



# Higher Education Review of ICMP Management Limited t/a The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance

February 2015

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at ICMP Limited trading as The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance. The review took place from 10 to 12 February 2015 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Liam Curran
- Marian Stewart
- Laurence McNaughton (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review the QAA review team:

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

In reviewing the Institute of Contemporary Music Performance the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

The [themes](#) for the academic year 2014-15 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,<sup>2</sup> and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.<sup>3</sup> A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review](#)<sup>4</sup> and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

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

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106).

<sup>3</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus).

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review web pages: [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review).

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about the Institute of Contemporary Music Performance

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at the Institute of Contemporary Music Performance.

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

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance:

- the management of auditions which provides feedback to aid applicants' development (Expectation B2)
- the high levels of support for continuous professional development for all staff (Expectation B3)
- the range of mechanisms that enable an effective response to enhancing learning resources for students (Expectation B4)
- the breadth of engagements with the music industry that improve the quality of student learning opportunities (Expectations B4, B10 and Enhancement)
- the development of 'The Hub', the Institute's forum for music industry engagement, which enhances students' professional practice and career opportunities (Expectations B4 and Enhancement).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance.

By November 2015:

- further develop internal periodic review processes to provide parity of monitoring for all programmes including Pearson (Expectation B8)
- maximise opportunities for industry engagement in quality assurance and enhancement processes (Expectations B1, B8 and Enhancement).

### Theme: Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The Institute places a high priority on the involvement of students in quality assurance and enhancement and supports this with a wide range of policies and practices. Its strategic plan 'places students at the heart of everything it does'.

Student President meetings are held with the senior management where students' concerns and proposals are discussed. In addition, the Student President and Secretary contribute to the Institute's quarterly business reviews.

Student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement is encouraged through student representation on Institute committees, feedback procedures and engagement with programme leaders and tutors.

This commitment is supported by comprehensive handbooks, regular committee and programme meetings, the 'You Said, We Did' campaign and newsletters produced by the Student President.

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

## About the ICMP Management Limited t/a The Institute of Contemporary Music

The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance's mission is 'to inspire, encourage and equip our students to succeed by delivering a relevant and innovative educational experience of the highest quality'. It has been providing programmes in contemporary music for 19 years. Its first Diploma of Higher Education was validated in 1995 and it developed a degree by 1999.

The Institute's pattern of growth has been steady and the current number of higher education students on roll is 860. The Institute's programmes are validated and accredited by the University of East London (UEL), the University of South Wales (USW) and Pearson. The University of East London is the Institute's principal awarding body. A validation agreement has been in place between the Institute and UEL since 2006. The newest partner is USW. A validation agreement was put in place in 2013 for the BA (Hons) Music Business Degree. Pearson as an accrediting organisation offer approved qualifications. The Institute has held Pearson Delivery Centre approval since 2011.

At the time of this Higher Education Review the programmes provided by the Institute were:

- BMus (Hons) in Popular Music Performance (UEL)
- BA (Hons) in Songwriting (UEL)
- BA (Hons) in Creative Musicianship (UEL)
- MMus in Popular Music Performance (UEL)
- BA (Hons) in Music Business (USW)
- BTEC Professional Diploma in Music Performance (Pearson).

In its self-evaluation document (SED) the Institute has identified ensuring parity of the Institute student experience while navigating the separate academic frameworks of its three awarding bodies as a key challenge.

Its strategic priorities for 2013-18 are:

- 1 Focusing on improved quality and an enhanced student experience at all levels to ensure improved student satisfaction is optimised and all regulatory requirements are exceeded, with the Institute becoming a fully-fledged member of the UK's Higher Education 'quality community'.
- 2 Ensuring that commercial success continues to be built on the principles of quality and value of educational provision with the needs of the student being the focus at all times.
- 3 Fully developing the academic function, ensuring that students are provided with access to the wide professional experience and practical approach of tutors while ensuring that pedagogical development and qualifications are fit for purpose.

- 4 Ensuring the business model is sustainably profitable and cash-positive while providing an innovative, leading and 'fit for purpose' curriculum and range of support services and perceived excellent value for money in relation to course fees.
- 5 Recruiting, training and developing staff across all functions to be able to deliver the excellence demanded by the organisation and continue to meet - and exceed - the growing expectations of the student body and sector regulators.
- 6 Developing a growth strategy for the business in an increasingly competitive sector while retaining both quality of provision and the closeness and 'sense of community' inherent to a 'small' institution and so appreciated by students.
- 7 Developing world-class partnerships and working relationships that are truly mutually beneficial and which bring about tangible benefits to learners.
- 8 Developing the Institute's sphere of operation beyond a single London centre and increasing the international profile and recruitment potential of the organisation.

## **Explanation of the findings about ICMP Managment Limited t/a The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance**

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

# **1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and 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* are met by:**

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

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

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

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

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

## **Findings**

1.1 The Institute works with two awarding bodies, the University of East London (UEL) and the University of South Wales (USW), and one awarding organisation, Pearson. It delivers a Level 7 taught postgraduate programme validated through UEL, Level 6 degree programmes validated through UEL and USW and Level 4 and 5 qualifications through Pearson. The Institute's awarding bodies and organisation are responsible for setting threshold academic standards, together with clear and transparent learning outcomes. They also ensure each qualification is allocated to the appropriate level in the FHEQ and meets relevant subject benchmarks for music. Assessment activity is aligned to learning outcomes and music subject benchmarks and assessment are approved as an integral part of the validation process.

1.2 Programmes validated by UEL and USW are managed by the Institute through its compliance with collaborative agreements, and the management of its internal quality assurance procedures. The Institute manages academic standards for the Pearson Higher National Diploma by implementation of the Institute's Centre Handbook for Pearson Level 4 to 7 qualifications. The Institute retains responsibility for maintaining programme delivery and quality assurance in accordance with the awarding bodies' and organisation's academic regulations, standards and learning outcomes. The Institute implements a cycle of

programme reviews which informs a SED. This process enables the Institute to monitor its performance in managing higher education programmes. UEL and USW monitor the Institute's annual monitoring reports. UEL captures relevant commentary on its review pro formas, while USW monitor annual monitoring reports via a course board. Pearson maintain an oversight of the annual programme monitoring process as an integral part of its programme and centre review processes.

1.3 UEL, USW and Pearson appoint external examiners to ensure that academic standards are met along with academic and quality regulations. External examiner reports are reviewed by senior managers and programme teams. Resolution of actions and recommendations is progressed through programme teams' annual programme review.

1.4 The review team explored the maintenance of academic standards in meetings with senior managers and academic staff at the Institute and UEL and USW representatives. In addition, the team reviewed collaborative agreements, validation documentations, Programme Annual Monitoring Reviews, Institute SEDs, external examiner reports, programme specifications, and programme handbooks.

1.5 The Institute has robust procedures in place to monitor its performance and ensure it is maintaining the academic standards and thresholds of its awarding bodies and awarding organisation. The Programme Annual Monitoring Review process is rigorous and the reports provide a detailed evaluation of programme performance, and review documents are subject to external scrutiny. Both UEL and USW use programme annual review documents, external examiner reports and liaison tutor reports to assure themselves that the Institute is maintaining academic standards. Pearson monitor academic standards through their Academic Management Review process and external examiner reports and no major issues have been identified in these reports. Action planning for programme reviews and external examiner reports is detailed and robust.

1.6 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**

1.7 The Institute's awarding bodies and organisation retain responsibility for ensuring relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements are incorporated into module learning outcomes and assessment strategies for the design and approval of their programmes. The Institute complies with the academic regulations of its awarding bodies and organisation for programme delivery, assessment and quality assurance. To secure academic standards, the Institute has contextualised awarding body policies and procedures while ensuring they reflect and incorporate awarding body and organisation-delegated responsibilities.

1.8 The Board of Directors and Academic Committee maintain a thorough oversight of the Institute's management and implementation of its awarding partners' academic frameworks and regulations. The Institute's Higher Education Quality Manual and related policy documents are accessible on the virtual learning environment (VLE), and they effectively support quality assurance and the delivery and assessment of the programmes.

1.9 Programme handbooks make appropriate reference to both the Institute and awarding partners' policies and procedures, relevant academic frameworks, programme structures and learning outcomes. Programme handbooks are located on the Institute's VLE. The Quality Manager is responsible for the annual review of programme handbooks. The Institute's Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy sets out the requirements for ensuring teaching and assessment activity meet the required programme academic standards, qualification and Subject Benchmark Statements and module learning outcomes. External examiner reports confirm programmes at the Institute meet required academic standards.

