



# Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Istituto Marangoni

April 2016

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Istituto Marangoni. The review took place from 19 to 21 April 2016 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Terence Clifford Amos
- Mrs Miranda Hobart
- Ms Leigh Spanner (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Istituto Marangoni 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 (Alternative Providers) the QAA review team:

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

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

In reviewing Istituto Marangoni 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 2015-16 are Student Employability, and Digital Literacy,<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.

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 6.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.<sup>3</sup> A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).<sup>4</sup> For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

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

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859).

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

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx).

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Istituto Marangoni

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies **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 Istituto Marangoni.

- The use of 'live briefs' to promote students' engagement with current sector practices, challenges and developments (Expectation B3).
- The active engagement with a wide range of sector employers which effectively supports curriculum development and the student learning experience (Expectation B10).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Istituto Marangoni.

By September 2016:

- formalise the admissions process to ensure it has effective oversight (Expectation B2)
- improve support provided to students to help identify suitable work placements (Expectations B4, B10)
- improve information for students engaging with the new complaints process including clearer communication of outcomes of formal and informal complaints (Expectation B9)
- ensure that all students on placements are supported in accordance with handbook requirements (Expectations B10, B4)
- ensure that students have sufficient pre-course information about course content to enable informed decisions to be made (Expectations C, B2).

### Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that the Istituto Marangoni is already taking to make academic standards secure and improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The plans being implemented to improve the learning environment in response to student feedback (Expectation B3).
- The introduction of a revised appeals process to establish oversight of the process and early resolution of students' assessment concerns (Expectation B9).

- The introduction of monitoring in the use of complaint and appeals outcomes as a source of student feedback (Expectation B9).

## **Theme: Student Employability**

The team found that the School has effectively embedded employability skills within unit delivery and assessments as well as through work placement units. Students are enabled to understand the current trends within the sector, develop practical and theoretical skills required by the sector, and engage with sector professionals to build their practice-based knowledge and skills. The role of employers and sector professionals in informing curriculum developments further ensures that employability skills are embedded in programmes, and students are supported to build their knowledge and practical skills which will help secure future employment.

## **Financial sustainability, management and governance**

There were no material issues identified at Istituto Marangoni during the financial sustainability, management and governance check.

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

## **About Istituto Marangoni**

Istituto Marangoni provides training and higher professional studies in fashion and related areas. The London School was established in 2003. The mission of the School is:

'To excel as a centre of professional and creative learning in the Fashion, Art and Design fields; to nourish international industries, providing talented Istituto Marangoni graduates from all over the world.'

A key feature of the School is its 'Italianess' which is designed to provide students with a learning experience drawn from the School's origins in Italy. The School is based in Shoreditch, central London and is well supported by the nearby fashion industry. All the School's teaching takes place at its premises in Fashion Street.

The awarding body for degree courses is Manchester Metropolitan University (Manchester Met). Some procedures have recently been contextualised to the requirements of the School, and agreed by the awarding body, for example the admissions policy and the complaints and appeals procedure.

The School offers full-time UK higher education courses at BA honours level in fashion business, design and styling. There are also Master's-level programmes in contemporary fashion buying, fashion and luxury brand management, fashion design womenswear, and fashion promotion, communication and media.

The total number of students for 2015-16 is 595. There are currently 503 undergraduates (213 international and 290 EU) and 92 postgraduates (64 international and 28 EU).

Staffing consists of a total of 53 academic staff. This includes two academic leadership posts (directors), four senior academics (e.g. course/programme leaders), and 83 full-time or fractional staff and/or sessional (hourly paid) lecturers.

The undergraduate courses have been specifically designed by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills for funding through the Student Loans Company (SLC). This enables

UK and EU students to apply for tuition fee loans and maintenance loans and grants through the SLC. The School also has Tier 4 sponsor status.

The School is a subscriber institution to the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

The School had a Review for Educational Oversight (REO) in April 2012. A subsequent annual monitoring visit took place in 2013 which resulted in an outcome of commendable progress against the implementation of the action plan from the 2012 review.

The annual monitoring visit in April 2015 concluded that the School was making acceptable progress since its previous monitoring visit in April 2013. However, the recommendation linked to the quality of written feedback and appropriateness of commentary about grades remains an area of ongoing work. The School continues to build on the good practice identified, including the inclusion of employability skills in assignment briefs.

Challenges faced by the School are both external and internal. Externally, the School has to respond to a wide range of education and regulatory requirements while looking to strengthen its relationship with its awarding body. Internally, the School wants to draw maximum benefit from being part of the Istituto Marangoni Group, to support student recruitment and enhance its range of educational programmes in fashion design, business and styling. A key aim of the School is to prepare itself for an application for its own taught degree awarding powers.

## Explanation of the findings about Istituto Marangoni

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**

**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 School's validation partner and awarding body Manchester Met has primary responsibility for ensuring appropriate academic standards are set and maintained. Programmes are aligned to the appropriate levels of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme proposals and unit content are linked to appropriate Subject Benchmark Statements. All proposed programmes are subject to agreement by the University and learning outcomes and titles must conform to the appropriate University and qualification descriptors and conventions.

1.2 The University approves external examiners for each programme who are identified by the School. Reports based on visits to the School and scrutiny of assessments serve to confirm academic standards management. The University also requires the School to produce annual monitoring reports in the form of Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) to set out actions for further assuring academic standards as set out in the MMU Institutional Code of Practice.

1.3 All programme specifications are aligned to the appropriate levels of the FHEQ and learning outcomes, along with assessment strategies scrutinised and approved by the University as part of the validation process.

1.4 These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.5 The review team examined a number of documents including those produced by the University and reports produced by the School including CIPs, Accreditation of Prior Learning Reports, minutes of Programme Committee Meetings and external examiner reports. The team also met with staff from the School and with students to further explore their understanding of the management of academic standards.

1.6 The external examiner reports indicate that the School is setting and maintaining appropriate academic standards for its provision at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Assessments are set by the School and scrutinised and approved by external examiners and the University to ensure students are offered appropriate opportunities to meet the learning outcomes. The moderation of assessment by the University further ensures that standards are maintained.

1.7 The team concludes that the University maintains clear oversight of academic standards, and the joint setting of assessment and moderation of marking further ensures that appropriate judgements are being made. Also, external examiners have indicated in their reports that standards are appropriate. As a result the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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



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

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

**Findings**

1.8 Programme Committees review the academic standards and management of provision as part of the School's academic governance arrangements. Programme Committees report to the Quality Enhancement and Academic Development Committee (QEADC) which is chaired by the Director of Education. The remit of QEADC includes oversight of academic standards and compliance with the awarding body requirements. Collaborative meetings are also held with the University to review the award of credit and qualifications following review by external examiners. The Exam Boards themselves are held at the School and the results are confirmed by the University. The final approval and confirmation of credit and qualifications are managed by the University. The School has clear arrangements in place to ensure it complies with University Assessment Regulations for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

1.9 The academic regulations and frameworks established by the University provide the key points of reference for the School. The revised School governance arrangements operate alongside those of the University and ensure that academic standards are maintained and regulations are consistently complied with.

