Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Futureworks Training Ltd

October 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 Futureworks Training Ltd. The review took place from 17 to 19 October 2017 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Ann Kettle
- Mark Irwin
- Cara Williams (student reviewer).

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 is **commended**.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities is **commended**.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities is **commended**.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice**.

- The enhancement-led approach to maintaining and systematically improving the quality of learning opportunities (Expectation B1).
- The commitment to providing an inclusive learning environment that enables students to develop as independent learners (Expectation B3).
- The comprehensive approach to supporting academic staff in continuing their professional development, thus enabling staff to enhance the learning experience (Expectation B3).
- The support for disabled students, and in particular the Running Start initiative, which enables students to fulfil their academic and professional potential (Expectation B4).
- The approach to embedding employability across learning opportunities, which effectively prepares students for a career in the creative industries (Expectation B4).
- The commitment to authentic, flexible and relevant assessment practice that enables all students to demonstrate achievement (Expectation B6).
- The approach to ensuring that students are provided with relevant and trustworthy information, and in particular, the work that has been done to ensure compliance with relevant regulatory frameworks (Expectation C).
- The embedding of a quality enhancement ethos into the institutional culture, which promotes the continuous improvement of learning opportunities (Enhancement).

Recommendations

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

By January 2019:

- after one year of operation, conduct a formal review of the new governance structure to ensure clarity in the responsibility for the maintenance of standards (Expectation A2.1).

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 work underway to enhance student engagement and representation across all levels of the institution (Expectation B5).

About the provider

Futureworks Training Ltd (Futureworks) was formed in 2006; its core purpose is to provide high quality media education. The institution has invested in: recruiting high quality staff with relevant industry and teaching experience; state-of-the-art studios that meet the needs of the media industry; and production facilities, which are built to industry standards. Futureworks offers nine undergraduate degree programmes in sound, film and TV, games, animation and visual effects. Recruitment to a tenth degree programme is about to start in 2018.

There are 508 students currently studying at Futureworks, supported by 47 staff. Since the last QAA review, which took place in 2014, Futureworks has added three new programmes to its portfolio: BSc (Hons) Game and Interactive Audio, BA (Hons) Independent Filmmaking, and BA (Hons) Graphic Arts and Design. The institution has also seen a rapid increase of student numbers, from 154 in 2013 to 508 in 2017. Since the last review, the institution has also made significant changes to its committee and academic governance structure.

The institution sees compliance with the evolving higher education regulatory environment as one of its key challenges. The increased competition between higher education providers and demographic challenges, which have led to a decline in the student market, has also been identified as a key challenge. Finally, Futureworks has identified the need to respond to the challenges of a developing external environment and a growing organisation as a challenge.

Futureworks' sole awarding body is the University of Central Lancashire.

Acceptable progress has been made in addressing feedback from the 2014 Review for Specific Course Designation. The functions of the Quality and Academic Review Committee, identified as a feature of good practice, have been distributed among other academic committees as part of a review of committee structure in June 2017. Module Quality Enhancement Plans, the innovative use of which was identified as good practice, have continued to be enhanced. In response to an advisable recommendation to 'formally clarify the roles and responsibilities for academic standards in the management structures', the Quality Role Descriptors were revised in 2014 and have continued to be reviewed periodically. In response to an advisable recommendation to 'ensure that students and markers are clear about how learning outcomes can be achieved', grading criteria have been amended to refer to corresponding learning outcomes in the module descriptor. In response to an advisable recommendation to 'document fully, monitor and evaluate published information about learning opportunities', a policy for the documentation, monitoring and evaluation of published information was instituted in 2016. A desirable recommendation to 'implement a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of management structures' has been met by reviews undertaken by the Management Committee Sub-Group (Academic) in 2016 and 2017. In response to a desirable recommendation to 'include students on management committees', student representatives have been included as members on institutional-level committees.

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   Futureworks delivers its higher education provision in partnership with its sole awarding body, the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). The responsibility for ensuring that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (the FHEQ) are met, and that the standards of Futureworks programmes align with the specifications of the FHEQ, lies with UCLan. Futureworks' framework for the maintenance of academic quality and standards is set out in the Academic Quality Handbook, which acknowledges that Futureworks is bound by UCLan's academic regulations.

1.2   The approach taken by Futureworks in respect to the maintenance of academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.3   The review team tested this Expectation by means of the scrutiny of awarding body approval and review documentation, external examiners' reports, and internal quality

documents, and in discussions with senior and academic staff and UCLan liaison staff.

1.4   UCLan's programme approval processes, together with external examiner oversight, secure threshold standards and align the programmes delivered by Futureworks to the FHEQ. This is explicit in programme specifications, which are made available to students in course handbooks. External examiners, appointed by UCLan, confirm that standards conform to the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. Futureworks ensures that academic staff are familiar with the FHEQ and the standards required by means of staff induction and development.

1.5   There are effective processes in place to secure and maintain academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

1.6   UCLan has ultimate responsibility for the security of academic standards by means of its academic framework and regulations. The management and academic staff of Futureworks ensure familiarity with UCLan's academic framework and regulations by working closely with university colleagues. Futureworks contributes to the securing and maintenance of academic standards by means of its management framework and deliberative committee structure. Academic policies and procedures are laid out in the Academic Quality Handbook. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.7   In considering this Expectation, the review team scrutinised UCLan's academic framework and regulations, Futureworks' quality assurance policies and procedures, and minutes of relevant meetings. The team also held meetings with senior, academic and professional support staff.