1.10 The review team tested the Institute's arrangements for securing the academic standards of its awarding bodies and awarding organisation through an examination of collaborative agreements, minutes of meetings, external examiner reports, programme handbooks, the Higher Education Quality Manual, the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, and other relevant policy documents. The team also met senior, teaching and support staff, and representatives from UEL and USW.

1.11 Comprehensive oversight of the Institute's implementation of the Expectation is provided by the Executive Committee and the Quality Standards Committee. External examiners confirm that the Institute applies its policies, procedures and programme handbooks effectively to ensure it meets the awarding bodies' and awarding organisation's reference points for academic standards. Programme handbooks are detailed and comprehensive and include academic regulations, policies and procedures important for students, and module and assessment schedules. Students confirmed that they find the handbooks helpful which are available both on the VLE and at induction.

1.12 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**

1.13 The Institute delivers degree programmes validated through UEL and USW. In addition there is one Level 5 QCF BTEC Professional Diploma approved through Pearson.

1.14 Specifications are made available to students through the VLE and the Institute's website. The specifications detail the award's title and intermediate exit awards. There are also reference points to relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ.

1.15 The Institute's internal quality procedures stipulate that programme leaders should take account of the academic frameworks of the awarding bodies when developing new programmes. This is in accordance with the memorandum of understanding between the awarding bodies, USW and UEL, and the collaboration agreement between the Institute and Pearson. Programme development is also informed by higher education sector experts, the QCF, FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements, which leads to the development of validation documentations and programme specifications. On completion, these documents are referred for approval to the Academic Committee and Quality Standing Committee.

1.16 All awards validated through both universities are approved using their formal approval processes. These procedures ensure that the programme aims, learning outcomes and descriptors include explicit reference to the frameworks for higher education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

1.17 Programme teams undertake a rigorous mapping within course documents that indicates subject-specific knowledge, understanding and skills. In addition, programme teams also undertake a detailed mapping against Subject Benchmark Statements. Approved programme specifications are extremely detailed and provide students with valuable information about programme aims, objectives and learning outcomes, course structure and content, assessment methodologies, quality assurance, the role of external examiners and support information. Reports from the awarding bodies indicate that programmes developed by the Institute and presented for approval are appropriate and meet the requirements of regulation governing standards and the use of benchmark information. Staff informed the team that there is a rigorous set of checks conducted internally before presentation to the respective awarding bodies.

1.18 The review team met senior managers and course leaders and considered the frameworks and working models for the validation of course specifications. During these meetings, staff from UEL and USW affirmed the high level of ownership and rigour the Institute applies through its internal procedures to ensure that the requirements of the awarding bodies are met. The team also reviewed evidence that demonstrated the Institute's robustness across all its programmes including Pearson. Students confirmed they were clear about the learning outcomes of their respective programmes as well as their location. The team viewed external examiner reports that confirmed the Institute's use of processes to maintain academic standards.

1.19 The Institute demonstrated a range of procedures and practices to ensure it adheres to the requirements of the two awarding bodies and Pearson. The team saw evidence of module evaluations where students were given the opportunity to feed back including assessment, course content and delivery. Feedback is then discussed in a variety of forums and the team viewed documents that demonstrated the Institute's process for review and monitoring including relevant action plans. These included committee minutes and the Institute's annual SEDs. This was also verified by staff in meetings with the team.

1.20 Students were aware of specifications and how they related to their respective programmes. The internal evaluation of programmes demonstrated the rigorous processes that the Institute implements for review of programmes. Minutes from the Institute's committee meetings demonstrate a regular review of processes that assures the Institute of alignment with its awarding bodies' regulations. This evaluative approach conforms with the requirements of the awarding bodies and organisation and during meetings staff from the awarding bodies praised the Institute for its diligent and rigorous oversight of programmes.

1.21 The team saw clear understanding and ownership of the process of monitoring with relation to Expectation A2.2. Following discussion with students and relevant staff as well as thorough examination of the Institute's documents relating to the records of its courses, the team concludes that this Expectation is met with low level of associated risk.

**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**

1.22 All university-validated programmes are subject to a five-year periodic review in accordance with their procedures. These ensure that proposed programmes are coherent in their structure and at the appropriate level within the UK frameworks including the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. Both universities' programme approval processes involve external examiners, subject knowledge specialists and senior university staff.

1.23 The Institute has recently introduced a new quality initiative whereby all new programme proposals approved by the Executive Committee and Academic Committee are subject to an internal validation event prior to the awarding body validation. Written guidance regarding the Institute's internal programme approval process is provided to programme leaders in the Higher Education Quality Manual.

1.24 The Institute follows the awarding bodies' approval processes. During these it is the responsibility of the University link tutor to assist the Institute programme teams in preparing the documentation for validation. Programme teams must provide evidence of regional demand for the programmes and clear evidence of consultation with relevant employers and professional bodies.

1.25 The Institute's staff and awarding body representatives confirmed that the validation process at the Institute is robust and validation documents are well prepared. In addition, programme teams engage effectively with the frameworks for higher education qualifications, the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, the Quality Code and any professional accreditation requirements. As part of the validation process the Institute's programme teams must produce a draft student handbook detailing the programme specification and course structure, module specifications, arrangements for supervision, assessment, and academic and student support.

1.26 Programme teams confirmed that they undertake a rigorous Subject Benchmark Statement mapping exercise when preparing for validation. This includes consulting industry and higher education experts and engaging with the frameworks for higher education qualifications, Subject Benchmark Statements and the Quality Code. The supporting documents are approved by the Institute's Academic Committee before referral to the universities. Awarding body representatives endorsed the Institute's procedures.

1.27 For the Pearson provision the Institute offers programmes within the awarding organisation's specific programme framework. Programme teams select units or a qualification from the framework to design an accredited programme. Proposals based on Pearson provision are subject to the Institute's internal approval processes and must be approved by the Academic Committee and Executive Committee.

1.28 The review team examined Quality Manuals, related policies, validation reports and validation documents. In addition, meetings were held with staff, awarding body representatives, employers and students.

1.29 The arrangements to secure validation of programmes at the Institute are clear and comprehensive. Validation and external examiners' reports confirm that the Institute's programmes have been developed at an appropriate level for the awarding bodies' academic frameworks. The review team noted the very strong and positive relationships between the Institute's academic staff and the universities' link tutors.

1.30 The review team concludes the Institute has effective procedures to maintain the standards of its higher education provision. As a result the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.31 To ensure academic standards and learning outcomes are met, the Institute has an internal standardisation and moderation process. This process is comprehensive and consists of anonymous marking, double marking and internal moderation. These procedures are in accordance with the awarding bodies' requirements for ensuring outcomes are met and academic standards are maintained. The Institute's programmes articulate and specify programme aims and learning outcomes in programme specifications, programme handbooks and module specifications. These meet awarding body requirements.

1.32 For Pearson qualifications there is a clearly defined policy regarding the internal moderation process in the Institute's Centre Handbook for Pearson. This policy specifies the requirements of the moderation process and the roles and responsibilities of relevant staff at the Institute.

1.33 The Institute's staff confirmed with the review team the role of external examiners in ensuring that learning outcomes are met through the assessment process. All external examiners are appointed by the awarding bodies and Pearson.

1.34 Institute reports confirm moderation processes and assessment decisions. All external examiners have an opportunity prior to Assessment Boards to undertake a sampling of students' assessed work and to meet with students. The Institute encourages programme leaders to forge close working links with their external examiner.

1.35 For Pearson awards it is the Institute's responsibility to establish and set meetings for Assessment Boards. After the internal moderation and verification of student work internal assessment boards are convened and students' grades are ratified. Subsequently external examiners visit the Institute and review students work and assessment boards minutes. Once the externals visit is successfully completed the Institute can claim students' certificates.

1.36 Assessments clearly outline the learning outcomes being assessed and at what level in relation to the relevant framework. All assessments indicate the associated criteria.

1.37 The Institute's staff confirmed to the review team that external examiners monitor and check assessment activity, ensuring national standards are met. In addition, they value external examiners' contributions that improve assessment practice and highlight good practice, which is disseminated.