1.10 These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.11 The review team considered the University academic regulations and School documentation along with minutes of Collaborative Meetings and Programme Committee Meetings. External examiner reports confirm academic standards are secure. The team also met with senior managers, programme leaders and tutors to further review the application of regulations to assure standards.

1.12 External examiner reports and student feedback further inform consideration of academic standards along with programme leader reports and actions plans, which are considered at programme and institution level. Collaborative meetings also ensure that academic frameworks are operating effectively, and actions linked to external examiner recommendations are being implemented.

1.13 The team concludes that the use of the academic framework and regulations put in place and monitored by the University means that the Expectation is met and the 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**

1.14 Programme specifications provide a definitive record and reference point for taught programmes. The Collaboration Agreement and the Institutional Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision and Academic Partnerships set out the University's responsibility for completing and checking programme specifications for approval, maintaining a definitive record of programme specifications, ratifying changes to programme specifications, using them as a reference point in their process for the periodic review of programmes, and providing students with a record of study which aligns with the specification.

1.15 These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.16 The review team investigated the School's use of programme specifications as a reference point in programme delivery by talking to teaching staff and analysing the materials teaching staff use to guide teaching and assessment. The team also verified that the School makes programme specifications available to staff and students by accessing SINAPTO, the School's virtual learning environment.

1.17 Programme specifications provide a comprehensive description of the learning, teaching and assessment a programme should deliver, including how these are designed to meet learning outcomes and threshold standards. These specifications are used effectively as a reference point for learning and teaching as tutors design unit content and assessment tasks which align to learning outcomes as part of the programme approval process.

1.18 The team concludes that the School's use of programme specifications is in line with the awarding body's requirements for designing and delivering curriculum and assessment, and the School also makes them available to staff and students. The Expectation is therefore met, and the risk low.

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

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

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

## **Findings**

1.19 The procedures for the design, development and approval of programmes, courses and units are set out by the awarding body. Students' achievement is measured in terms of learning outcomes which govern assessment tasks carried out by School academic staff. Guidance is provided on the drafting of learning outcome for tutors and Programme Leaders to follow for all curricular development, and learning outcomes are reviewed as part of a draft unit or programme specification as approved by the School's Director of Education and School before being shared with the awarding body. Final approval for qualifications at Bachelor and Master's level is given by the awarding body.

1.20 These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.21 The review team explored pertinent documents, mainly those issued by the awarding body, though not exclusively, and conducted interviews with a range of teaching staff and staff with specific responsibilities for the design and approval of modules, learning outcomes and assessments.

1.22 The awarding body scrutinises the School's draft programme specifications, considering and commenting on new programme detail. The review team found that the associated documentation was developed to a good standard. An amended or improved draft programme specification and the related set of unit specifications are the basic documents the School submits to the University to go forward for approval and validation. There is further detailed scrutiny by the University through its Programme Approval Review and Modification (PARM) procedures before validation procedures are scheduled.

1.23 Panels reviewing proposals are requested to include external peer experts, as required by the University. External peer experts act in the role of assessors and are selected by the Faculty and the University. Validation events are chaired by a senior internal member of the awarding university. Panel members include senior members from the awarding body Faculties and external peer members. Before new courses can run the University checks all conditions (where appropriate) and recommendations agreed by panels.

1.24 Learning outcomes play a significant part in the validation process and are the delegated responsibility of tutors and Programme Leaders. They are reviewed as a component of the draft unit or programme specification, undertaken by the School's Director of Education and School Director before being shared with the University.

1.25 The team concludes that the processes for programme approval meet threshold standards and therefore the Expectation is met and the associated 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**

1.26 The process for the approval of modules, programmes and qualifications also includes the setting and scrutiny of learning outcomes and the ensuing assessment methods undertaken as part of the awarding body's validation and approval processes. Alignment with UK threshold academic standards is the responsibility of the awarding body. Externality involves both the University and the School in the selection and appointment of external examiners, and in the early stages of programme approval, other involved external stakeholders.

1.27 These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.28 The review team explored pertinent documents, mainly those issued by the awarding body, though not exclusively, and conducted interviews with University link personnel, a range of teaching staff and staff with specific responsibilities for the design and approval of modules, learning outcomes and assessments.

1.29 External examiners are appointed by the awarding body for evaluating assessments carried out by School academic staff contributing to judgements on progression and awards. External examiners have found that marking is rigorous, learning outcomes are being met and students are receiving appropriate feedback on their assessed work. The Director of Education provides workshops on learning outcomes and there is continuous development throughout the year with input from students, external examiners and staff. Internal and external verification of assessment briefs also takes place. There are also bi-weekly meetings between the School Director and the awarding body, who provide representation at course meetings and meetings with student representatives. The awarding body link tutors also verify the internal moderation process for all assessments.

1.30 For all assessment boards at the School, the Chair must be able to confirm that all marking and moderation conforms to the set requirements of the awarding body. Published 'Results Lists' and Progression Reports for individual students must declare that all unit assessments have been passed before credit and marks are allocated or students are permitted to proceed to an award. In addition, external examiners also provide external moderation to help provide further security in the award of credit for learning outcomes.

1.31 The team concludes that the process of assessment, including awarding body oversight, ensures that threshold standards are met. Therefore, overall, the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.32 Threshold standards are systematically safeguarded and maintained through the Continuous Monitoring and Improvement process (CMI), which includes periodic reviews. The CMI process supports the maintenance of standards and assures learning opportunities by promoting consistent development of the learning experience through continuous review of the School offer, and through identifying areas in need of improvement and aspects of good practice. The awarding body identifies CMI as a 'live' process, so that issues can be raised and resolved at unit and programme level and through the sharing of good practice at an early stage.

1.33 These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.34 The review team examined a range of documents dealing with continuous monitoring, periodic review and evaluation and conducted interviews with the awarding body's link tutor, a range of School staff and students.

1.35 The awarding body's Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision & Academic Partnerships makes clear that the CMI process ensures that academic standards and academic quality are not compromised by non-academic considerations. A focus of CMI allows for timely engagement to review course health and a focus on potential areas for enhancement. Items identified from Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs), which may include good practice, feed into strategic developments.

1.36 In recent years, the School has operated student feedback arrangements organised on unit programme and School-level questionnaires to elicit students' opinions of the learning environment and learning opportunities. In autumn 2015, this system was replaced by the School's revised and enhanced 'Student Voice' project aimed at improving collecting, analysing and acting on student feedback.

1.37 The team found that through the governance of the awarding body, the School regularly monitors and reviews the academic standards of its awards, with appropriate reference and regard to internal standards and expectations, external reference points and feedback from external examiners. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

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

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.38 The design of new programmes written by the School follows the University's procedures. Proposals use feedback from external examiners as critical friends and from industry groups as appropriate. The Istituto Marangoni Advisory Committees review proposals before they are sent to the University for agreement.

1.39 As part of the programme development process, programme specifications are produced. The subject content is aligned to the appropriate Subject Benchmark Statements and levels of the FHEQ, and module descriptors are developed to support student understanding of programme content. These documents are scrutinised by the validation and approval panels at the University which include external peers, to ensure they are clear and reflect sector learning requirements. Unit specifications include reference to employability elements and assessment strategies are linked appropriately to the learning outcomes. Continuous Improvement Plans further ensure that any recommendations made by external examiners are implemented and their impact evaluated.