1.8   Responsibility for the maintenance of academic standards is included in the role descriptions of Managing Director, General Manager, heads of school and programme leaders. The responsibilities of the newly created post of Head of Academic Quality and Enhancement include ensuring that the processes for assuring academic standards are operating effectively. With the intention of further separating commercial and academic activities and reducing overlap in committee remits and membership, revisions to the academic committee structure have been introduced for the academic year 2017-18. Programme committees have been incorporated into school committees. The Management Committee Sub-Group (Academic) combines the functions of the former Education Board and Quality and Academic Review Committee. The Management Committee Sub-Group (Planning) combines the activities of the former school planning committees and the support services planning committee. Two new student-focused committees have been created: the Management Committee Sub-Group (Student Experience) and the Student Partner Committee, which will report directly to a newly established Board of Governors, the remit of which includes ensuring that there are effective arrangements for maintaining academic standards and that those arrangements are operating successfully.

1.9   Members of senior, academic and professional support staff met by the review team were clear about their roles and responsibilities in Futureworks' academic governance framework, and welcomed the revisions to the committee structure as having the potential to reduce overlap and increase student engagement. At the time of the review visit, most of the new committees had yet to meet and, although its remit and membership had been settled, the Board of Governors had not held its first meeting. As evidence was not available to the team to judge the effectiveness of the revised committee structure, the review team **recommends** that Futureworks, after one year of operation, conduct a formal review of the new governance structure to ensure clarity in the responsibility for the maintenance of standards.

1.10   Futureworks has ensured that responsibilities for the securing and maintenance of academic standards are fully understood by staff and are embedded in its governance

framework and committee structure. 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

1.11   Definitive records for each programme are produced and shared with the awarding body. UCLan is responsible for the maintenance of definitive records of programmes and qualificatications approved, and the provision of records to students and alumni. Futureworks provides student enrolment and assessment data to UCLan using UCLan systems; Futureworks is responsible for the development of its programmes. The institution prepares relevant documentation for approval in collaboration with UCLan. The awarding body has a responsibility for approving new programmes and modifications to programmes following the procedures set out in its academic regulations. When developing a new programme or making amendments, Futureworks refer to the UCLan Course Development Guide. UCLan provides a standard Programme Specification template together with guidance notes to support staff in completing it. Programme specifications and module handbooks are available for each award.

1.12   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.13   During the review visit the review team met senior managers with responsibility for standards and quality, programme and module leaders, teaching staff, the UCLan liaison tutor, and Futureworks students from across the programmes offered. The team evaluated the effectiveness of these arrangements by examining programme specifications and module handbooks, and the team discussed their availability and use with teaching staff and students.

1.14   Futureworks' use of programme specifications as reference points is comprehensive and staff are familiar with programme specifications and their purpose. Futureworks is also clear about the use of the Quality Code and the FHEQ. Students are also aware of programme requirements through the appropriate use of programme handbooks and induction information, which are also available on the virtual learning environment (VLE).

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 (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

1.16   Futureworks follows UCLan's policy and process for programme approval and modifications to validated provision. New programme proposals require a business and academic rationale prior to full approval. Programmes and modules are designed and modified by Futureworks programme and module leaders and submitted for approval using UCLan templates. Programme design teams utilise the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, and UCLan approval panels confirm alignment with sector expectations. Futureworks complies fully with UCLan's approval policy and process using an approval checklist to audit submissions prior to submission and has also introduced an internal approval stage to its own programme development process. Futureworks operates a process for the approval of taught programmes that would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.17   During the review visit, the team met senior managers with responsibility for standards and quality, programme and module leaders, teaching staff, the UCLan liaison tutor, and Futureworks students from across the programmes offered. The team reviewed the evidence supplied by Futureworks, including approval submission documents and reports from UCLan.

1.18   Staff were aware of UCLan's requirements in terms of programme approval, and articulated a thorough understanding of the use of sector benchmarks in programme design and modification. New staff are supported through published guidance and mentoring in programme design, and training in the use of Subject Benchmark Statements is also provided. The Futureworks internal approval stage ensures the quality of programme approval submissions prior to external scrutiny through the UCLan programme approval process. Furthermore, Futureworks staff consult with current students and industry on programmes and receive support from Futureworks academic consultant through the internal development process, where course proposals are scrutinised by their peers.

1.19   The internal and external approval process, support for programme developers, and consultation with stakeholders ensures that programme design meets the standards set by UCLan and is also fully aligned with sector threshold standards and industry expectations. The review team concludes that 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

1.20   The degree-level programmes provided by Futureworks were developed following UCLan's written guidance for course developers. Futureworks uses UCLan's policy, regulations and process for the scrutiny and approval of taught programmes, which make use of an outcomes-based approach to secure academic standards through the internal and external scrutiny of award-level outcomes against UK sector threshold standards. Assessment boards are conducted by UCLan for partners using its database and systems. Minutes of boards indicate proper and rigorous consideration of results. External examiner reports also indicate that assessment policy and regulations are properly applied. These regulations, frameworks and processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.21   During the review visit, the team met senior managers with responsibility for standards and quality, programme and module leaders, teaching staff, the UCLan liaison tutor, and Futureworks students from across the programmes offered. The team examined evidence including programme/module handbooks, and UCLan guidance and regulations.