1.38 As part of its quality assurance processes the Institute operates an effective internal moderation and cross-marking policy. All staff are made aware of this during their induction. In addition, assessment training for staff is provided by the Institute's Head of Studies and Quality Manager. This covers the Institute's internal moderation processes of assessment

tasks, first marking, anonymous marking, second marking, external moderation and the role of Assessment Boards. Staff confirmed this training was very helpful in understanding their role in maintaining standards.

1.39 The review team tested this Expectation by reviewing the policies and procedures of the Institute to ensure they complied with the awarding bodies and organisation. In addition, the team reviewed programme specifications and programme and module handbooks. The team also met senior managers, academic staff and students.

1.40 All programmes at the Institute have a comprehensive internal moderation and standardisation process which is supported by University link tutors. External examiner reports confirm that programme assessments are robust, valid and reliable. Their reports are generally positive and confirm that the assessments set by the Institute tutors are appropriately designed to measure the learning outcomes at the required levels. External examiners also confirm that assessment practice within programmes meets threshold standards.

1.41 The review team concludes that the Institute complies with its awarding bodies' and awarding organisation's regulations and procedures for managing assessment. 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**

1.42 The Institute's programmes are subject to five-year periodic reviews by the awarding Universities. These examine resources, staffing, programme management, regulations, standards and student support. The outcomes of the periodic reviews result in action plans for implementation by the Institute that are monitored by the awarding bodies.

1.43 In addition, all higher education programmes are subject to the Institute's annual monitoring process informed by standardised evaluative reports submitted by programme leaders. These reports include programme management, responses to external examiner reports, student data, feedback from students, teaching and assessment outcomes, and employer and professional body engagement.

1.44 The Institute's Academic Committee is responsible for the strategic oversight of programme monitoring and review annually. On receipt of programme annual monitoring reports the Committee identifies themes across the Institute for an overarching annual SED. This informs the Institute's Annual Quality Improvement Plan which is referred for approval to the Executive Committee and Board of Directors and contributes to the Institute's annual operational plan.

1.45 At the time of the review visit, programme teams at the Institute were preparing for revalidations with UEL. Institute staff confirmed this process aided their evaluation and review of programmes and helped to ensure that curriculum content, teaching and learning, assessment strategies and programme outcomes remain relevant and align to industry needs and best practice. It was noted by the review team that Pearson programmes do not have a periodic review.

1.46 All Institute programmes undertake an annual review. The result of this process is the production of an action plan which informs quality and is monitored regularly by the programme team and the Quality Manager.

1.47 University link tutors also produce an annual report on the Institute's provision.

1.48 These comment on how programme teams have addressed actions from the previous year's annual monitoring process. They also confirm if programmes are managed in accordance with the University's regulations and external examiners' comments.

1.49 The review team tested this Expectation by examining policies, institutional quality reports, annual monitoring reports, external examiner reports, and awarding body and organisation reports. The review team also held meetings with academic and senior staff.

1.50 With the awarding bodies and organisation, the Institute systematically reviews its provision to ensure it meets student needs. The evidence reviewed by the team confirmed clear and effective monitoring processes. In addition, there is very strong commitment from programme leaders and senior managers to implement quality enhancement through annual monitoring and associated action plans.



1.51 The review team recognised that the Institute conforms fully with the quality regulations and requirements for Pearson awards and undertakes annual monitoring and review. However, the team has made a recommendation in Expectation B8 to further develop the internal periodic process to provide parity of internal periodic review for all programmes including Pearson's.

1.52 The review team concludes that the Institute maintains robust and effective monitoring and review processes. 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**

1.53 The Institute follows UEL and USW collaborative agreement requirements with respect to externality in programme development and validation. These processes are clearly specified in collaborative and academic standards documentation. UEL and USW regulations require external advisers to be consulted during programme validations and revalidations. Pearson retain sole responsibility for the design and validation of the programmes delivered on its behalf at the Institute. The Institute nominates prospective external examiners for UEL programmes. USW and Pearson are responsible for nominating their external examiners. UEL, USW and Pearson appoint and induct external examiners acting on their behalf.

1.54 Although the Institute does not actively engage external stakeholders in its quality assurance and programme development activities, the breadth of its engagement with the music industry and the engagement of tutors who are current practitioners/professionals in the music industry provide the Institute with up-to-date information and awareness of current contemporary music trends, which informs programme development.

1.55 The Institute makes excellent use of a range of external music industry professionals, sector best practice guidance, industry liaison, and the employment of tutors to enhance the student learning experience and ensure that the curriculum is current and valid. Music industry professionals are generous in their support of the Institute. For example, external guidance was used in setting the agenda and content of the Institute's 2013 Learning and Teaching Conference. The Institute's commitment to the role of external consultation is confirmed through the appointment of two external non-executive directors, providing strategic engagement between the Board of Directors and quality assurance and enhancement activities at the Institute.

1.56 The Institute makes effective use of external examiner reports to review and maintain the academic and qualification standards of programmes it delivers on behalf of UEL, USW and Pearson.

1.57 The review team explored the Expectation through a review of collaborative agreements, external examiner reports and Centre Management Reports, minutes of meetings, programme annual reviews, and meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, stakeholders and alumni.

1.58 The Institute's wide range of activities and interactions with professional and practitioner stakeholders enhances the student learning experience and the development of their professional skills while maintaining the academic standards of its awarding bodies and organisation.

1.59 The Institute is robust and comprehensive in engagement with a variety of external stakeholders, including awarding bodies, the awarding organisation and external examiners. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

1.60 To reach judgements about academic standards the review team matched its findings against criteria for this section in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.61 There are seven Expectations in this area and all are met with a low level of risk.

1.62 The review team concludes that higher education provision at the Institute, in partnership with the awarding bodies UEL and USW and awarding organisation Pearson, matches programme outcomes to the appropriate levels in the QCF. In addition, the Institute has robust procedures in place to monitor its performance and ensure it is maintaining the academic standards of its awarding bodies and organisation.

1.63 To maintain academic standards, the Institute has contextualised awarding body policies and procedures while ensuring they reflect and incorporate awarding body and organisation-delegated responsibilities. The Institute's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy ensures that teaching and assessment meet the required academic standards, benchmark statements and learning outcomes.

1.64 Representatives of the two university awarding bodies affirmed the high level of rigour the Institute applies through its procedures to ensure the requirements of the awarding bodies are met. The arrangements to secure the validation of programmes at the Institute are clear and comprehensive and external examiners confirm programmes have been developed at an appropriate level for the awarding bodies' academic frameworks.

1.65 The Institute applies clear and effective processes for programme monitoring. There is an institutional commitment to implement quality enhancement through annual monitoring and associated action plans. The interactions with the music industry and the associated student outcomes contribute to maintaining the awarding partners' standards.

1.66 The review team concludes that the maintenance of academic standards at the Institute **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 and Approval**

#### **Findings**

2.1 The Institute conforms with the required procedures of its awarding Universities for course approval which include external involvement from higher education sector experts. The Institute's programmes align with the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. These inform the development of programme specifications, modules and programme handbooks.

2.2 Prior to approval by the awarding body, a proposal for new programmes must be submitted by programme leaders to the Institute's Executive Committee and the Academic committee. The Executive Committee's role is to undertake a business and resourcing check to ensure there is sufficient demand for the new programme supported by the appropriate resources. The Academic Committee undertake an academic merit check to ensure the new programme proposal has a place within the academic portfolio and a fits strategically within the Institutes overall ethos. Once both committees have given their approval the process for course development can begin.

2.3 The Academic Committee monitors best practice in programme design and development. Students are involved when programmes are revalidated or modified through student representatives and Programme Committee meetings.

2.4 The Institute's intentions for programme development are contained in the Strategic Plan. These include a new master's award and doctorate programmes. The Strategic Plan also indicates an intention to align programmes into the five core study themes of Professional Musicianship, Creative Musicianship, Songwriting, Music Business and Composition and Teacher Training.

2.5 Programme development is very well planned and reviewed. It is informed by student engagement, stakeholder feedback and innovative methods of teaching and learning.

2.6 In meetings with the review team, programme leaders confirmed the Institute's policies for programme design and approval. They demonstrated a clear understanding of Subject Benchmarks Statements and the FHEQ.

2.7 In addition, programme leaders make use of the Institute's programme design framework which is linked to the teaching and learning strategy. This provides comprehensive guidance and encourages staff to engage in innovative practices.

2.8 The review team tested this Expectation by reviewing policies, reports, documents and meetings with senior staff, awarding body representatives, academic staff and students.