1.40 These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.41 The team reviewed University procedures and guidance for the development and approval of new programmes along with evidence of programme and unit specifications and external examiner reports and course improvement plans. The team also met with senior managers and programme leaders to discuss the process of programme development and validation.

1.42 The validation procedure and associated recommendations ensure that academic threshold standards are met, and that learning outcomes and assessments are set at the appropriate level and reflect the key subject knowledge set out in Subject Benchmark Statements or other sector reference points. Use of external examiners as critical friends further supports the design of programmes, and external examiner scrutiny of assessments ensures that programme learning outcomes are at the appropriate level.

1.43 The team concludes that the School's use of the University's procedures to validate course content, including through approval panels, ensures that programmes meet academic regulations and reflect external reference points. The use of external examiners to scrutinise assessment ensures that learning outcomes are met at the appropriate level. The range of deliberative University and School committees and external scrutiny of provision along with moderation of assessment by University staff provides evidence that the Expectation is met and the 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: Summary of findings

1.44 In reaching its judgements, the review team matched its findings against the criteria in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.45 From its scrutiny of a wide range of evidence, and through the meetings held with staff and students, the team considers that effective use is made of relevant subject and qualification benchmarks and external expertise in the development of programmes and their subsequent approval and monitoring, with qualifications being set at an appropriate academic level. Furthermore, the team confirms that effective use is made of input from external examiners and link tutors from the degree-awarding partner.

1.46 All of the Expectations for this judgement area were met and the associated level of risk was low. In all aspects of this judgement area the School complies with the requirements of its degree-awarding body. There are no recommendations for this judgement area and no good practice identified.

1.47 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards at the School **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

### Findings

2.1 The School works closely with the awarding body and with relevant employers in the development and design of new programmes. This includes an internal verification process where the associated academic and business cases need to be made. The School is also required to submit any new programme proposal to the awarding body for approval. This two-stage process serves as a double evaluation and security for all emerging proposals.

2.2 This approach would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3 The review team explored documents, both issued by the awarding body and the School, and conducted interviews with a range of teaching staff and staff with specific responsibilities for the design and approval of modules and awarding body alignment.

2.4 In practice, through its internal and market research, the School develops and submits a strategic case to its awarding body for new course and programme proposals. Should the awarding body approve the strategic case, proposals can then be developed into full programmes along with course specifications, unit specifications and the necessary supporting evidence. There is then further detailed awarding body scrutiny through its Programme Approval Review and Modification procedures. Once approved, the next stage is a move to formal validation (see also Expectation A3.1). Post-validation includes the important completion and checking of the individual course and unit specifications of definitive programmes. Following awarding body approval of these working documents, they are made available to staff and students through the School intranet. Copies are within the School's Library.

2.5 The School states that its future wishes are to further use, foster and disseminate staff expertise and familiarity with good practice about sector-specific programme design and development activities. The School's Quality Enhancement & Academic Development Committee will facilitate this new development with academic and relevant support staff.

2.6 Following scrutiny of approval documents and processes and meetings with staff and an awarding body representative, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

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



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

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

**Findings**

2.7 The School follows the University's Recruitment and Admissions Policy which sets out the responsibilities of the School for the recruitment and admission of students, provides guidance on adhering to the principles of fair admission, and details the admissions criteria against which the School assesses its students. In January 2016, the School introduced a refined admissions process, which is summarised in the Admissions Procedure. The School intends for the School Board to review the Admissions Procedure when it considers annual reports from the Admissions Team.

2.8 This approach would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.9 The review team looked at how the School applies and oversees its admissions procedure. They analysed documents that record the application process from application to final decision, the materials used for guiding admissions staff, and information the School provides to applicants such as prospectuses, the website and e-mail correspondence. The team also discussed the process with students and admissions staff.

2.10 The team noted that senior staff with responsibility for admissions decisions are now formally involved in the process through an Admissions Meeting. Programme Leaders (who act as Admissions Tutors) with relevant subject-specific expertise are involved in assessing applications at a more appropriate time. The introduction of the Admissions Procedure document has begun to formalise the process and improved its transparency. Staff confirmed that their roles in the process were now clearer.

2.11 The evidence showed that the School has recently introduced additional measures to enable it to have better oversight of the admissions process as it now records the results of discussions around individual applications within the Admissions Meeting. The School uses a checklist, which enables the Admissions Team to ensure that the applicant has undertaken due obligations before enrolling onto the course, and has designed a form to begin to record interviews formally.

2.12 However, the review team found that some of the processes in place to ensure the School is able to effectively oversee the admissions processes are still mainly informal. The documents that track the admissions process from application to final decision were fragmented and incomplete. The School monitors and evaluates the process through discussions within the Admissions Meeting, but these discussions are not formally recorded. The Admissions Team is yet to submit a report to the School Board to enable it to review admissions processes. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the School formalises the admissions process to ensure sufficient emphasis is given to its effective oversight.

2.13 The School facilitates the professional development of the Admissions Team through objective-setting activities and funding internal and external training events. Both the Admissions Team and admissions tutors use the University's Recruitment and Admissions Policy as their main source of guidance in undertaking their responsibilities. Admissions tutors do not have any additional professional training in this area, although the Admissions

Team have an advisory role and academic staff feel confident that the School provides them with adequate support to fulfil their role as admissions tutors. The School has also developed a guide for staff conducting interviews to ensure these are conducted fairly and consistently.

2.14 The students whom the team met were generally pleased with the amount of information they received around the application process. They found the one-to-one advice offered by admissions staff and in-country agents particularly helpful. Support staff also said that in-country agents, and the training and development in which the School is actively involved, were instrumental in allowing the School to recruit students internationally, with around half of students having had some initial contact with agents. However, students also indicated that in some areas the information they received about their courses before applying was insufficient (see also Part C on Information).

2.15 The review team concludes that recruitment, selection and admission to the School are generally sound, which enables the Expectation to be met. However, the team considers that the institutional oversight of this area could be strengthened through a more formalised approach to admissions. Because the overall oversight of admissions needs improvement, the risk is moderate.

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

**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**

2.16 A Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy has been developed by the School aligned to the Quality Code and approved by the Quality Enhancement and Academic Committee and the School Board. The Teaching Strategy also aligns with the academic regulations of the University. Students are provided with copies of both the University's Collaborative Partner Student Handbook which sets out broad expectations linked to learning and teaching, and the undergraduate or postgraduate handbook developed by the School setting out local arrangements and guidance. Students are also provided with Unit Handbooks which include the key learning outcomes, and a placement handbook to support work-based learning.

2.17 Clear assignment briefs provide students with information on the learning outcomes being assessed and set out the requirements for the assessment tasks linked to the unit specification. Students are encouraged to undertake critical reflection as part of both academic and practical work, and receive interim feedback as part of practical workshops.

2.18 This approach would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.19 Meetings with staff and students allowed the team to explore the nature of the resources available to support the student learning experience. The team reviewed student feedback summaries, external examiner reports, the Learning and Teaching Strategy, Tutor Handbooks and assessment regulations. The team also met with students and teaching and support staff to discuss the quality of learning, resources and support.