1.22   Staff and students articulated a shared understanding of an outcomes-based approach to the award of credit measured through assessment, which is embedded in the curriculum and its delivery. Staff are also aware of the importance of articulating learning outcomes in a way that is aligned to UK threshold standards and at the same time clearly informs students of what is required of them to achieve those standards.

1.23   Futureworks ensures that it maintains the standards set by UCLan and is thus fully aligned with sector threshold standards. Standards are met through an outcome-based approach to the setting of assessment against clearly articulated learning outcomes at module and programme level. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.24   Futureworks has in place an appropriate system for the annual monitoring of its provision that is closely aligned with the policy and process required by UCLan for its validated provision. Futureworks operates its own quality assurance cycle, which has recently been overhauled in response to previous QAA reviews with the introduction of a revised academic committee structure and a new post of Head of Academic Quality and Enhancement. Furthermore, UCLan convenes a regular partnership forum to update partners on changes to policy and regulation, and report on the submission of partner reporting. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.25   During the review visit, the team met senior managers with responsibility for standards and quality, programme and module leaders, teaching staff, UCLan liaison staff, and students from across the programmes offered. The review team examined evidence including annual monitoring reports at module, course and institutional level, and reports on annual monitoring actions from UCLan and Futureworks.

1.26   Staff at Futureworks demonstrated that they maintain effective oversight of the programmes they offer, and that there is a range of mechanisms in place to ensure that UK threshold standards are met, and that they are able to effectively monitor, analyse and enhance the provision of learning opportunities to their students.

1.27   Futureworks ensures that standards set by UCLan are embedded throughout the institution and is thus fully aligned with sector threshold standards, which are effectively monitored and maintained. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.28   Futureworks' Learning and Teaching Strategy commits it to engaging with industry professionals to achieve its aims. To maintain academic standards, use is made of external and independent expertise by means of UCLan's validation and periodic review procedures, external examiners and professional links. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.29   The review team tested the effectiveness of processes for the use of independent external expertise by examining validation and periodic review documentation and external examiners' reports. The review team also held meetings with senior, academic and professional support staff.

1.30   For programme approval and periodic review events, Futureworks proposes external advisers and examiners for consideration by UCLan. In designing and operating the programmes approved by UCLan, Futureworks uses external reference points to ensure appropriate standards are met; these include Subject Benchmark Statements and input from the creative industries, for example Creative Skillset, the Audio Engineering Society, and Avid Technology. Independent advice is also sought from UCLan colleagues, external consultants and industry specialists. The membership of the newly established Board of Governors includes individuals occupying senior positions in academia and the industries associated with Futureworks programmes. The review team heard that the establishment of an industry liaison group is in its final stages.

1.31   Full use is made of external and independent advice and expertise in setting and maintaining academic standards. The review team 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

1.32   In reaching its judgement about the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by Futureworks, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.33   All Expectations in this area have been met, with a low level of associated risk in each case. There is one recommendation for Expectation A2.1, based on the need for Futureworks to conduct a formal review of its revised governance structure. However, the review team concluded that the associated level of risk for this area is still low and the Expectation is met based on the details provided of the new governance structure. The review team could not test the effectiveness of the new governance structure as it was put in place very recently, which has led to the recommendation above.

1.34   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body at Futureworks **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   Futureworks follows the UCLan policy for setting academic standards through UCLan's process and guidance for programme design and approval of programme proposals. At Futureworks, the design and development process is overseen by the General Manager and new programme development is led by relevant head of school, working with programme and module leaders. There is evidence of the use of industry expertise at programme and subject level in course design and modification. Futureworks uses UCLan's process for the modification of modules and programmes. This process includes consultation with external examiners on proposed modifications. The processes for devising, developing and enhancing programmes are fit for purpose and would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.2   During the review visit, the team met senior managers with responsibility for standards and quality, programme and module leaders, teaching staff, the UCLan liaison tutor, and Futureworks students from across the programmes offered. The team reviewed the evidence supplied by Futureworks, including approval submission documents and reports from UCLan.

2.3   Staff articulated a comprehensive understanding of the programme approval and modification process, both within the institution and in partnership with UCLan. Throughout the review team's discussions with managers, teaching and support staff, and students it became apparent that industry and student engagement, self-reflection and enhancement (see Section 4) is deeply embedded in the culture and ethos of the organisation at every level, which is also demonstrated by the institution's very positive NSS results. The enhancement-led approach to maintaining and systematically improving the quality of learning opportunities is **good practice**.

2.4   Programme design meets the standards set by UCLan and is fully aligned with sector threshold standards and industry expectations. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.5   Futureworks recruits and admits its students by adhering to UCLan's Admissions Policy and procedures, which it uses to guide its own processes and policy. The Futureworks Student Recruitment and Admissions Policy sets out the principles and processes of recruitment and admission. Structures and processes, and their operation are reviewed and evaluated in consultation with heads of schools and the management team, and modified in response to feedback, including information gained from attendance at the annual UCAS Media Masterclass.