2.9 The validation documents and reports the review team examined indicate the Institute ensures there is a sound rationale for all new programmes. It was confirmed to the team that academic staff make good use of the appropriate national reference points and the Quality Code. The Institute's adoption of UEL's programme design quality criteria ensures its

programmes meet national standards. Programme leaders take account of many aspects of good practice at programme planning stage. However, the review team noted that in the programme and approval process there was an absence of employer involvement, and therefore **recommends** that the Institute maximise opportunities for industry engagement in quality assurance and enhancement processes.

2.10 Overall the review team concludes that Expectation B1 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***

#### **Findings**

2.11 The Institute has a detailed admissions policy. This clearly outlines the key roles and responsibilities for application, admission and induction. It is supported by an admissions panel which reviews the policy, procedures and admissions statistics.

2.12 The Executive Committee is responsible for setting the annual targets for programmes which are subsequently agreed with the Academic Committee. It is the responsibility of the admissions team to receive all applications.

2.13 For degree programmes, all applications are made through UCAS. For other programmes, applications are made directly to the Institute. The Institute's policy outlines to prospective students the application routes, type of application checks, interview and audition arrangements, and joining arrangements. Information for international students is comprehensive and includes a show-reel.

2.14 The admissions panel is chaired by the Head of Student and Staff Services. It is the responsibility of the panel to oversee the admission recommendations made by audition tutors and to ensure that the Institute's admissions policy is operated appropriately. This Committee also has oversight of appeals, ensuring that they are managed efficiently and fairly.

2.15 Programme specifications provide prospective students with valuable information regarding the UCAS programme profile and entry requirements. Specifications also provide detailed insight into how students will be admitted. Students confirm that at the enquiry stage of their course they received admissions information and application forms. International students can apply to the Institute through the website. Students indicated that the Institute's admissions team have an effective communication system.

2.16 Recruitment for all courses is managed by the marketing team. A wide variety of promotional materials and mediums of communication are available and used by the Institute. These and the course specifications include the requirements for auditions. A full range of events is organised for induction. At the induction process students receive a copy of the course handbook which includes information on academic appeals and extenuating circumstances. The induction programme also outlines the details and structure of programmes, the Institute's policies and procedures, and student support systems.

2.17 Applicants have access to the Institute's Public Complaints Procedure where timescales are clearly articulated and information is available on how appeals can be made.

2.18 Entry requirements and, where applicable, audition requirements are articulated on the Institute's website and within each programme's respective specifications. As stipulated on the website and in the prospectus, more specific audition requirements are available on request from the Institute. This was confirmed in meetings with administrative staff, tutors and students. Students confirmed that requirements for auditions were clear although students of some programmes felt that there seemed to be a certain amount of disparity between what was required at audition and the level required in the first year. In meetings

with the review team staff explained this was in response to students' different strengths and weaknesses. Information for students relating to additional support and guidance can be found within the Programme Handbooks and the Institute's VLE.

2.19 The review team met members of staff who have roles and responsibilities for admissions. This included staff with administrative and academic responsibilities. The team also met students who discussed their experience of application, admission and induction to the Institute. The team reviewed documents relating to admissions which included the prospectus, website, programme handbooks, the admissions policy, audition feedback forms and induction information. The team also met music industry professionals who were regularly involved with the Institute as well as alumni.

2.20 Staff are clear about their responsibilities for admissions. The team saw evidence that the admissions policy is being applied consistently and consequently meets the requirements of its awarding partners. Students confirmed the effectiveness of the application process and how it matched their expectations from the information available via the website and prospectus.

2.21 The Institute's auditions processes are highly developed. Applicants are given comprehensive feedback regardless of whether they are offered a place at the Institute. The team felt that the Institute's approach clearly demonstrates its mission to enhance and connect with the musical community. Feedback from highly distinguished members of the music industry helps students to achieve their ambitions and understand their level with regard to the Institute's requirements. The review team considered the management of the auditions processes to be enlightened and selfless.

2.22 The evidence the review team viewed provides clear confirmation of the management of admissions. The processes were well understood by staff and evidence demonstrated the Institute's rigorous internal processes and adherence with the requirements of the awarding bodies and organisation. Students also complimented the application process and thought the induction week was a very useful experience. The team considers the management of auditions which provides feedback to aid applicants' development as **good practice**. The Expectation is met with a low level of associated risk.

**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**

2.23 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Strategy sets out the Institute's vision for and principles of learning, teaching and assessment, and is located on the Institute's VLE. The LTA Committee maintains oversight of the implementation of the LTA Strategy including a review and discussion of at least one theme at every meeting.

2.24 There is an annual review of the progress made in meeting the themes, aims and objectives of the LTA Strategy. The outcomes of the review are published on the Institute's VLE. The Academic Committee has undertaken a holistic progress review of the revised LTA Strategy to ensure continuing alignment to the Institute's Vision, Mission and Values.

2.25 The Institute has appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure equality and parity of student access to assessment and learning opportunities. Students are invited to notify the Institute of any specific learning or physical needs at the point they are offered a place on their selected programme of study. There are robust procedures in place to support students with particular needs.

2.26 The Tutor Recruitment Policy provides clear guidance on managing the recruitment process. All teaching staff are academically qualified and are experienced music practitioners. A tutor grading matrix is used by the Institute as an aid to the recruitment process. The Institute is committed to the continuous professional development of all its teaching staff, especially in providing opportunities for them to obtain teaching qualifications and achieve Higher Education Academy (HEA) fellowships. The Institute enables all full-time, sessional and hourly paid teaching staff to identify and participate in continuous professional development opportunities.

2.27 The Institute has been proactive in encouraging staff to engage with the HEA, and a total of 16 staff currently hold HEA fellowships, at levels appropriate to their role within the Institute. The Institute is supporting six staff members undertaking the Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma - The Teaching Musician.

2.28 There is an annual Teaching and Learning Conference and teaching staff have undertaken two internal 'away days', which included additional training on assessment feedback. Staff have received specific training on the Quality Code, and have participated in internal Quality Code quizzes to embed Quality Code knowledge and understanding. The review team considers the Institute's high levels of support for continuous professional development for all staff to be **good practice**.

2.29 There is a robust formal teaching observation process to monitor and enhance the quality of teaching practices. The annual cycle of lesson observations feed into annual performance appraisals and the programme annual monitoring reviews. Lesson observations provide an opportunity for the Institute and teaching staff to identify additional continuous professional development opportunities. The lesson observation forms are benchmarked against the HEA's Professional Standards Framework. All teaching staff are observed at least once annually and the outcomes of teaching observations may be used to

provide developmental guidance and support for the teaching staff. Observed good practice also feeds into internal staff development activities. New staff are observed shortly after commencing employment and are provided with a teaching mentor.

2.30 The Institute's Annual Monitoring Report processes evaluate a wide range of data and feedback to ensure the effectiveness of the Institute's approach to learning and teaching at module, programme and Institute level. Lesson observations form an integral part of the data incorporated into programme Annual Monitoring reports. Associated action plans are regularly reviewed at Programme Committee meetings and overseen by the Academic Committee.

2.31 New teaching staff are provided with an experienced mentor and a thorough week-long induction to the Institute. They meet senior, administrative and teaching staff and are comprehensively briefed on the programme(s) they will be delivering to students. An integral part of staff induction is the completion of the Learning Passport which provides a clear audit trail to ensure the new staff member has completed all elements of their induction process. Teaching staff were unanimous in stating they found their induction to the Institute both comprehensive and supportive.

2.32 The review team reviewed a wide range of evidence relating to teaching and learning including the developmental support provided to new and established staff. The team looked at collaborative agreements, the LTA Strategy, lesson observation forms, the Higher Education Manual, Annual Monitoring reports, staff development data, the Learning Passport, and the Induction Schedule, and held meetings with senior managers and teaching staff.

2.33 The Institute is diligent in systematic review and enhancement of learning opportunities and teaching practices. Teaching staff ensure that every student is able to develop as an independent learner and develop academic and music performance skills relevant to their programme of study.

2.34 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**

2.35 The Institute has robust procedures to support students' professional and academic development and achievement. There is an Institute Strategic Plan 2013-18 which encapsulates the Institute's approach to supporting its students' academic and professional development. Each department produces an Operational Plan aligned to the Strategic Plan and these are supported by an institutional Quality Improvement Plan and a SED. This process of reflective review enables the Institute to assure itself that it is providing a learning environment that supports student development and achievement.