2.20 The development of design skills is central to the programmes and students are expected to develop their practical skills as part of their programme, before and during work placements, as well as through workshops. Tutors support students through ongoing feedback on practical work, and external examiners have commented favourably on the quality of work produced. Students are also able to engage with 'live briefs' which reflect current challenges and projects within the sector. Students are able to develop proposals and present their findings to a panel which includes external sector experts. The students reported that they value the experience these briefs provide. The team considers the use of 'live briefs' to promote student engagement with current sector practices, challenges and developments to be **good practice**.

2.21 Teaching staff are encouraged to obtain a teaching qualification (including the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice), and to work with the University's Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching to develop their pedagogical skills. Staff development sessions also support staff to develop their teaching skills and knowledge of student support methods. A tutor handbook provides teaching staff with further guidance. The Istituto Marangoni Academic Strategy also encourages staff to undertake scholarly activity to support the quality of curriculum development and delivery, and 'research clusters' in fashion, design and teaching in fashion and design aim to encourage staff to identify new developments in the industry and to feed new practices into their teaching. The Director of

Education maintains an overview of research activities and possible links to new curriculum development.

2.22 The quality of learning and teaching is monitored through peer teaching observations managed by Programme Leaders. A revised framework for teaching observations is in place for 2015-16, and outcomes are linked to a new appraisal system. Student feedback also informs the monitoring of teaching, and students complete end-of-unit surveys which are then discussed and reviewed at Programme Committee meetings.

2.23 The Director of Education is responsible for monitoring the learning environment and responding to students' views on the quality of the environment, resources and facilities. The School is planning to invest substantially in a buildings renovation programme to provide more library facilities and private study. This work is linked to both student feedback and the outcomes of the British Accreditation Council visit and recommendations, and also supported by the broader Istituto Marangoni Group.

2.24 There is clear evidence of strategies to monitor the quality of teaching and the student learning experience, through student surveys, programme committee meetings with student representation and support for staff to develop their own scholarly research and pedagogy. The School has responded to both external review and the student voice and is investing in improving the resources, learning spaces and other facilities.

2.25 Students have frequent opportunities to provide formal feedback to the School through surveys, forums and attendance by student representatives at Programme Committee meetings. As the School is a relatively small institution, students also have a range of opportunities to provide feedback informally through discussion with staff and tutorial sessions. The Director of Education and Director of School run open drop-in sessions for students to raise any matters of concern. Students report that they value the support they receive from staff who are knowledgeable and helpful. Feedback from students also indicates that they would like more personal working spaces and resources. The team **affirms** the School's plans to improve the learning environment in response to student feedback, through its summer building plans.

2.26 The review team concludes that the School effectively manages the delivery of learning and teaching. This includes teaching observations, consideration of student feedback and active engagement with the sector to develop students' knowledge and understanding of current developments. The Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.27 All students arriving at the School have a clear and helpful two-day induction programme which provides information on the resources available, student support offered through Student Services and the programme learning outcomes and assessment methods. Students appreciate the information they are given including access to more learning support. As part of induction, students are provided with School and programme handbooks, and the School is planning to enhance induction by providing students with more detailed information about programme requirements and available resources. The School also recognises that international students require more support and a dedicated international student support adviser is to be appointed to assist students with familiarising themselves with UK higher education and providing pastoral support.

2.28 The School is working to develop a revised strategic approach to the support provided to students. The Director of Education has identified the advantages of a more proactive approach to student support and development which will enable students to gain increased practice-based knowledge and technical skills. This includes provision for students with specific learning needs, and a three-day staff development session in January 2016 explored strategies for inclusive approaches to teaching and learning and individual support. The outcome of workshops and broader deliberations is the development of a strategy for supporting student development and achievement which is scheduled for full implementation in 2016-17.

2.29 This approach would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.30 The team met with staff and students to explore the nature of support available to students and to discuss new initiatives and developments including extra learning support and work placement information. A range of documents were also reviewed including placement and unit and School handbooks, student surveys and minutes of meetings.

2.31 Students receive information about their placement requirements through course descriptors and programme and unit handbooks. However, student feedback through surveys and the student submission indicates that this is an area where more support is needed as some students experience problems with identifying suitable placements. Students on some undergraduate programmes are required to undertake 36-week placements and while briefing and some information from returning students provides guidance on what placements may be available, levels of satisfaction are low. Students who met with the team reported that finding placements is a problem and that they would value more support and guidance, both in advance of the starting the programme and through tutors and Careers Advisors at the School while on a work placement. Work placements clearly assist students to develop their employability skills and profile, and the team **recommends** that the School places greater emphasis on improving the support provided to students to help identify suitable work placements (see also Expectation B10).

2.32 Plans for new workshop spaces have been developed and work will be undertaken over the summer of 2016. This work is being undertaken in response to student feedback and the BAC Report which highlighted the need for more workshop space to allow students to develop their design skills.

2.33 The School provides effective support to enable students to develop their academic and practical skills. Students receive formative feedback on their practical work and summative feedback on written and final practical submissions which external examiners have judged appropriate. Students regularly have access to tutors' support and extra support through Student Services and the School Careers Service to facilitate practical placement preparations. The Student Handbook and programme handbooks also provide students with information on assessment strategies and criteria, including for work placements.

2.34 The School has effective processes in place to monitor student progression and achievement. This is reflected in the overall completion rate which for 2014-15 was 90 per cent and above. Students are provided with an induction programme which familiarises them with the facilities offered, resources and access to extra support. Students are also supported with developing their CVs and letters of application which assists them in obtaining work placements. Personal Development Plans have been introduced along with Personal Learning Plans to ensure that students' progress is tracked and monitored by tutors and that students are made aware of progress and areas for development. The quality of support and information linked to student placements, however, is an area for further development, and the School is putting in place a new online system to provide clearer placement information to students.

2.35 The team concludes that students are effectively supported through induction, tutorials, workshops and clear assessment requirements. Students have access to a good range of resources including online resources and computer facilities and practical workshop areas. Overall students are satisfied with the support they receive from lecturers and tutors and so the Expectation is met and the 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**

2.36 The School currently details its student engagement activity within tutor, student and student representative handbooks. It has now produced a draft Quality Handbook which brings together the policies and practices found in these documents and summarises the School's approach to student engagement, but this has not yet been published. The School Director has responsibility for monitoring student feedback and ensuring that changes are made as a result of student feedback, which also happens at academic governance committees.

2.37 This approach would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.38 The review team tested the application of student engagement policies and procedures by talking to staff and students, reading minutes of meetings that students attend, and analysing documents which monitor student feedback.

2.39 The Quality Handbook outlines the wide range of opportunities that the School provides for students to engage in the quality assurance and enhancement of its programmes, including a termly Student Voice survey, student representatives, Student Forums and meetings with University Link Tutors. The team noted that formal student representation is working effectively. The School is committed to electing and/or appointing students to its key academic governance committees and students feel that the representatives are an effective means of communicating feedback. The student representatives whom the team met confirmed their attendance at committees, said they felt their contributions were valued, and commented that the briefings with staff before meetings were helpful in enabling them to fulfil their role effectively.

