



Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of Creative Academy (Slough Borough Council), November 2018

1 Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that Creative Academy (Slough Borough Council) (the Academy) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the November 2017 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 Creative Academy is based on one site in central Slough and delivers a Foundation Degree (FdA) in Dance and a BA honours top-up degree in Dance validated by the University of West London (the University).

3 There are 31 dance tutors employed on sessional contracts, plus six full and part-time members of staff in management, teaching and professional support roles. Since the last review the Academy has created two new full-time senior lecturer posts in dance to further strengthen the teaching team and student support, and a part-time Data Support Officer post to manage and prepare data for internal and external use. The number of students remains unchanged since the last review at 84. The Academy is currently exploring opportunities to expand its teaching facilities in its current location in discussion with Slough Borough Council.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

4 All actions arising from the 2017 Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) (HER (AP)) have been fully implemented and the College demonstrates thorough engagement with a range of relevant external reference points to support and enhance academic and professional standards and teaching quality. The Academy has maintained and extended the four features of Good Practice identified in the 2017 HER (AP) report, adding value to students' learning experiences (see paragraphs 5 to 7). The five recommendations made in the last review have been implemented fully, and the Academy is building towards establishing good practice in each area (see paragraphs 8 to 10, 14 and 18). Positive progress has been made in completing the two affirmations identified in the 2017 HER (AP) report (see paragraphs 11 and 12).

5 The model of learning and teaching practice that prepares students for employment has been developed further. For example, Master Class Weeks now take place every semester, providing additional opportunities for students to undertake scheduled workshops and to network with professionals actively engaged in the dance world.

6 The high level of support for students has been further enhanced. Every student has a personal tutor who provides guidance on personal and professional matters. The Well-being Team has been expanded to offer additional support in respect of improving academic skills and enhancing prospects for emotional and physical wellbeing. The review team meets regularly to discuss issues arising in respect of individual students, to identify

trends and to make recommendations for improvement. Two full-time lecturers have been appointed to provide additional opportunities for student guidance and support.

The Academy continues to assist staff in gaining a Pilates qualification to better support students. Student involvement in peer support has increased; for example, a Buddy system now operates in the foundation degree programme.

7 The range of extra-curricular activities aimed at enhancing the quality of students' learning opportunities is expanding. Students have opportunities to engage in workshops and presentations provided by professional dance companies throughout the year, in addition to participating in the Academy's Master Class Week every semester. Additional techniques classes are now linked to programme modules to ensure that the skills developed meet current industry requirements. Opportunities exist to acquire an additional qualification accredited by the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dance (ISTD) and to participate in external work-based learning projects underpinned by a Work-Based Learning Policy. New relationships with DK ProDuKtions and South East Dance are being developed. Students who the review team met expressed a high regard for the opportunities to work with professional dance companies.

8 The Complaints Policy has been reviewed and re-written to clarify procedures to be followed in lodging complaints with the University and with Slough Borough Council. Senior Managers have also separated complaints procedures for current and prospective students. Candidates are sent separate letters setting out procedures for admissions complaints and appeals.

9 A detailed public information policy that clarifies stakeholder responsibilities and requirements has been developed and is scheduled for implementation, subject to approval by Slough Borough Council. The Public Information Policy applies to information provided on the internet and other electronic and hard copy materials. The Academy has also developed a Social Media Policy and appointed a team responsible for managing and analysing the flow of information on all social media platforms.

10 The Quality, Governance and Enhancement Strategy has been developed to provide more effective oversight of key quality assurance processes internally and within Slough Borough Council, using the Golden Thread model. In the meeting with staff members, the University's Head of Quality confirmed that the strategy and designated responsibilities have recently been agreed by the University and the Borough Council, in consultation with other relevant bodies. Within the new system, a steering committee for higher education provision will operate to ensure more effective oversight of key internal quality assurance processes in the Academy and within the Borough Council and the University.

11 Good progress has been made on the affirmation relating to actions taken to develop an online alumni network to promote professional opportunities, raise student aspirations and contribute to the currency of the professional environment. To support these efforts, a social media team has been appointed to work with alumni and students to raise professional opportunities and visibility on the various social media platforms. For example, Varsity, a private page on Facebook, has been developed to facilitate communications between alumni and current students, and testimonies provided in the Good News section are impacting positively upon current students' career aspirations.

12 With regard to the affirmation on progress to formalise the enhancement process, The Golden Thread model has been further developed and is now embedded in the Academy's revised Quality, Governance and Enhancement Strategy, recently agreed by Slough Borough Council and the University. Primary enhancement objectives are to enhance teaching and learning quality and prospects for employability and to improve

techniques for realising students' personal, professional and academic potential. For example, non-credit techniques classes have been restructured to ensure linkage to programme modules; the Social Media Team now issues comprehensive reports on developments taking place on the various platforms, and policies now contain version and sign-off details to ensure that all stakeholders have access to the latest information.