2.36 The Institute is diligent in using a range of activities to support students' professional and academic development. This includes supporting an effective student voice through engagements with student representatives on formal committees, programme inductions and an extensive range of learning resources. In addition, staff are appropriately qualified and professionally experienced.

2.37 Students are provided with a thorough induction. They reported that their induction included a full briefing on a wide range of issues, including health and safety, the student voice, the Institute's expectations of student behaviour and performance, programme and resources information, and a copy of their programme handbook. Students regard the programme handbooks as a useful reference document for programme content and procedures. Programme tutors brief students on module content and assessment activities.

2.38 Students are also introduced to the VLE and 'The Hub' as part of their induction activities. The Institute uses its Induction and Freshers' Week to support students in making the transition to higher education study. Once on their programme, students receive both academic and music practitioner support.

2.39 All students are provided with a cycle of tutorials for academic and pastoral support. The frequency of tutorial support varies according to programme design, for example master's students have a weekly tutorial while other students have fewer scheduled tutorials over the academic year.

2.40 Students appreciate the physical resources provided to support their studies. The new recording studio, which is run by students, is highly valued and seen as an important aid to professional development by specialists in the music industry. The Institute provides an excellent range of physical resources and equipment, for example rehearsal rooms, drum booths, technical suites and a recording studio used by students to record, process and release their own CDs. Students reported that the Institute responds very quickly to requests for additional learning resources, for example the provision of new drum kits, hiring additional 'live rooms' (practice rooms) in a neighbouring building and training student engineers to provide greater student access to the recording studio. The review team concludes that the range of mechanisms which enable an effective response to enhancing learning resources for students is **good practice**.

2.41 To help students organise external performances the Institute has produced an external performance booklet and appointed an Industry Liaison Officer. 'The Hub' is used by students as a source of information and enables them to establish contacts within the music industry, develop a network of performance venues and enhance performance opportunities.

The review team considers the development of The Hub, the Institute's forum for music industry engagement that enhances students' professional practice and career opportunities, to be **good practice**.

2.42 The Institute's 'Next Steps' meetings and master classes (see Expectation B10) are highly valued by students as they can work with very experienced and established musicians and other music practitioners. Students regard these events as an essential element in the development of their performance skills. The review team also considered the breadth of engagements with the music industry that improves the quality of student learning opportunities to be **good practice**.

2.43 The Wellbeing Team and Learning Support Centre provide support to students with learning and physical needs. The range of provision includes support with dyslexia, the disabled student allowance process and in-house counsellors. The Institute embeds UEL's 'Skills Curriculum' and is developing a 'common chassis framework' to support students registered with its other awarding body and organisation. The Institute has developed an online writing centre to support students in their academic writing skills supported by a digital space where students can seek support from staff and their peers.

2.44 The review team tested the Expectation by considering relevant policies and procedures, minutes of meetings, and the Institute's VLE and 'The Hub'. In addition, the review team met administrative and teaching staff, students, music industry employers and alumni.

2.45 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**

2.46 The Institute's strategic plan underpins its initiatives for student engagement and it states, as one of its key values, that the Institute 'places students at the heart of everything [they] do'. There is a detailed quality cycle which has significant student involvement and engagement. Within the Institute's committee structures student representation is significant. Student representatives sit on the Executive Committee, Academic Committee, Quality and Standards Committee, Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, and the Admissions Panel.

2.47 The Institute has processes that enable students and staff to engage in discussion that informs the enhancement of the student experience. Programme committees are responsible for assuring the quality of the student experience at programme level. These committees meet three times a year and are chaired by the programme leader. Student representative meetings are chaired by the Student President and attended by the Head of Studies and the Quality Manager. Themes discussed include the Institute's 'You Said, We Did' initiative, facilities and services, assessment, and health and safety. At induction the Student President and other student representatives give a presentation that underlines and promotes the importance of student engagement and feedback at the Institute in the enhancement of provision.

2.48 The Institute states that due to the vocational nature of the programmes, feedback is varied and ongoing. An open-door policy is adopted by staff to promote opportunities for student feedback. There is a student charter that informs students about what they can expect from the Institute and what it expects from them.

2.49 The recruitment of student representatives is organised by the Institute's Communications Officer and training for student representatives is available from the UEL Students' Union. The review team considers that it could be beneficial to develop the training of student representatives and support to the Communications Officer.

2.50 Student representatives feed back about their programmes through student representative meetings and Institute committees, including the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, Academic Committee and Programme Committee meetings. In addition students have frequent contact with programme leaders.

2.51 Students provide feedback about their programmes through module feedback forms, end-of-semester surveys and when programmes are revalidated. The review team is confident that the structures for student representation and feedback opportunities are clearly understood. Students felt listened to, engaged with and valued by the Institute.

2.52 The review team met programme leaders, tutors, student support staff, senior managers and staff who monitor and collate student feedback. In addition, meetings with students and student representatives helped the team understand the process for selecting and training student representatives. The team reviewed a range of documents that support the Institute's approach to student engagement and, in particular, those for quality assurance processes. To gain additional insight into the Institute's engagement with the music industry, the team met with alumni and music industry professionals. The team also considered programme documents and committee minutes.

2.53 From meetings with staff and students, it was clear to the team that student engagement is highly integrated into the quality of provision at the Institute. Students feel supported through application, acceptance, enrolment and induction. Their induction includes information about student involvement at the Institute including opportunities to be a student representative. Students are also informed about additional support for their learning at induction. The meetings with staff confirmed the processes and mechanisms in place to support students with additional needs.

2.54 Students whom the team met were aware of what was expected of them as well as what they can expect from the Institute.

2.55 The review team saw clear evidence of the Institute's commitment to student engagement in their policies and processes. There are numerous forums for students to give feedback about their provision. Furthermore, from their meetings with students the team were confident in the effectiveness of these processes. Consequently this Expectation is met with a low level of associated risk.

**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**

2.56 The Institute works closely with external examiners and link tutors to ensure that students have appropriate assessment opportunities that demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes. This is managed through annual revision of assessments. Pearson programme assessments are internally moderated to ensure they are at the correct level with appropriate grading criteria. The Institute has developed and implemented a contextualised grading criteria for assessment which has been implemented across all programmes.

2.57 The Institute's admissions policy outlines the comprehensive arrangements to manage Accredited Prior Learning applications. Applicants who seek credited learning or experiential learning for either exemption or admission are assessed by the relevant programme leader in discussion with the applicant and liaison with the awarding body link tutor.

2.58 Student programme handbooks, programme specifications and module guides provide detailed information regarding learning outcomes and assessment. The learning outcomes in some modules provide students with an opportunity to showcase and demonstrate their attainments as part of the assessment. Programme handbooks also provide students with detailed information regarding the submission of coursework and guidelines for good academic practice and the use of plagiarism-detection software.

2.59 Students are particularly complimentary about assessed content that enables them to run their own events. The BMus Popular Performance programme, for example, offers an Event Management Module that requires students to organise music events. In addition, students from the BA Creative Musicianship have the opportunity to work with students from UEL and the London School of Fashion on specific projects.

2.60 Oversight of the Institute's teaching and learning strategy is the responsibility of LTA Committee. This includes the Institute's teaching and learning strategy, the observation of teaching and the monitoring and implementation of recommendations made by external examiners.

2.61 The Institute's teaching and learning strategy highlights assessment of learning as a key theme which promotes timely, clear and rigorous assessment practices for students.

2.62 Academic staff are provided with assessment guidance in the Higher Education Handbook. This promotes and encourages tutors to use a wide range of assessments that are appropriate to the level of the programme. External examiner comments are favourable on assessment and indicate that marks awarded are comparable with UK standards.

2.63 Academic staff receive guidance and training in assessment practice and support staff receive training from the awarding bodies about assessment systems and regulations.

2.64 The Institute systematically observes teaching to monitor and seek improvement in teaching and assessment practice. These observations are conducted by a senior member of the academic team or the Head of Studies. The Institute encourages dialogue in programme teams about effective assessment methods and best practice observed.

2.65 Staff comply with the awarding bodies' and organisation's assessment procedures to ensure assessments are fair and that learning outcomes are met. Students receive timely formative and summative feedback. Feedback practice is monitored closely and staff workshops provided which highlight elements of good practice.

2.66 The vocational structure of the Institute's programmes determines that feedback to students is often immediate, for example in live performance workshops and instrumental skills classes. Students confirm they receive feedback in a wide range of contexts and forms. Tutors upload student feedback to the VLE although the team was informed by students this can be inconsistent, with some students reporting variability in examination feedback.

