentary of the resources and facilities available. Academic and support staff give careful thought to the quality of the student direct learning experience and the integration of the wider support and enhancements provided. There is clear evidence that the quality of experience that the students have is of a very high standard and prepares the students well for progression into further study or employment.

4.12   The Academy wellbeing team has been established to provide the wider support needs of students in relation to their physical, emotional and additional learning support needs. This includes specialist support and advice concerning diet and nutrition. Students spoke very positively about this support, and clearly understood the need to build the emotional and physical attributes required to progress into a career in the performing arts profession. The students and alumni the team met expressed their need to develop a resilient and mature attitude to be able to be successful within the profession, and acknowledged how the wellbeing team supported this development. The review team identified the work of the wellbeing team and range of support provided to students, which enhances the quality of the students' learning opportunities, as **good practice**.

4.13   'The Golden Thread' concept, and associated additionality this brings, is operationally well embedded. Both staff and students the team met were able to describe the concept and explain how this supported student development and enhancement activity. However, it is at an early stage of being formalised and documented. The Academy has in place draft documentation that endeavours to capture 'The Golden Thread' concept, and how this identifies and considers activity that is complementary to the programme modules students are required to study. The team **affirms** the progress being made to formalise the enhancement process.

4.14   There is a clear institutional commitment to improving the quality of students' learning opportunities and a culture of reflection at all levels. The enhancement processes are not formally approved but evidence is available that enables the team to have

confidence of the impact these initiatives are having on the student experience. Formal approval of defining the Academy's enhancement processes are at an early stage and the current development of agreeing an enhancement framework should be progressed.
The review team therefore 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

4.15   In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation in this area is met and the associated level of risk is low. The review team identifies one area of good practice and one affirmation.

4.16   The Academy wellbeing team has been set up to meet the wider support needs of students in relation to their physical, emotional and additional learning support. This includes specialist support and advice relating to diet and nutrition. Students spoke highly of the work of the wellbeing team and clearly understood the need to build the emotional and physical attributes necessary to progress into a career in the performing arts profession. Both students and alumni highlighted the need to develop a resilient and mature attitude in order to be successful within the profession and acknowledged how the wellbeing team supported this development. The review team recognises as good practice the work of the wellbeing team and range of support provided to students that enhances the quality of the students' learning opportunities.

4.17   'The Golden Thread' is a concept within the Academy that identifies and approves enhancement activities that students are able to access in addition to their studies. It is operationally well embedded. Staff and students described the concept and explained how it supported student development and enhancement activity. The Academy has in place draft documentation that endeavours to capture 'The Golden Thread' concept, and how this identifies and considers activity that is complementary to the programme modules students are required to study; however, it is at an early stage of being formalised and documented. The review team therefore affirms the progress being made to formalise the enhancement process.

4.18   The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the Academy **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 21-24 of the [Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) handbook](#).

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

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

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

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

Awarding organisation
An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

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

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

Flexible and distributed learning
A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations. See also **distance learning**.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Self-evaluation document
A report submitted by a higher education provider, assessing its own performance, to be used as evidence in a QAA review.

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or **e-learning**)
Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

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

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

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