2.6   All applications are processed through UCAS. The initial selection is done by Futureworks' admissions team based on the UCAS application and mapped to the criteria guide and selection matrix for each school. Applicants are interviewed; the review team was provided with an interview guide used by Futureworks including induction information, details of finance and student loan information. Successful applicants receive an offer letter, followed by an enrolment pack. Applicant complaints and appeals are dealt with under UCLan policy.

2.7   These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.8   During the review visit, the team met senior managers with responsibility for standards and quality, staff with responsibility for student recruitment and admissions, programme and module leaders, teaching staff, the UCLan liaison tutor, and Futureworks students from across the programmes offered. The team reviewed the evidence supplied by Futureworks, including policy documents, committee minutes and student feedback.

2.9   Prospective applicants are provided with guidance at the point of application and through the admissions process to enrolment and induction. The Futureworks website includes a detailed guide to the admissions process. Applicants are sent the Applicant Selection Guide and an example of the interview format, as well as the school-specific selection criteria matrix. The review team understood that there are plans to develop further the pre-contract information to ensure its transparency and be proactive in providing feedback to applicants who do not make it into a programme. These processes ensure that systems are robust and fair to all applicants and provide equity of access, while simultaneously recognising the importance of increasing diversity of its student provide.

2.10   Staff involved in the selection process are trained to ensure they are making appropriate judgements, and are provided with guidance on inclusivity and diversity to adhere to the Equality and Diversity Policy.

2.11   Futureworks reviews admission decisions and sets strategic priorities for recruitment. Disability and special educational needs are recorded at admission.

2.12   Futureworks produces an Annual Diversity Report that analyses the profile of the student body by age, gender, ethnicity, religion and disability. Futureworks uses this report to identify areas requiring attention and for enhancement, and a Diversity Strategic Action Plan

sets out immediate, medium and long-term actions to address the identified issues.

2.13   Systems are transparent, fair and underpinned by robust structures and processes. The review team concludes that the Expectation to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.14   Futureworks' teaching philosophy is expressed in its Learning and Teaching Strategy, which sets out the underpinning core themes of academic quality, equality of opportunity and employability. Its approach to learning and teaching is explained in course and module handbooks. Teaching staff are all professional practitioners with current experience in the creative and media industries. Student feedback on learning and teaching is collected formally through internal and external surveys. The arrangements in place would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.15   In considering this Expectation, the review team examined strategies and policies relevant to teaching and learning, annual monitoring documentation and committee minutes. The team also held discussions with senior and teaching staff, professional support staff and students.

2.16   Futureworks has an Equality and Diversity Policy and actively works to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge to become independent learners. There is an institutional commitment to the provision of a learning environment that is inclusive as possible, so that the need to make changes for individual students is the exception rather than the rule and support systems are accessible to all students. The review team was provided with numerous examples of how academic and professional support staff aimed to make learning accessible to all students, including: the effective use of the VLE to address different styles of learning; tailoring assessments to meet specific student needs; providing staff with information on inclusive teaching practice; and supporting students in the use of learning resources. Students met by the team were aware of the support that they received in meeting their differing learning styles and requirements. The commitment to providing an inclusive learning environment that enables students to develop as independent learners is **good practice**.

2.17   New academic staff are inducted, mentored and supported in assessment procedures, and all staff, both full and part-time, permanent and freelance, are supported in studying for additional qualifications. A buddy system that enables staff to share good practice by peer observation of teaching, and to support each other in inclusive practice, has recently been formalised. There is an annual Staff Training Week to share developments in teaching and student support. A Staff Training and Development Policy promotes and supports continuing professional development, and teaching staff are encouraged to update their professional practice by means of research projects, industry contacts and attendance at conferences. Staff development needs are identified through the appraisal system and the review team heard that all requests for professional training and development are met promptly. The comprehensive approach to supporting academic staff in continuing their professional development, thus enabling staff to enhance the learning experience, is **good practice**.

2.18   Arrangements are in place to provide and enhance opportunities to enable students to develop as independent learners. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.19   Futureworks' aim is to provide opportunities for students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional development, which is embedded in the Strategic Plan and the Learning and Teaching Strategy. Students have access to a range of academic and pastoral support services. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.20   The review team tested the effectiveness of the approach to the development of students' academic, personal and professional potential through the scrutiny of a range of documents and in discussions with academic and professional support staff and students.

2.21   Futureworks aims to provide an inclusive culture and environment in which learning is accessible to all. An Annual Diversity Report is used to identify areas requiring attention, to ensure that all students receive the support they need to acquire the skills needed to achieve their potential. Where students have declared a disability, this is identified in the VLE, visible only to the student's programme leader and personal tutor. If necessary, learning materials and assessments are adapted, and there is a system for identifying work submitted by students with specific learning difficulties. To help students engage with Student Services, there are plans for a series of awareness sessions; a session on autism has already been piloted. Student Services distributes information to academic staff about supporting students with disabilities or special needs. A Disability and Support Information page for staff has been added to the VLE, with details of all the health conditions of current students and what support might be needed. In 2016, an early induction event called 'Running Start' was organised for students who felt that they could benefit from enrolling in a quieter, more relaxed atmosphere that the main induction events; the attendees included students with autism, anxiety, physical disabilities and specific learning difficulties. The event was so successful that it was repeated in 2017. The support for disabled students, and in particular the Running Start initiative, which enables students to fulfil their academic and professional potential, is **good practice**.