2.67 The review team tested the effectiveness of the Institute's processes for assessment by examining policy documents, programme specifications, module handbooks, external examiners' reports and the VLE. In addition, the review team held meetings with senior and academic staff and awarding body representatives.

2.68 Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of assessment development and design processes and an understanding of the Expectations of the Quality Code. In addition, they are aware of the FHEQ and its relevance to assessment processes. All new teaching staff at the Institute are provided with induction and training on assessment practice and supported by an experienced mentor.

2.69 Assessment best practice is identified from student feedback, external examiners' reports and link tutor reports. This is shared and disseminated across programmes with the LTA Committee being instrumental in this process.

2.70 The internal moderation processes are robust and ensure assessment methods are effective and assessment decisions accurate. The schemes for marking are applied to all programmes showing how intended learning outcomes can be met.

2.71 Assessments meet national standards and programme leaders engage effectively with external examiners. External examiner reports confirmed programme teams are applying assessments to meet intended learning outcomes. When external examiners recommend improvements to assessment processes and practice, action is monitored through the annual monitoring process.

2.72 Students confirmed assessment information is accurate and available in course handbooks, programme specifications and module handbooks. In addition, students informed the review team that guidance on submission, format and marking schemes was clear and timely. They value the timely and detailed feedback from their tutors and informed the review team that the formative assessment and feedback logs were particularly helpful

2.73 The Institute's assessment processes are reliable and enable students to achieve their qualifications. In addition, the Institute provides clear information, guidance and support to applicants with prior learning. The review team concludes that Expectation B6 is met and the level of associated 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**

2.74 The Institute's awarding bodies and organisation retain responsibility for the appointment and induction of the external examiners who review academic and qualification standards, assessment processes and the quality assurance of the programmes delivered on their behalf. Only UEL require the Institute to nominate external examiners for their programmes. The Institute has robust internal procedures to review external examiner reports, respond to any actions and recommendations, and ensure the dissemination of good practice. The Institute is diligent in ensuring that external examiner reports are considered as public information and posts them on its VLE, together with any programme team responses. External examiner report content is an essential element in programme annual reviews.

2.75 The Institute has an established and robust procedure in place for managing the external examiner process. Nominated external examiners are trained and inducted by the respective awarding bodies and organisation. It is standard Institute policy that programme teams initiate contact with an external examiner once the appointment is made to invite the external examiner to visit the Institute and familiarise themselves with the programme, teaching team and students. Programme teams manage external examiner visits. External examiners for UEL and USW attend assessment boards in accordance with their academic regulations. Assessment Boards for Pearson programmes take place prior to external examiner visits. External examiners ensure that assessment boards are conducted in accordance with Pearson guidance. The Institute provides external examiners with access to its anti-plagiarism detection software to randomly sample students' report data.

2.76 UEL and USW external examiner reports are initially received by the universities. The quality assurance department at UEL outlines the points they would like to see referenced in the Institute's response to comments made in an external examiner's report. Programme teams are required to enter into a dialogue with USW to discuss the content of external examiner reports. Pearson external examiner reports are received by the Institute. Programme teams generate action plans for Pearson programmes.

2.77 The Institute systematically considers external examiner reports and uses them to enhance its provision. All external examiner reports are considered at Programme Committee meetings which are attended by programme student representatives. Consideration of external examiner reports at programme committee level ensures programme teams take ownership of any identified issues and good practice. Programme Committee meetings report responses to recommendations, planned actions and good practice to the Quality Standards Committee.

2.78 External examiner report templates for UEL, USW and Pearson prompt external examiners to provide useful comments on the standards and quality of provision. External examiner report outcomes and the programme team response form an integral part of the Programme Annual Monitoring Review documentation, which contributes to the Institute's annual SED and Quality Improvement Plan. The Institute prepares a helpful Annual Institute External Examiner Action Table which enables the monitoring and resolution of issues identified by external examiners.

2.79 The Institute has demonstrated a commitment to quality assurance and the maintenance of standards through its policy of encouraging and supporting staff to become

external examiners. At the time of the review three staff held appointments as external examiners and an additional two were under consideration.

2.80 The review team considered the Institute's application of external examining processes and outcomes through a review of relevant policies and procedures, collaborative agreements, minutes of meetings, external examiner nomination forms, external examiner reports, and the annual Institute External Examiner Action Table. In addition the team met staff and students.

2.81 The Institute's external examiner process and responses to their recommendations are robust, effective and well managed. The Institute is conscientious in ensuring that the outcomes of the external examining process are published and accessible to students via the VLE. The Institute has further demonstrated its commitment to the internal quality assurance of its programmes and implementation of academic, qualification and subject benchmarking standards by actively supporting its staff to undertake the role of external examiner.

2.82 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**

2.83 The Institute's validated programmes with UEL and USW are subject to a five-year periodic review. This process evaluates teaching learning and assessment practice as well as making a judgements on the reliability and validity of curriculum content against sector best practice. Past periodic reviews have highlighted areas of good practice at the Institute including the high quality of tutors, excellent links with the music industry and strong professional development.

2.84 The Institute has a detailed quality cycle in place, of which annual monitoring is an important component. It is the responsibility of Institute programme teams to complete annual monitoring review and enhancement reports for all validated awards in line with awarding body procedures. For university-validated programmes a standard annual monitoring template is used and on completion must be submitted to the awarding body for approval.

2.85 The oversight and monitoring of annual monitoring reports rests with the Quality Standards Committee which is chaired by the Head of Data and Planning. The Academic Committee also receives all annual monitoring reports. It is this committee's responsibility to identify emergent themes from programme monitoring which informs the Institute's annual SED and quality improvement plan.

2.86 Programmes at the Institute are subject to an annual monitoring review. This report is written by the programme leader with input from the programme team. The programme review takes account of programme committee outcomes, external examiner reports, responses to external examiner reports, student data, module data, student feedback, placement reports, employers' reports, and an action plan for the forthcoming year.

2.87 Each programme has a programme committee which meets three times a year and reports to the Academic Committee. The Programme Committee is chaired by programme leaders and is composed of tutors, student representatives, and quality, communications, and administrative staff. The programme committee is responsible for approving the annual monitoring reports and action plan and for its monitoring and implementation.

2.88 It is also the responsibility of the Programme Committee to review programme questionnaire results and produce module improvement plans. In addition the programme committee is a formal platform where students can express their views regarding programme management and the learning, teaching and assessment of modules.

2.89 Students indicated they are aware of the Programme Committee meeting process and that it enables them to raise and resolve concerns and issues about the programme.

2.90 The Programme Committee may initiate minor changes to programmes as a result of programme review and student feedback. Examples of changes include modification to elements of learning, teaching and assessment. These modifications must be ratified by the Institute's Academic Committee and then referred to the awarding body for approval.

2.91 The Institute's Programme Committees are accountable for assuring the quality of the student experience at programme level. These committees comprise the programme

leaders, academic teaching staff, students, and representatives from administration and student support. The programme committee is responsible for producing and endorsing all annual monitoring reports and action plans. In addition annual monitoring reports are submitted to the University awarding bodies.

2.92 The review team considered a range of reports. These were rigorous and detailed. Programme teams reflect on the action plan from the previous year and make good use of data, student feedback and external examiner reports. Modifications to the Institute's programmes must be made in accordance with the awarding body procedures which includes consultation with students currently enrolled on programmes who may be affected. Programme leaders liaise with the University link tutors who advise on proposals.

2.93 The review team tested this Expectation through reviewing annual monitoring reports, policies and procedures and by engaging in meetings with academic and senior staff, awarding body representatives and students.

2.94 The Institute's quality systems, processes, policies and procedures relating to annual monitoring operate effectively. Monitoring of all higher education programmes takes place using a standard template. All annual monitoring reviews draw upon a broad range of evidence that includes student record statistics, student feedback and external examiner reports. The review team noted that employer involvement in the Institute's quality assurance and enhancement processes would be beneficial and makes a recommendation in Expectation B1.

2.95 The programme annual monitoring reports are clear and include identified actions and required responses. This enables programme leaders to identify where enhancement can be made to provision. Students confirmed to the review team that they are able to comment on programmes and associated modules through student representatives and module evaluations. Students also confirmed they are able to give regular feedback through the student president meetings. This includes feedback to the Institute's senior management team.

2.96 In-year monitoring is completed through the Programme Committee meetings and the Programme Leader Report. These provide a general overview on progress from the student representatives and the programme team. The formal audit of progress against actions takes place during the completion of the following year's report. The Quality Manager monitors the completion of action plans throughout the year in consultation with the programme committees and programme leaders.