2.40 The review team noted that, outside of formal student representation, the School's small size contributes to an open environment in which students are able to informally talk to staff about their educational experience. Students have said that they feel able to talk to staff, whether support staff, tutors or programme leaders, when they have an issue. This has meant that, in the past, the School has predominantly responded to feedback directly and informally.

2.41 In 2015-16 the School has worked to improve how it manages formal opportunities for students to feed back on the quality of their educational experience. The Student Voice survey is conducted at an appropriate time for student contributions, student feedback data is produced in a more usable format, and students have increased contact with senior staff through representation on the new academic governance meetings and Student Forums.

2.42 Although students expressed concerns that, historically, the School has been slow to respond to their feedback, they have noticed a marked improvement because of the changes implemented in 2015-16. Students gave examples of the School making effective responses to their feedback, including issues relating to the School Library and changes to event times. Furthermore the School is responding to comments that it needs to be more transparent about changes made as a result of student feedback by including updates in Student Forum meetings and developing a Student Newsletter.

2.43 As the School's academic governance structure is in its infancy, there was limited evidence available to the review team showing oversight of student engagement processes.

However, evidence from the minutes of academic governance committees, and analysis of the student feedback action plan for which the School Director is responsible, is encouraging. It demonstrates that the School is beginning to record effectively and monitor student feedback and changes made as a result of student recommendations.

Although there is no specific procedure for review and evaluation of student engagement policy and processes, there is evidence that the School enhances its student engagement through conversations that happen at academic governance committees.

2.44 Overall, the team concludes that the student representation system works effectively. There is a range of other opportunities for students to engage in the assurance and enhancement of their courses, and the School is working towards enhancing these opportunities. The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**



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

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

**Findings**

2.45 The assessment of students is regulated by the awarding body's policies, procedures and regulations and covers the setting and assessment of all learning outcomes. The approval of learning outcomes is embedded in the approval and validation procedures. Assessments, together with learning and teaching strategies, are subsequently developed by academic staff teams in association with the Director of Education and the School Director. Learning and teaching and assessment strategies, including the design, development, application and implementation of programme and unit learning outcomes, are developed, mentored and monitored within the academic staff team in collaboration with the Director of Education and School Director. There is internal support for all staff in the development of assessment strategies and methodologies, which is supported by the PgCert in Academic Practice, contracted through the awarding body, to provide this programme for members of the School's academic staff.

2.46 This approach would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.47 The review team looked at assessment documents issued by the awarding body and the School and conducted interviews with a range of teaching staff, staff with specific responsibilities for learning outcomes and assessments and students.

2.48 The awarding body provides the necessary guidance for all academic staff on verification, marking and moderation. Teaching staff are required to compose and verify assignment briefs before dissemination to students. Internal verification, to be carried out by a non-involved staff member, includes: examining the consistency of the assignment task when compared to other units at the same level in the same discipline; addressing learning outcomes in relation to the tasks to which they apply; and ensuring the marking criteria are in line with programme specifications and the awarding body's policy. External verification requires involvement by an external examiner, who should scrutinise sampled assignment briefs and check for currency appropriateness and standards illustrated in the brief. Records of internal and external verifications are kept.

2.49 When the University has approved and published any definitive changes to its assessment regulations and procedures, the School is duly notified for dissemination to its staff and students. Hard copies are made available, online links are available to staff, and relevant extracts are published in student and programme handbooks.

2.50 The Code of Practice on assessment states that feedback will be returned on submitted assessment within four weeks. During inter-campus moderation, as in all assessment timescales, the four-week stipulated turnaround for return to students as stated above and on the intranet still applies. However, the review team heard some contradictory comments about this process. The teaching staff stated that students received their grades before moderation, while in another meeting staff claimed grades were given after moderation. While it was stressed that every effort is made not to exceed the four-week timescale, students were of the opinion that this timeframe is exceeded, and in one case it was stated that two months had passed. The team considers that the School should

investigate this discrepancy and also include the four-week timescale in the student handbook as well as the Code of Practice on assessment.

2.51 The team learnt that some students perceived the current practices on group assessments as unfair because the group work does not recognise individual effort. However, the team saw evidence of guidance issued to tutors for group work to ensure equitable outcomes. In addition, while students reported that they understood the purpose and function of learning outcomes, the student submission stated that one-to-one sessions would be welcome to discuss their feedback so they are able to understand the progress they need to make.

2.52 Having examined a range of assessment evidence, the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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**

2.53 The awarding body regulations define the role of external examiners within the Quality Assurance framework. External examiners are nominated by the School and approved by the University. External examiners visit both the London and Paris Schools and where possible meet with student representative as part of their visit. Where external examiners visit both centres, joint visit reports are produced, with some differentiated commentary linked to individual centres. Reports are submitted to the University who forward them on to the Director of Education for dissemination to course teams. Responses to recommendations and good practice identified by external examiners are produced by Programme Leaders, and reviewed and evaluated by Programme Committees before being reviewed by the Quality Enhancement and Academic Development Committee (QEADC). Key actions linked to recommendations are included in the Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) which are reviewed by the QEADC and approved before being forwarded to the University for consideration.

2.54 Clear procedures are in place for scrupulous consideration of external examiner reports to ensure the Expectation is met.

2.55 The team reviewed a range of external examiner reports along with reports from Programme Committee meetings, Collaborative Meetings and CIPs. Action plans demonstrate clear actions for ensuring external examiner comments inform the management of programmes. The team met with staff to discuss how external examiner reports support teams in maintaining the quality of provision and further developing provision. The team also met with students to explore their understanding of the role of external examiners and access to reports.

2.56 In response to external examiner comments in 2014-15, external examiners now receive a briefing by the School Director and the Director of Education on the School and visit programmes. The responses to previous reports are incorporated into the CIPs and shared with the awarding body, and reflect proposed and completed actions in response to recommendations. The School has, for example, looked at the management of practice-based assessments to improve the quality and completeness of feedback provided to students. These proposals, actions and outcomes are discussed at Programme Committee meetings. The School has also responded to concerns raised by external examiners linked to practical visit arrangements and from January 2016 has managed all travel and visit programmes.

2.57 External examiners are invited to comment on assessments briefs in advance of visits, as well as the grading and feedback of assessed work. External examiner reports reflect broad satisfaction with the actions taken in response to comments and recommendations and the management of assessment. The School actively investigates any areas of concern and action plans produced by Programme Leaders record responses and outcomes.

2.58 Sections of external examiner reports are made available to students through SINAPTO, the School's virtual learning environment, and full reports are available through the library. Students are aware of the role of external examiners and of the availability of reports, and are also represented at Programme Committee meetings where reports and responses are discussed.

2.59 The monitoring of external examiner reports and CIPs produced by Programme Leaders and discussed by Programme Committees and the QEADC ensures that the School has a clear appreciation of areas for development with strategies in place. Oversight by the University further ensures key recommendations are considered and appropriate approaches recorded in action plans in compliance with the awarding body's academic regulations. Oversight of actions taken in response to external examiner reports is maintained by the Director of Education and also the School Board who receive summaries of reports and actions.