2.22   Academic, personal and employability skills are integrated into module delivery, and theme-based Continuing Development Weeks are held each semester. All programmes include modules with an employability focus and students gain professional skills through producing work that aims to meet industry standards. Teaching staff have extensive links with the creative and media industries, which helps graduates gain employment in the industries related to their programmes. An industry coordinator provides career and employability information and guidance for students; facilitates informal, extracurricular work experience opportunities; and coordinates lectures given by industry professionals. Studio facilities and equipment are comparable with professional film, audio and games design studios, and systematic planning ensures that learning resources are kept up to date with developments in the industry. The approach to embedding employability across learning opportunities, which effectively prepares students for a career in the creative industries, is **good practice**.

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

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

2.24   Futureworks is responsible for student engagement as set out in the Student Policy and Procedures Handbook 2017-18, and specifically in the Student Representation and Feedback Policy and Student Engagement Policy. The Head of Academic Quality and Enhancement monitors and evaluates the student partnership framework to ensure increased student engagement.

2.25   Previously, as a relatively small institution, student engagement was mostly informal. However, as the institution has grown it has sought to introduce more conventional mechanisms to engage its students. For the current academic year, a new student representation system has been introduced alongside a revised academic and management committee structure. The creation of the Management Committee Sub-Group (Student Experience) and the Student Partner Committee stem from a new student representation framework. The Student Partner Committee feeds directly to the Board of Governors, and student partners feedback directly via the school committees once per semester. The Principal Student Partner plays a leading role in the student partnership structure and in the representation and participation of students in Futureworks academic management. The Vice-Principal Student Partner (Student Experience) supports the Principal Student Partner, with particular responsibilities relating to the student experience; each programme has two elected student partners, who represent the students on that programme. Partners work together to share the responsibilities of the role. The Management Committee Sub-Group (Student Engagement) monitors and implements the management structures and systems that inform the student experience, and acts as a student liaison committee focused on the quality of the student experience. The Vice-Principal Student Partner (Academic) is a member of the Management Committee Sub-Group (Academic).

2.26   These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.27   The review team met students from a range of subject areas and years, including student representatives and one alumni. The team read and considered a range of documentary evidence, including the NSS results, the Student Engagement Policy, minutes from several committees, and programme-level and course team meetings. Examples of end-of-unit surveys were provided to the team and reflection on these is documented in the annual monitoring reports for each programme of study.

2.28   Futureworks is making progress on its commitment to engaging its students individually and collectively as partners in the quality assurance and enhancement of their learning opportunities, and the new committee structure should enable a better flow to close the feedback loop. The review team **affirms** the work underway to enhance student engagement and representation across all levels of the institution.

2.29   During the review visit, the team witnessed elections taking place for the newly formed student partner system. This is a deliberate step to try and move towards a students' union-like system, as set out in the Institutional Academic Quality Action Plan 2017-18. Student representatives are trained and supported by Student Services.

2.30   During induction, students are provided with information on how to provide feedback on their experience. Information is also available to students on the

MyFutureworks VLE and student notice boards. All students are given the opportunity to feedback their opinions through a variety of methods, including Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQ), the annual student experience survey, focus groups, and a suggestions box. Analysis of MEQ responses is used by module leaders when preparing Module Quality Enhancement Plans. Students can also feedback through national surveys (NSS and DLHE), and now via the membership of higher level committees, which provide students with regular and formal methods of feeding back.

2.31   Tutors encourage regular feedback on both informal and formal levels during lessons. Posters are displayed on student notice boards as a reminder. Informal feedback is also gathered on a regular basis through conversations with tutors, programme and module leaders, and personal tutors. Through meetings with the institution, the review team established that students felt that their voices are heard and that they can talk to a range of people. It was evident to the team that partnership working occurs naturally due to small class sizes, as well as close and mature relationships fostered within an environment that maintains a mutual respect between staff and students.

2.32   School committees provide student partners with the opportunity to feedback to staff about their programme and the overall student experience, to inform developments that will improve their own and future programmes. The review team was provided with several examples from academic staff where students are asked about changes to the course or assessments during school committees, or where issues have been effectively dealt with through the student partner system. Students provided the team with examples of course content and structure being changed to suit the needs of students based on their feedback. The review team also received examples of students shaping their courses before the start of the next academic year.

2.33   Data from student surveys is analysed and presented for consideration at the Management Committee and the Management Committee Sub-Group (Academic). Data is also considered in an institutional enhancement plan.