2.97 The awarding organisation, Pearson, engages external examiners to report annually on the quality processes applied for the programmes it accredits. It also makes periodic changes to programme specifications and regulations to which the Institute must adapt. While there is a comprehensive annual monitoring process in place, there is no formal cycle of periodic review for Pearson programmes that examines programme performance and development over a longer period of time. The review team **recommends** that by November 2015 the Institute further develop internal periodic review processes to provide parity of all programmes including Pearson.

2.98 The review team concludes that the Institute operates an effective, regular and systematic annual monitoring and review process. The 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**

2.98 The Institute's responsibilities for the management of policies for complaints and appeals are included in its agreements with its awarding bodies and organisations. It is the responsibility of the Institute's quality manager to monitor complaints and academic appeals. Academic appeals relating to University programmes are managed through the awarding bodies' academic appeals procedures. The Institute responds to complaints through its internal complaints procedures. These are detailed in the quality handbook and programme handbooks. All complaints and academic appeals relating to Pearson programmes are managed by the Institute. Complaints and appeals are also a standing item on the agenda for the Quality and Standards Committee.

2.99 The requirements for complaints and appeals of each awarding organisation are articulated in the Institute's quality handbook. Included in this is the Institute's overarching complaints and appeals policies and procedures that are underpinned by the Quality Code and its awarding bodies' procedures. Consequently, academic appeals policies and procedures relating to UEL and USW programmes are consistent with the awarding bodies' quality handbooks. For Pearson programmes academic appeals are managed by the Institute. This is a four-stage process with definitive timelines.

2.100 Information about appeals and complaints is brought to students' attention during induction week. There are also links on the Institute's VLE to information about these procedures. Staff also inform students of procedures relating to complaints and appeals during tutorials.

2.101 The review team met staff responsible for managing academic appeals and complaints. The team also met students to confirm how effectively the Institute communicate their policies. In addition to meetings with staff and students, the team reviewed relevant policies and procedures. They included the Institute's quality handbook, programme-specific student handbooks and policy documents relating to the internally managed complaints procedure. The team also reviewed committee minutes relating to complaints and appeals. Information about complaints and appeals is also available on the Institute's VLE.

2.102 In addition to information at induction, the Institute also organises a 're-fresh week' in the autumn term to provide students with another opportunity to receive information about the procedures for appeals and complaints. Meetings with students demonstrated their understanding of the respective procedures and processes and confirmed to the review team that the Institute is effective in communicating them to the student body. Meetings with staff demonstrated that they understood how the management of complaints and appeals provides opportunities to enhance the Institute's provision.

2.103 The Institute demonstrated fair, accessible and timely policies and procedures to manage academic appeals and student complaints. Consequently the team concludes the Expectation is met with a low level of associated risk.

**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**

2.104 The Institute has been proactive in establishing a range of contacts in the music industry which provide students with the opportunity to fully engage in the wider music industry and perform at the Institute and external venues. The Institute has its own record label where students are able to apply recording knowledge gained from their programmes of study and interactions with professionals in the music industry. Students are provided with learning opportunities to enable them to manage external venue bookings and performance through the content of specific modules and the support of the Industry Liaison Officer.

2.105 To facilitate students' knowledge and experience of, and employability in, the music industry, the Institute has developed the multifaceted resource known as The Hub.

2.106 The Institute is diligent in enhancing all aspects of students' musical knowledge and experience. To develop these skills the Institute arranges, and enable students to arrange and manage, in-house musical and external venue opportunities for performance and composing skills. Module delivery provides the underpinning knowledge to enable students to manage the process of venue bookings and performance. Additional support to students is available in the External Performance Guidance booklet, on 'The Hub' and through the services of the Institute's Industry Liaison Officer.

2.107 The Institute uses 'The Hub' to manage its wide range of professional and venue contacts and to give students access to external performance opportunities. The Institute delivers professional master classes and a cycle of 'Next Steps' meetings with music industry specialists. Master classes provide students with the opportunity to work alongside professional musicians and songwriters and are highly valued by students. 'Next Steps' meetings are informal and student led, and students are able to have individual conversations with the attending music industry specialist. These meetings provide an opportunity for students to gain knowledge and guidance from practitioners in the music industry including contacts from the attending professionals who actively encourage student networking. The 'Next Steps 5' meeting held in February 2014 involved A & R managers from Virgin/EMI Records and Universal Publishing.

2.108 The Institute has participated in national and international collaborations with other music institutions and universities. Students especially valued the opportunity to work with LAMA (Los Angeles) and FERMATA (Mexico) on a 'Without the Beatles' project. Students reported that this was an extremely useful learning experience. In addition students have also worked on collaborative projects with UEL. Students gained invaluable professional experience composing and recording original soundtracks for London College of Fashion students' fashion films, successfully meeting prescribed deadlines.

2.109 To ensure students have access to the relevant subject knowledge and skills development, the Institute has a large number of part-time staff with academic and professional qualifications who are current practitioners in the music industry. Employers regard the Institute's commitment to employing staff who are current practitioners as a particular strength since the contemporary music industry is constantly changing.

2.110 The review team considered the arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with other organisations by reviewing relevant policies and procedures including the Institute's annual SEDs, the student submission, minutes of programmes and meetings, meetings with staff, students, music industry specialists, alumni, 'The Hub', and module specifications.

2.111 The Institute provides students with numerous opportunities to engage with the music industry and music industry specialists which enhances their skills, knowledge and learning opportunities. The review team considers the breadth of engagements with the music industry that improves the quality of student learning opportunities to be **good practice**.

2.112 The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

**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***

2.113 The Institute does not offer research degrees.



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

2.114 In reaching its judgements about the quality of learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria in Annex 2 of the relevant handbook.

2.115 Of the 10 applicable Expectations in this area all are met with a low level of risk.

2.116 There are two recommendations in this area which relate to programme design and approval (B1), programme monitoring and review (B8) and Enhancement. There are also five features of good practice. These recognise feedback to applicants from auditions (B2), support for staff continuous professional development (B3), learning resources for students (B4), engagements with the music industry (B4, B10 and Enhancement), and the development of 'The Hub' (B4 and Enhancement).

2.117 The review team considers that the Institute applies effective and systematic annual monitoring and review processes. While there is a comprehensive process, there is no formal cycle of periodic review for Pearson programmes. The review team recommends that the Institute further develop internal periodic review processes to provide parity of monitoring for all programmes including Pearson (B8).

2.118 When planning programmes the Institute takes into consideration many aspects of sector good practice. However, the review team noted that there was an absence of employer involvement in the programme and approval process. The review team recommends that the Institute maximise opportunities for industry engagement in quality assurance and enhancement processes (B1, B8 and Enhancement).

2.119 Overall, the review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the Institute **meets** UK expectations.

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

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

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

##### **Findings**

3.1 Under the memoranda of collaboration between the Institute and its two awarding bodies and approval document with its awarding organisation, Pearson, the responsibility for information is delegated to the Institute. The awarding bodies monitor information to ensure accuracy. This includes reviewing programme specifications and programme handbooks in addition to information on the Institute's website and in its prospectus.

3.2 The Institute's Public Information Policy promotes publishing information that is accurate, fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Thematic audits are undertaken by the Marketing Manager, Quality Manager and the Head of Studies. In addition, areas of public information are assigned to particular staff within the Institute who are responsible for its accuracy. The Institute's website details programmes offered and their fees. There is also a printed prospectus and VLE. The VLE is relatively new and the Institute plans to move more of its information to this format. It is the reasonability of the marketing department to check the accuracy of the website before being approved for the Institute by the Head of Studies.

3.3 For auditions, specific requirements are not detailed in promotional materials but are readily available by direct enquiry to the Admissions Team and Student Services staff.

3.4 Staff roles and responsibilities are clearly articulated in the Institute's policies including the Public Information policy, the learning and teaching policy and the Admissions Policy.

3.5 The review team reviewed documents pertaining to higher education degrees at the Institute. Furthermore, the team reviewed documents that underpinned quality processes including the Institute's quality handbook and strategic plan, programme handbook and specific policy documents. In addition, the team viewed committee minutes and action plans that demonstrated the Institute's rigorous monitoring processes with regard to its information and confirmed the arrangements documented in agreements with the awarding bodies and organisation. The team reviewed the prospectus and the website, including the associated links, for clarity and whether they were fit for purpose, particularly in light of the cutting-edge nature of the Institute's programmes. The team accessed the Institute's VLE to gain a better understanding of the student experience when using this to find information. While there are no minimum upload requirements for the VLE, staff who manage it explained that the engagement with the Institute's learning frameworks keeps the VLE as a central point of access.