2.60 Oversight of external examiner reports by the awarding body and by the Programme Committees, the Director of Education and the School Board ensures that key actions linked to external examiner recommendations are appropriately analysed and discussed, and actions monitored. Good practice is identified and shared through the QEADC which allows practices to be shared and built upon across the range of provision.

2.61 The team concludes that clear procedures are in place for the analysis of external examiner reports and CIPs developed by Programme Leaders to ensure that actions are taken and their impact evaluated at programme and institution level. The Expectation is met and 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**

2.62 The School engages the awarding body's Continuous Monitoring and Improvement (CMI) process on an annual-cycle basis. The CMI process enables regular reporting to the awarding body through the use of Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs). CIPs play a key role in maintaining and enhancing the learning environment. They also ensure that the awarding body's regulations and procedures are adhered to and academic standards safeguarded. The School uses CIPs as aids to the enhancement of the student learning experience, including external examiner commentaries and their recommendations related to School improvements.

2.63 From January 2016, a procedural change will involve draft CIPs (for the London School only) being sent by Programme Committees to the School Board's Quality Enhancement & Academic Development Committee (QEADC) for review. Through this new process, wider staff and student engagement with, and discussion of, the plans before they are sent to the School Board with the comments of QEADC can be assured. Also, from 2016, CIPs sent to the University by the School will be signed off by the School's Director as Chair of its School Board.

2.64 For the awarding body, periodic review is in essence a preparation for programme revalidation; the periodic review process for programmes follows the system the awarding body employs for the approval of new programmes, but with the inclusion of monitoring data and the results of continuous mechanisms.

2.65 This approach would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.66 The review team explored the School's internal scheme for monitoring documents, both issued by the awarding body and the School, and conducted interviews with a range of teaching staff and staff with specific responsibilities for annual programme monitoring.

2.67 Successive agreements between the awarding body and the School mean the School is committed to the procedures for programme monitoring and periodic review adopted by the University. CMI procedures allow the awarding body to work closely with the School to assess future sustainability and financial stability, take a detailed look each year at the learning environment and opportunities offered to students, and undertake holistic checks on the adherence to regulations and the maintenance of academic standards.

2.68 The School employs the completion of draft CIPs for the awarding body's use and the retrospective review of the academic wellbeing of its programmes. The draft CIPs include recent external examiner commentaries and discussions around them at meetings of Programme Committees, thereby enabling Link Tutors, students and the School's tutors to engage in both monitoring and enhancing the School's programmes. A CIP is completed by the Programme Leader then presented and considered at the biannual Programme Committee meetings before being submitted to the awarding body.

2.69 Where the data and information made available to the awarding body indicate that the programme delivered by the collaborating institution has been without issue or concern, and where student outcomes are sound and the running of the programmes has been

straightforward, periodic reviews may be undertaken as a paper-based exercise coordinated by a University Standing Panel. In such cases, the procedure does not need a review visit, but does necessitate a meeting with students from the School. Full institutional periodic reviews are signed off by the awarding body, thereby permitting the partnership to continue. This is then followed by programme validation shortly afterwards once it is agreed that the partnership can be extended.

2.70 Professional review is also conducted through local and group industry representatives on the Istituto Marangoni Advisory Committee. This involves the School engaging with known professional experts in assessing, debating and critiquing the School's graduate readiness for employment, and aligns with the external experts helping the development of School or group strategic priorities. The School is also receptive and responsive to regular market sector research (such as the recent Deloitte group international survey research), which is influenced by the powers of industry leaders, their drivers and the strategies of competitors in helping to devise, examine and measure the potential and currency of course proposals within the professional field.

2.71 Having considered a range monitoring evidence, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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**

2.72 Until recently the School has used the University's complaints and appeals procedures. In 2015-16, the University updated its policy, requiring the School to operate its own localised complaints and appeals process. The School's revised complaints process is summarised in the Complaints Procedure document and the revised appeals procedure is summarised in the draft Quality Handbook. The School began operating its revised complaints procedure in November 2015. However, as the University approved the appeals process later, the School, in agreement with the University, has delayed implementation until the 2016-17 academic cycle. Currently, students who wish to make an appeal can use the University's Procedure for Academic Appeals and Review of Assessment Related Matters.

2.73 The procedures for student complaints and appeals described in the School's Complaints Procedure and the University's Procedure for Academic Appeals and Review of Assessment Related Matters would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.74 The review team tested how the complaints and appeals procedures work in practice by talking to staff and students, analysing the School's records of complaints, and looking at minutes of meetings where complaints and appeals procedures were discussed.

2.75 The students indicated to the team that they feel able to raise complaints with staff from across the School. Evidence showed that the School has also begun to put in place measures for the appropriate management of the new Complaints Procedure. It now records both the informal and formal complaints it has received and assigns responsibilities for handling complaints.

2.76 However, the review team noted that there was some confusion around the operation of the new Complaints Procedure. In meetings with staff and students, explanations of who has responsibility for complaints once they are raised and providing guidance to students were sometimes vague and conflicting. The team met students who raised concerns about a number of oral and written complaints they have made in the past year, sometimes on the same issue. The students commented that they were unaware of what happened to these complaints once they were submitted and were unclear about the outcomes. The review team **recommends** that the School improve information for students engaging with the new complaints process including clearer communication on the outcomes of formal and informal complaints.

2.77 The review team considers that the existing appeal procedure could be improved, including providing opportunities for students to informally resolve their assessment-related concerns. Although the School gives students the opportunity to discuss their grades informally with tutors in one-to-one meetings, the team also heard that students felt unable to challenge their final grade on assignments. Also, the current procedure does not allow for the School to have appropriate oversight of student appeals. The School recognises that it has insufficient information relating to appeals made by its students as the procedure is conducted by the University.

2.78 However, the new appeals procedure outlined in the draft Quality Handbook provides evidence that the School has developed a process which allows students to

challenge their grades informally and allows the School to effectively oversee appeals made by its students. Discussions with the Head of Provider and analysis of School Board minutes confirmed the School's agreement with the University that it will introduce the revised appeals procedure in September 2016. Appropriately, the School has delayed implementing the procedure to avoid confusing and disadvantaging students by introducing a new procedure midway through the year. The review team **affirms** the plans to establish oversight of the appeals process and early resolution of students' assessment concerns through the introduction of a revised appeals process.

2.79 The School intends to link complainants and appeals procedures to enhancement by producing an annual report which will be evaluated by the School Board. As the complaints procedure is in its first cycle, the School is yet to produce a report, but evidence showing that the School records complaints demonstrates that there are measures in place to allow it to monitor them effectively. The review team acknowledged that the School will also be able to use appeals as a source of student feedback once the new procedure is introduced and it is able to monitor appeals made by its students. The review team **affirms** the introduction of monitoring in the use of complaint and appeals outcomes as a source of student feedback.

2.80 The review team concludes that the content of the complaints and appeals procedures in place and, in general, their operation allow the Expectation to be met. The complaints procedure is broadly adequate and there are measures in place to ensure it is managed effectively, but there are shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which the procedure is applied as there is insufficient information around engaging in the process and the outcomes of complaints, resulting in some misunderstanding among students. The review team is satisfied that the School has appropriately identified the weaknesses in the appeals process and addressed these through the revised process. Measures are in place to provide links to enhancement, demonstrating that the School is giving increased priority to assuring standards and quality in its planning processes, but the newness of the procedures means the team were unable to fully assess how this area works in practice. The risk in this area is therefore moderate.