2.34   Overall, the new structure should create more focused and meaningful roles for those students who want to be actively involved, bringing increased responsibility and cultivating a student community with real opportunities to engage as partners in their educational experience. The review team found the arrangements already in place to be effective in practice, and that Futureworks is demonstrably committed to improving and developing its arrangements for student engagement by taking deliberate steps at both an individual and collective level.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.36   Futureworks operates a process for assessment that is aligned with the framework and regulations provided by UCLan. UCLan also moderates the Futureworks assessment process and runs the examination boards. Assessment briefs are issued to students in module handbooks and on the MyFutureworks VLE. Assessment modes are varied and include essays, presentations, reports and practice-based assessments, including student-devised and 'live brief' projects, which allow students to utilise commercial projects commissioned by companies from the sector as assessment tasks. Assessment is designed in line with sector good practice and staff provide opportunities for formative and summative feedback through a variety of means, which students find helpful. There are arrangements in place for regulating the volume and timing of assignments and ensuring that feedback on assessment is timely, constructive and developmental. Appropriate allowances are made for students with special needs. Futureworks uses UCLan's policy for the recognition of prior learning, which is comprehensive.

2.37   Programme teams reflect on assessment through the annual monitoring process and potential changes to assessment are considered through school committees and formalised in Programme Quality Enhancement Plans before being submitted to UCLan. Futureworks uses UCLan's academic regulations relating to the use of unfair means in assessment, and students are provided with guidance on group work, ethical practice, academic writing, referencing and plagiarism. Futureworks policy, regulations and processes for the assessment of students and recognition of prior learning would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.38   During the review visit, the team met senior managers with responsibility for standards and quality, programme and module leaders, teaching staff, the UCLan liaison tutor, and Futureworks students from across the programmes offered. The team reviewed the evidence supplied by Futureworks, including assessment policy and strategies, course and module handbooks, and module reports.

2.39   Futureworks staff articulated very clearly an enhancement-led approach to the design and development of assessment (see Section 4). This enhancement-led approach has led to the use and dissemination of numerous examples of innovative practice within the institution, including the use of: student-centered negotiated assessment modes; peer assessment; authentic assessment (assessment that models industry practice) including the use of 'live' commercial project briefs; comprehensive guidance to students on ethical practice; an emphasis on formative feedback and encouragement for student to engage with interdisciplinary work; colour highlighting of tutor summative feedback (especially helpful to students with dyslexia); and the use of additional audio feedback on assignments. During the review visit, the team confirmed that students receive useful information on assessment requirements and criteria, and that they understand the link between learning outcomes and assessment. Furthermore, students felt that marks were fair and that feedback is both developmental and prompt. These points are also reflected by Futureworks' NSS scores in the area of assessment. The commitment to authentic, flexible and relevant assessment practice that enables all students to demonstrate achievement is **good practice**.

2.40   The enhancement-led approach to assessment at Futureworks, and its ongoing development, ensures that assessment is effective, student-centred and relevant to industry, while meeting the standards set by UCLan. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.41   External examiners are nominated for each programme by Futureworks, ensuring that they have recent industry experience, and approved and appointed by UCLan, in accordance with the awarding body's regulations. External examiners are contracted to attend moderation sessions at Futureworks at the end of the academic year, to attend assessment boards at UCLan, and to produce an annual report on the standards and operation of the programme. When undertaking moderation of student work, external examiners may speak to students about their experience of the programme and are given access to learning resources used by students. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.42   In considering this Expectation, the review team examined external examiner reports, a range of annual monitoring reports and action plans, and relevant committee minutes. The team also held discussions with senior and academic staff and students.

2.43   The external examiners' reports inform a range of monitoring reports and action plans. Programme leaders are responsible for responding to issues raised in the reports and reporting the response to UCLan, and for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the response in the Programme Quality Enhancement Plan. The Head of Academic Quality and Enhancement is responsible for producing annual UCLan Collaborative Course Reports for each programme; these require a statement of actions taken and planned in response to the reports. The Head of Academic Quality and Enhancement is also responsible for the annual UCLan Institution Report, which requires a statement of actions taken and planned in response to the reports, including institution-wide issues. The Head of Academic Quality and Enhancement also considers external examiners' reports when preparing the Annual Institutional Academic Quality Action Plan. Students have access to external examiners' reports on the VLE.

2.44   Futureworks makes appropriate use of external examiners and its reports. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.45   The Futureworks Academic Quality Policy aligns the institution's own quality assurance processes with UCLan's policy and process for the annual review of its provision, which is overseen by the Managing Director, General Manager and heads of school, and reported through the academic committee structure utilising a rolling Institutional Academic Quality Action Plan. The Head of Academic Quality and Enhancement is responsible for writing and submitting the institutional-level annual monitoring report to UCLan using a range of information from module, course and institutional reporting, and is also responsible for evaluating and reviewing its annual monitoring process. UCLan takes responsibility for periodic review of Futureworks validated provision on a five to six-year cycle. The policy and processes for annual and periodic review of the institution's provision would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.46   During the review visit the team met senior managers with responsibility for standards and quality, programme and module leaders, teaching staff, the UCLan liaison tutor, and students from across the programmes offered. The review team examined evidence including annual monitoring reports at module, course and institutional level, and reports on actions from annual monitoring from UCLan and Futureworks.

2.47   During meetings with managers and staff at Futureworks, the review team explored the revised committee structure, in terms of its efficacy in monitoring standards and quality. The review team found that staff at all levels of the organisation have a clear idea of the process by which standards are maintained and the quality of learning opportunities is assured and enhanced. The team also found that the enhancement-led approach Futureworks takes to reflecting upon its provision and sharing good practice both upwards through its management systems and across the institution is highly appropriate and therefore effective.