3.6 Issues relating to information feature in the Institute's action plans and demonstrate the systematic processes applied by the Institute. Meetings with students confirmed that information is made available to them in advance of commencing their programmes and also at induction. They confirmed the information was fit for purpose. Furthermore, they were complimentary about staff support in helping them access information.

3.7 The review team considered that the Institute could further promote information about its strengths and in particular initiatives such as 'The Hub'.

3.8 The team concludes that the Expectation is met with a low level of associated risk.

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

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

3.9 In reaching its judgements 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.

3.10 The Institute's policies promote information that is accurate, fair, reasonable and timely. Thematic audits are undertaken and responsibilities for areas of public information are assigned to appropriate staff.

3.11 The website details the programmes offered and their fees, and there is also a printed prospectus and VLE. The marketing department check the accuracy of information prior to approval by the Head of Studies. Rigorous checks of information are made as part of the Institute's quality cycle.

3.12 The review team considers that the Institute could extend information about areas of strength including 'The Hub'.

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

## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

### Findings

4.1 The Institute has a number of processes to identify and enable it to enhance its provision. Enhancement is embedded in the Institute's strategic plans and supported by its mission: 'To inspire, encourage and equip our students to succeed by delivering a relevant and innovative educational experience of the highest quality'. The student voice and students as partners are important elements of the Institute's quality processes and central to the management, development and enhancement of provision. There is a commitment to the development of a world-class workforce through internal and external training.

4.2 This strategic approach and commitment to students is evident in the Institute's wide breadth of engagements for students with the music industry that improves the quality of their learning opportunities. Through the Institute's networks and industry links students have access to leading record labels, publishers, promoters, management companies and performers. The review team considers the breadth of engagements with the music industry that improves the quality of student learning opportunities as **good practice**; this is also referred to in Expectations B4 and B10.

4.3 The Institute's annual SED and quality improvement plan are key to the identification of enhancement. It is the responsibility of the Academic Committee to annually analyse information and identify enhancement from sources that include programme committee records, external examiner reports, awarding body reports and annual monitoring reports. The review team considered that the Institute could maximise opportunities for industry engagement in quality assurance and enhancement processes and the recommendation made in Expectations B1 and B8 is repeated.

4.4 The Institute applies its processes and policies to identifying, implementing and monitoring to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. The annual monitoring process and the associated action plans are key in identifying enhancement opportunities. In addition, periodic review provides further quality procedures to review programmes and identify good practice. The review team considered that the Institute could further develop internal periodic review processes to provide parity of monitoring for all programmes including Pearson, and made a recommendation in Expectation B8.

4.5 The review team tested the Institute's steps to securing enhancement by examining a range of strategy documents, policies, performance data and reports, and held meetings with senior managers, academic staff, administrative staff, students, alumni and employers.

4.6 The annual monitoring process and reports supported by reviewing and monitoring data are the principal mechanisms used to identify and improve student learning opportunities at institutional and programme level. The information from annual monitoring informs the Institute's annual SED and subsequent annual quality improvement plan with regard to required or requested enhancements that are integrated into an institutional action plan.

4.7 Students and staff confirmed that the Institute's student representative system is important in helping to identify improvements in learning opportunities. Students are represented on a wide range of internal forums including the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, the Admissions Panel the Academic Committee and the Quality

and Standards Committee. Student representatives are also invited to attend the Institute's Executive Committee and Board of Director's meetings at key points. In addition, the Institute's Student President has meetings with student representatives from higher education programmes. Any concerns or issues raised within these meetings are subsequently fed back and discussed with the Institute senior management team for consideration and action.

4.8 The review team identified many examples where the Institute had taken deliberate steps to improve the quality of students' learning provision. These included the application of academic staff professional expertise in musicianship and performance to students' learning and teaching, the redesign of student handbooks, the development of the VLE and the development of 'The Hub'.

4.9 'The Hub' is operated by an experienced team of established industry professionals and provides activities designed to extend and improve the learning opportunities for students. These activities include supporting students in arranging live performance and specialist music events, hosting clinics on interview techniques, providing additional teaching and mentoring for students, sourcing work placements and internship opportunities, and arranging host artist and repertoire sessions with industry professionals.

4.10 Students confirmed the activities arranged and support provided through 'The Hub' complement and improve their learning and employment opportunities. They also valued support provided by the Institute's student-managed Record Label, 'Dyne Road Recording'. The team considers the development of 'The Hub', the Institute's forum for music industry engagement that enhances students' professional practice and career opportunities, to be **good practice**.

4.11 The Institute's events team work closely with premier London music venues to provide and arrange opportunities for students to perform. In addition the events team also arrange internal performance activities such as the songwriters circle, Badeoke, where students can perform with the in-house band using an instrument of their choice, jam nights and tutor showcases and festivals. Regular master classes and workshops delivered by world-famous artists and industry business specialists are particularly welcomed by students as these provide an opportunity to meet and learn from highly successful musicians and industry professionals.

4.12 The review team concludes that deliberate steps are being taken by the senior management and staff at the Institute to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities. 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

4.13 In reaching its judgements about the quality of the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.14 The Institute has systematic processes to identify enhancement of its provision. Enhancement features in the Institute's strategic plans and is supported by its mission. A strategic approach is evident in the breadth of engagements with the music industry that improves the quality of students' learning opportunities.

4.15 The annual SED and quality improvement plan enable the Institute to identify enhancement and take deliberate steps to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

4.16 The review team considers that the Institute could maximise opportunities for industry engagement in quality assurance and enhancement processes and the recommendation made in Expectations B1 and B8 is repeated.

4.17 In conclusion the review team finds that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the Institute **meets** UK expectations.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement

### Findings

5.1 The Institute has numerous processes for student feedback and opportunities for students to be involved with the Institute's quality assurance processes. In the Institute's strategic plan it states that it places students at the heart of everything it does.

5.2 The Student President meetings provide a process for students to raise issues or concerns directly with the senior management team. In addition the Student President and the Student Secretary are involved with the Institute's Quarterly Business Review. At these meetings, the Student President is asked to submit an annual 'wish list' of enhancements. These requests are discussed and where required costed and if agreed, actioned through the Institute's Executive Committee.

5.3 In meetings with staff the review team found there was a high level of understanding of the processes to underpin and support student engagement and feedback. Programme leaders are actively involved with the process and gather ongoing feedback through regular contact with students. In meetings with students the review team tested the Institute's statement that its 'relatively small size is beneficial in enabling student involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement by removing barriers that may be present in larger organisations'. It was confirmed that the Institute proactively encourages student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement through means that include student representation, feedback procedures and engagement with their tutors.

5.4 There are three categories of student representatives: Course Representatives, Committee Representatives, and Events Representatives. Each representative is elected for every year of each degree programme. At least once per term, there is a programme-specific meeting for all the representatives to attend. There is active staff involvement in the promotion of the importance of student representatives and following their election, training for student representatives is conducted by UEL's Students' Union.

5.5 The Institute has a comprehensive student representative handbook, and regular committee and programme meetings attended by student representatives. The Institute places high priority on providing students with feedback on action taken to rectify and resolve concerns they raise. This is exemplified in the Institute's 'You Said, We Did' campaign and the newsletter produced by the Student President.

5.6 In addition to the formal quality assurance processes, there are numerous opportunities for students to work with external practitioners and music industry professionals. The review team heard about the benefit of these relationships from current Institute students, alumni and employers.

5.7 The Institute provides a meaningful and strategic approach to the engagement of students in its quality processes. Significantly, it was clear to the team that the Institute considers these in an extended framework that provides an exceptional link with the music industry.



## 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 29 to 32 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#).

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

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

### Academic standards

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

### Award

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

### Blended learning

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

### Credit(s)

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

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

### Dual award or double award

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

### e-learning

See **technology enhanced or enabled learning**

### **Enhancement**

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

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

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

See also **distance learning**.

### **Framework**

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

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

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

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

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

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

### **Programme specifications**

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

### **Public information**

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

### **Quality Code**

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

### **Reference points**

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

### **Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

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

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

### **Threshold academic standard**

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

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

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

### **Widening participation**

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

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