13 The Academy, in partnership with the University, has explicit arrangements for the admission of students. Students apply through UCAS or directly to the Academy but not through agents. The Academy's Business Support Officer oversees the admissions process to ensure that processes are managed effectively, the integrity of the system is maintained and ample support is provided to potential students. Entry requirements are explicit, have been approved by the relevant awarding body, can be accessed on the website, and are explained in open day events and published in student handbooks. Academic staff members also review the applications to ensure suitability for programmes. The Business Support Officer sends invitations to audition or letters of rejection to candidates. To be accepted on either programme, students must complete auditions and interviews successfully. All candidates are notified in writing of the outcomes within five working days of auditions.

14 Recruitment and selection procedures have been rewritten since the last review in response to the recommendation to ensure that all prospective students have timely access to clear, reliable audition and selection information. Applicants meeting the University's admissions requirements are formally invited to audition on a specific date and provided with a detailed schedule of the day's events. Students attending the meeting confirmed that the information received was sufficient, reliable and provided in a timely manner.

15 The levels of English required for the Academy's Foundation and BA (Hons) top-up programmes comply with the University's admissions requirements and are checked during the admissions process. The Academy uses standards set by the Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre's (CDMT) and the University to test and ensure the integrity of its admissions processes.

16 Internal procedures ensure that assessments are carried out with rigor and integrity and aligned to the University's requirements. Students are informed about academic misconduct and plagiarism in Induction and academic skills sessions, and information is provided on the VLE. Tutorial sessions provide opportunities for lecturers to review student written work in various stages of development, and workshops in Academic Skills equip students with Harvard Referencing Skills. Students are assessed individually in performance assessments, making it very difficult to plagiarise. In cases where plagiarism is suspected, the Academy follows the policy and procedures set out in the University's regulations for academic misconduct and plagiarism.

17 Policies and procedures for internal and external verification are aligned with the University's academic regulations to ensure that student work achieves the learning outcomes required, marking is fair, and results are secured. Students submit work to the Creative Academy Manager through a secured email system administered by Slough Borough Council, and written assignments are kept in a secured place for marking. Integrity in marking is assured through the process of internal moderation and external review: Academy lecturers first mark and moderate assessments; University lecturers undertake second moderation, and external examiners review assessments and final results to ensure that marking is fair and at the appropriate level. Joint assessment boards confirm final results and ensure that the University's standards in respect of assessment have been met.

18 An Internal Quality Cycle Model has been developed in response to the recommendation from the last review to formalise the process for the confirmation of assessment outcomes at key points in the academic year. Dates of assessment boards and

other events are now mapped against the University's quality assurance procedures and aligned with the academic timetable to ensure consistency in planning.

19 The statistical data provided with the annual return show consistently high retention and achievement rates. Retention on the foundation degree programme for students due to complete their study in 2019 is 97 per cent, compared to 94 per cent for those who completed in 2018. The pass rate for those completing in 2018 is 100 per cent which is the same as those who completed in 2017 and 2016. For students on the one year BA honours top-up degree award, retention is 100 per cent for those completing in 2018 and 96 per cent in 2017. The pass rate for students completing in 2018 is 100 per cent. The pass rate for those who completed in 2017 is also 100 per cent. Student attendance is monitored and a variety of mechanisms is in place to identify and support students at risk of leaving or failing.

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

20 The Academy demonstrates highly effective engagement with a wide range of relevant external reference points to help assure academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The awarding body's processes for programme design, approval and review ensure alignment with the relevant expectations of the Quality Code, while also taking account of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, the Higher Education Credit Framework and QAA Subject Benchmark Statements. The Academy is currently developing new modules of study for its programmes in partnership with the University and industry partners which are informed by the Quality Code.

21 The Academy draws extensively on its strong industry links in the design and delivery of its programmes. This includes the substantial experience of its dance tutors who continue their professional practice within the dance industry, and systematic engagement with external dance companies and agencies to ensure the creation of realistic working environments for students and to assist with academic development and monitoring. The Creative Academy is a fully accredited member of CDMT (Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre), which provides quality assurance for the professional dance, drama and musical theatre industries. CDMT provide a UK-wide industry benchmark of quality assurance that all its members are expected to follow.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

22 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

23 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Tommie Anderson-Jaquet, Reviewer, and Dr Judith Foreman, QAA Officer, on 27 November 2018.

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