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



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

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

**Findings**

2.81 Provision and management of work-based learning are the responsibility of the School, and oversight is maintained by Programme Leaders and the Director of Education. Students are provided with information through placement handbooks and briefings, and placement providers are supplied with guidance by the Careers Support Officers. Placements vary from a 12-week period for MA courses to 36-week sandwich options on all undergraduate provision. Named tutors are allocated to each student while on placement, and in conjunction with the careers office they have responsibility for ensuring that the placement offers opportunities for the student to meet the learning outcomes at the correct level. To ensure this is the case, placement checklists are completed. Handbooks set out the nature of support students can expect to receive while on placement, including two or three placement visits.

2.82 This approach would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.83 The team reviewed work placement unit handbooks and student feedback surveys as well as a range of documents supporting the management of work placements, including checklists and visit record sheets. The team met with staff and students to discuss the nature of support and supervision as part of the management of work placements.

2.84 Tutors visit students during their placements and students who may be undertaking placements at a distance, including abroad, have videoconference contact with their tutors. Tutors also seek feedback from placement supervisors as well as from students. Feedback received from students indicates the need for placement support to be reviewed. Students reported that they do not always receive the regular placement contact as set out in the handbooks, and that the level of contact with tutors while on placement is variable, and in some cases students had felt unsupported. The team **recommends** that the School ensures that all students on placements are supported in line with the handbook requirements.

2.85 Students are responsible for identifying their own placements and receiving preparatory briefings and support from the School's Careers Service in drafting CVs and letters of application. Placements, once identified, are assessed by the Careers Service staff who liaise with the Programme Leader and the Director of Education. Checklists are completed to ensure the placement is suitable and will offer the student the necessary opportunities to meet their academic and practice-based learning outcomes, and to confirm appropriate workplace supervision. Students reported, however, that they would value more information about employers who may be able to offer placements, as some students have found placements difficult to identify and as a result have experienced delays in starting their work experience (see also Expectation B4).

2.86 Employers who accept students on placement are provided with a letter setting out terms and conditions and placement expectations. Feedback from sector surveys indicates that employers view placements as building valuable industry skills and knowledge and employers confirmed that they work closely with the School in setting up and managing the placement process. Placement providers are not involved in the assessment of students'

work, details of which are set out in the work-based learning unit handbooks. As part of their placements students must keep a reflective journal, which in the case of Master's-level programmes counts for 20 per cent of the dissertation unit marks. Work produced is assessed by course tutors, and moderated and reviewed by external examiners.

2.87 The School works closely with employers and sector bodies to inform the nature of curriculum content, practical skills and assessment. Surveys are undertaken and employer representatives are invited to join the Istituto Marangoni Advisory Committee which reviews new initiatives and developments. As discussed under Expectation B3, employers also provide 'live briefs' which form part of the assessment process and offer students a chance to work on current projects. Employer representatives are invited to contribute to the London School Career Week which allows students to engage with sector professionals and gain insight into new developments and practices. Also, employer representatives and some alumni are invited to input to classes as guest speakers which helps raise student awareness of current sector practices. The team considers the active engagement with a range of sector employers which effectively supports curriculum development and the student learning experience to be **good practice**.

2.88 The team concludes that although student feedback indicates that more needs to be done to make students aware of the placement requirement in pre-programme materials, and more support is needed with accessing suitable placements, the checks in place ensure that placements offer student appropriate learning opportunities. The effective relationships with employers serve to support and enhance students' learning opportunities and so the team considers that the Expectation is met and the 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***

### **Findings**

2.89 The School does not deliver research degree programmes, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

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

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

2.91 All applicable Expectations have been met and the associated level of risk is low or moderate. There are four recommendations and three affirmations in this judgement area. The recommendation associated with Expectation B2 concerns more formality and improved oversight of the admissions process and represents a moderate risk. With Expectation B4 the team considered student development would be enhanced with improved support for the identification of work placements. In Expectation B9 the introduction of the revised complaints process would be strengthened by providing students with more information about how the process works and the outcomes of the process being communicated more clearly. Because the complaints process remains untested across a complete academic year, the level of risk is moderate. Finally in Expectation B10 the School needs to ensure that all students on placement are supported in accordance with the handbook requirements. Two features of good practice were also identified in two different Expectations which highlighted the School's positive approach to employer engagement and preparing students for work in the fashion industry.

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

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

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

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

##### **Findings**

3.1 The School follows the principles and procedures for the production of published information set out by the wider Istituto Marangoni Group. These are summarised in the Data Protection and Public Information Scheme. The procedure for the production of information is clear and details an appropriate number of stages of checking, including a stage for professional proofreading and sign off from the School Director, the Istituto Marangoni Group and the University when necessary. The School is also currently working with the Istituto Marangoni Group to review the website, prospectus and public information.

3.2 The principles and procedures set out by the Istituto Marangoni Group, and the ongoing review, would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.3 The review team reviewed samples of information available to potential and current students such as the website, prospectus, handbooks and SINAPTO. The team also conducted meetings with students and staff and analysed evidence demonstrating progress on reviews of information.

3.4 The School has demonstrated that it reviews the information it publishes, having recently conducted a review of student handbooks and currently undertaking a comprehensive review of all the information it makes available to the public. These reviews involved consultation with student representatives and students are also invited to feed back about the information they receive in Student Forums and within the Student Voice survey. The School also recognises some areas which it needs to improve such as the accessibility of the website, and is paying particular attention to these in its current reviews. The School is also active in seeking advice on how to meet CMA guidance, and is now producing HESA data.

3.5 The School's students receive information about their course and the School's policies and procedures through unit handbooks, placement handbooks and an overall student handbook. These are made available to students in paper form and can be accessed on SINAPTO, along with other course materials. The School supplements these sources of information with briefings during induction and throughout the year to reinforce information or inform students of changes. Students are generally positive about the information they receive and commented that they prefer to access information in multiple formats, although they also said that content on SINAPTO could be better organised. Additionally, students said that the recent review of handbooks has improved their usability.

3.6 The team did note some weaknesses in information within some areas of the School's provision, including omissions in the information prospective students received. Specific examples included information relating to the details of transferring between Istituto Marangoni Schools, recognition of qualifications between Istituto Marangoni Schools, course materials offered by the School, the amount of support offered by the School in finding a placement, and additional skills required to participate in the course, such as Photoshop skills. The School recognises it needs to provide more comprehensive information about its

courses to prospective students, and is taking some steps, such as planning to increase student coursework information on the website as part of the ongoing website review. The review team **recommends** that the School ensures students have sufficient pre-course information about course content to help them make fully informed decisions.

3.7 The other areas of weakness the team identified were that policies on feedback turnaround times are omitted from student handbooks (see also Expectation B6) and there is insufficient information for students engaging with the complaints procedure, resulting in confusion (see also Expectation B9).