2.48   Futureworks ensures that it fulfils its responsibilities to maintain the standards set by UCLan and to monitor and enhance the quality of learning opportunities provided to its students. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.49   Futureworks has its own three-stage complaints policy and procedure, aligned with UCLan policy. Information and guidance on both the complaints and appeals process are provided in the Student Programme Handbook, the VLE and within the Student Policy and Procedures Handbook 2017-18.

2.50   The Complaints Procedure is managed by the Head of Student Services, who decides whether a raised concern should be defined as a complaint or as an academic appeal. If it is defined as an academic appeal, it is dealt with under UCLan's academic appeals procedure and regulations.

2.51   Futureworks operates a three-stage Student Complaints Procedure. The process differs slightly for directly funded and indirectly funded students. Stage three for directly funded students is handled by Futureworks, while stage three for indirectly funded students is handled by UCLan. After exhausting the Futureworks Student Complaints Procedure, students who remain unsatisfied are entitled to submit a complaint to UCLan under stage three of the procedure within 15 working days of the date of Futureworks' final response.

2.52   The process described in the documentation would allow for the Expectation to be met.

2.53   The review team met senior staff, academic staff and students from across the programmes. The team evaluated the effectiveness of these arrangements by examining student feedback and Futureworks policies and procedures.

2.54   Students are encouraged to raise any concerns informally with their module tutor, programme leader, personal tutor, Student Services, or with their student representative, who may pursue the concern on their behalf. Students understand the process and the team heard examples where issues are dealt with very well informally or through the representative system. Students were aware of the complaints and appeal procedure or knew where they could find it.

2.55   Informal complaints and appeals are monitored and reported to the Managing Director. Complaints and appeals are monitored by the administration department and reviewed annually by the Managing Director. No formal complaints have been received. Tutors and programme leaders continuously receive student feedback and regularly resolve issues informally. The Complaints Procedure is made available to all students at induction as well as via the website, the VLE and poster campaigns. There were two academic appeals in academic year 2016-17, which is a fairly consistent rate year on year.

2.56   The absence of formal complaints provides evidence for the effectiveness of Futureworks' support systems and reflects the excellent working atmosphere, and the sympathetic and constructive responses students have experienced when concerns have been raised informally, either personally or through student representatives. This open, positive environment reduces the likelihood of issues escalating into a formal complaint.

2.57   Although the review team is unable to comment on the effectiveness of policies or procedures in their application, from reviewing documentary evidence and speaking to

students and staff the team considers Futureworks' values and ethos to be based upon principles of equality and diversity, which in turn foster good relations. Futureworks works hard to safeguard the interests and wellbeing of students and has designed policies and implemented them in a way that is fair and transparent.

2.58   Students informed the review team of their knowledge and understanding of the appeals and Complaints Procedures. They felt comfortable in speaking informally in the first instance with staff to resolve issues before needing to escalate them further into formal proceedings. While no formal complaints have been made, students commented that they have various opportunities to give feedback at course level.

2.59   Processes for academic appeals and student complaints work effectively in practice. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

2.60   Futureworks does not have arrangements for delivering 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

2.61   Futureworks does not offer postgraduate research provision, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

Expectation: Not applicable
Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.63   All relevant Expectations in this area have been met, with a judgement of low risk being reached in all cases.

2.64   There were six instances of good practice. The first involves Expectation B1 and the enhancement-led approach to improving the quality of learning opportunities. There are two further instances of good practices relating to Expectation B3: the inclusive learning environment provided by Futureworks and the comprehensive approach employed by the institution to developing staff. Two instances of good practices were identified regarding Expectation B4: one concerned with the support for disabled students and the second regarding Futureworks' approach to embedding employability. The institution's approach to assessment was identified as good practice relevant to Expectation B6.

2.65   There were no recommendations. The review team affirms the work underway to enhance student engagement and representation across all levels of the institution.

2.66   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at Futureworks is **commended**.

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 Futureworks website includes the Futureworks Strategic Plan, which sets out the institution's mission, values and overall strategy. The website also includes the Equality and Diversity Policy, and statements relating to Privacy, Access and Participation. The Approval of Public Information Policy makes roles and responsibilities for the fitness for purpose, accessibility and trustworthiness of information clear. Information about higher education programmes is available to prospective students and applicants on the website and in the prospectus**.** Information about learning opportunities is made available to current students on the MyFutureworks VLE, student and module handbooks, and conveyed personally by both academic and non-academic staff.

3.2   Updates to the Futureworks website, prospectus, Student Services guides and marketing information are approved by the General Manager. Once approved, information is documented by the Academic Quality and Enhancement Unit, and evidence of the final, approved documentation recorded in the Approval of Published Material log. All marketing materials relating to Futureworks' higher education provision are also approved by UCLan.

3.3   The Head of School and Head of Academic Quality and Enhancement approve student handbooks, and the programme leader approves module handbooks. Any other information on the programme provided to current students is approved by the relevant head of school. The Management Committee Sub-Group (Academic) reviews a sample of published materials on an annual basis and UCLan periodically conducts reviews, thus providing an external audit of published information.

3.4   Futureworks follows the guidance provided by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) regarding compliance with consumer protection law, and the guidelines set out in Part C of the Quality Code.

3.5   The design of these systems and procedures allow the Expectation to be met.

3.6   In its review of the evidence, the review team tested the effectiveness of the process by reviewing the Futureworks website, VLE, prospectus, student and module handbooks, programme specifications and minutes of meetings. Monitoring and review processes were explored through discussions with students, and senior, teaching and support staff.

3.7   The website has many features designed to increase accessibility, including the use of alternative text in images and the option to download in PDF format. Overall, the website is clear, informative and easy to use, and settings can be changed by partially sighted users to improve its clarity and legibility.

3.8   During induction, students are provided with all essential information on accessing physical and online learning materials, assessment methods and assessment criteria, the use and availability of ICT, academic calendar, and programme timetable and programme structure. Students are provided with a tutorial on how to access the student handbook and

other programme information on the MyFutureworks VLE. The information on the programme of study is issued to students at the start of their programme and throughout their studies, principally through student and module handbooks.

3.9 Information available for students on the VLE includes course handbooks, qualification and unit structure, assessment schedule, assignment briefs, readings lists, responses to unit survey reports, course materials and external examiner reports. Students confirmed that the accuracy of information on the website and VLE was good, and that it matched the content of module handbooks. Futureworks is considering the introduction of a new VLE in the next academic year, which will include an app that would enable students to receive push notifications thus improving communication with students in real time.

3.10 Senior staff confirmed that they are beginning to use data as an effective tool for enhancement and enhancement activity. Enhancement activity is clearly communicated to students through the module handbooks, which include a section highlighting where changes have been made as a result of the module review.

3.11 Futureworks has thorough and detailed systems in place to ensure that information is stored and kept securely and that the information is correct. By working collaboratively with UCLan, Futureworks ensures transparency of policies, systems and procedures for the management of academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement.

3.12 Futureworks has succeeded in implementing a fair and transparent approach to the requirements of the CMA. The institution has responded effectively to published guidance from the CMA and UCLan on the responsibilities of providers to provide appropriate pre-contract information to students. The approach to ensuring that students are provided with relevant and trustworthy information, and in particular, the work that has been done to ensure compliance with relevant regulatory frameworks, is **good practice**.

3.13 The system for ensuring that published information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy is working effectively and in accordance with the Quality Code, Part C. The review team 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

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

3.15   The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There is one area of good practice identified relevant to this Expectation, which refers to the approach Futureworks has undertaken in ensuring that students are provided with relevant and trustworthy information. Futureworks has ensured that information provided to current and prospective students is relevant, clear and correct, and thus students are well informed about their future study options at the institution. The information provided meets various external regulatory requirements. Furthermore, the institution has plans to improve further the information provided to prospective students and enhance various processes to improve its application process.

3.16   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at Futureworks is **commended**.

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 Futureworks has a defined quality cycle, which enables the enhancement of student learning opportunities to be considered. Enhancement is deliberated on formally through the institution's governance structure and articulated within institutional strategies and policies. Furthermore, enhancement activity is reported on through the Learning and Teaching Strategy Action Plan; the Annual Institutional Academic Quality Action Plan; the Annual Resource Plan; and the Diversity Strategic Action Plan. These plans are combined into both the Strategic Advisory Meeting Report and Partner Institution Report. Futureworks engages with the industry it serves at both programme and subject level, inviting expert comment on enhancement and inviting external speakers to address students. Futureworks has a deliberative approach to the enhancement of its provision that would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.2 During the review visit, the team met senior managers with responsibility for standards and quality, programme and module leaders, teaching staff, the UCLan liaison person, and Futureworks students from across the programmes offered. The review team examined evidence including policy and strategy documents, action plans, committee reports and minutes.

4.3 In the course of the meetings the review team held with managers, staff and students, it became clear that Futureworks has an embedded culture of self-critical reflection on all aspects of institutional practice, which has led to an enhancement-led approach and ethos. Enhancement initiatives are integrated in a systematic and planned manner, by means of a management structure that assigns clear strategic and operational responsibilities for promoting enhancement. This includes: an academic committee structure that provides a framework for identifying and recommending enhancement initiatives; and a monitoring, review and enhancement system, with reports and action plans identifying enhancements. The embedding of enhancement across the institution has resulted in good practice emerging in a number of areas including: a student-centred and inclusive learning environment; the embedding of employability within the curriculum; an awareness of the challenges presented by diversity; the creation of a collaborative community of practices that crosses discipline boundaries; innovative and diverse approaches to teaching, learning assessment and feedback; comprehensive support for the development of staff; the emergence of a distinct research culture; and good practice in terms of resourcing, public information and compliance. Enhancement activity is communicated to students through the use of module handbooks (see Section 3). The embedding of a quality enhancement ethos into the institutional culture, which promotes the continuous improvement of learning opportunities, is **good practice**.

4.4 The embedded nature of an ethos of constant reflection and improvement at Futureworks ensures that deliberate steps are taken to enhance students' learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.6   The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. The quality enhancement ethos embedded into the institutional culture, which has resulted in the promotion of numerous enhancement initiatives to the benefit of the quality of learning opportunities, was identified as good practice.

4.7   The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at Futureworks is **commended**.

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.