3.8 The team concludes that, in general, the School's application of its procedures allows for the effective management of information. Students are generally content with the quality and accessibility of the information the School provides. Although there are some omissions or oversights in information for prospective students and the complaints procedure, the School has demonstrated it is able to recognise areas for improvement and take appropriate and deliberate steps to review its provision in these areas. The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

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

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

3.9 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.10 The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There is one recommendation, no affirmations and no features of good practice. Information is generally clear, accessible and appropriate for intended audiences. The recommendation associated with this area concerns students having sufficient pre-course information about course content to allow informed decisions to be made. More generally, there are effective mechanisms in place that ensure the accuracy, transparency and ownership of the information.

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

## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

### Findings

4.1 The School has identified a number of initiatives under the theme of enhancement and the School's Director has been responsible for bringing together the areas for development and the expertise of a range of School staff into a coherent and managed approach. In November 2015, the School took steps by starting a series of rotating, cross-departmental team meetings in which staff were motivated to identify areas of the student experience for enhancement openings and possibilities during 2016. Included in this process was the feedback it receives from external sources, including the awarding body, external examiners, members of the Istituto Marangoni Advisory Committees and the results of quality assurance data to enhance learning opportunities for students. The review team believes that the School as a whole is experiencing important strategic changes in terms of direction and management strengths provided by new leadership now in post. This in itself is emerging as an exciting enhancement driver across the School.

4.2 The review team explored the theme of enhancement with a range of School staff and students and reflected on a range of deliberate steps taken by the School to improve the academic development and welfare of students.

4.3 Areas and projects already operating or approved for operation include the Directors' Projects – in effect, extra-curricular student engagement projects beginning in February 2016. These projects relate to a series of student-led social events, projects, communication platforms and employability activities. A Director's Project includes participation from a range of active participants including students, tutors, alumni and industry. There is an Industry Events Programme, comprising a series of extra-curricular events towards enhancing students' access to industry representatives invited to the School. To date, since December 2015, the event has hosted around 200 students, tutors and industry professionals.

4.4 Opportunities to attend visiting speaker occasions are also open to staff. As much opportunity as possible is offered for students to meet senior figures from industry and for such people to see the work of the School to its fullest extent.

4.5 There are also School Internships (having begun in February 2016) which are intended to enhance the student learning experience. As a development from this, the School has appointed two paid interns from recently graduated UK degree holders for 12 months each to help with a range of forthcoming Directors' Projects. These will include 'visual communication, copy production, peer-to-peer communication, enhanced School data analysis and ... assist[ing] with further strategic review and support[ing] evidence-based, time-sensitive decision-making'.

4.6 Academically related enhancements to the School include support for academic staff development (PgCAP and MA qualifications), visiting professorships, education days and the best tutor award scheme. There have also been enhancements to the Library and Careers' Service.

4.7 Importantly, these projects have been gathered from the School's internal quality processes and the awarding body's Continuous Monitoring and Improvement Process.



The School is also looking to improve its use of management information including progression and completion data to improve the student learning experience.

4.8 More generally, the School's monitoring and evaluative data and completed Continuous Improvement Plans feature good practice that external examiners have recognised. The Continuous Monitoring and Improvement Process has yielded areas of opportunity for both staff and students to identify and discuss good practice in teaching and learning and the support of both. New internal review procedures, in preparation for awarding body periodic reviews, are expected to reveal more good practice and opportunities to share information about areas worthy of note, ignite further development, and along with other new internal monitoring procedures, allow a more rapid response to need.

4.9 The review team concludes that the School meets the Expectation and the level of risk is low.

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

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

4.10 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.11 From its scrutiny of a wide range of evidence, and through meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the School **meets** UK expectations.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Findings

5.1 The programmes offered by the School build students' understanding of theoretical and practice-based learning within the context of the fashion industry, and aim to foster creative, critical and reflective thinking within employment contexts. The School states its programmes offer 'an extensive and detailed educational portfolio that is constantly updated to match industry demands and evolution'. The rationale underpinning all provision is to 'encourage the development of students' intellectual and imaginative powers, creativity, independence, critical self-awareness, imagination and skills that will enhance global employment opportunities on graduation'. Programmes are 'designed to facilitate the development of a student who will be highly employable' and supported by the Istituto Marangoni Advisory Committees at national and international levels, which include key industry representatives.

5.2 The validated programmes include practice-based elements and work placements as well as learning outcomes linked to sector-based skills, knowledge and understanding. Alongside subject-based knowledge, students are also expected to develop broader transferable skills including working in teams, leadership, ICT and research skills. Assessment strategies reflect employability elements including those related to the compulsory work placements and internships through production of reflective journals and 'live briefs' in conjunction with employers. Sector groups and experts are consulted in the preparation of programme proposals to inform the nature of learning content and practice-based skills. The School is able to engage with employers to review and enhance the development of employability skills embedded in programmes, and to use external examiners as critical friends to help develop academic content.

5.3 Fashion courses at undergraduate level include design pattern and garment technology and familiarise students with the requirements of the manufacturing and retailing aspects of the fashion industry. Unit Handbooks provide students with guidance as to skills development requirements and learning outcomes linked to theoretical and practical knowledge. Employability outcomes are shown in undergraduate unit specifications and handbooks, and students are expected to keep reflective journals linked to their placements, which for MA students contributes up to 20 per cent of the overall marks. Students are also encouraged to engage with Personal and Professional Development plans with tutor support; however, these are not compulsory.

5.4 Work placements are a key part of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and link directly to providing students with employability skills. Placements range from 12 weeks for MA students to 36 weeks for sandwich course students on undergraduate programmes. International students comply with visa requirements in relation to work placement opportunities.

5.5 Students complete evaluations of their placements, and feedback informs the School's approach to managing and supporting work-based learning. Students value the skills and opportunities offered by work placements, but feedback also indicates that more support and guidance would enhance the identification of suitable placements as outlined in Expectations B3 and B10. The School has purchased a new digital platform to support engagement with alumni and sector professionals and the identification and management of work placements. The School plans to introduce this platform in autumn 2016.

5.6 The School has recently introduced a Careers Week for students to raise awareness of support available linked to placements, and to promote student engagement with sector professionals. External industry speakers are invited to address students,

including alumni working in the sector. Based on feedback received from students, the careers week model is being further developed to include the London Fashion Week professional engagement model including student-led activities. External speakers are also brought in to contribute to unit delivery and to engage in discussions with students. Employers and industry professionals are also invited to meet students as part of extra-curricular seminars and lectures.

5.7 The use of 'live briefs' encourages students to undertake work linked to current priorities within the sector. Briefs are developed by tutors in conjunction with sector professionals to ensure they are relevant to unit learning outcomes. Sector professionals are also invited to sit in on student presentations linked to the briefs. Assignment briefs include clear reference to employability skills which helps students to understand the nature of knowledge, skills and expertise needed to support their career and employment opportunities.

5.8 Engagement with employers is important to the School, and a forum for employers offering placements is arranged. Where appropriate, employers are invited to talk to students on topics related to units being studied and more broadly about sector developments. Employers who offer placements confirmed that the placement experience coupled with programme-based knowledge builds employability skills.

5.9 The team found that the School has effectively embedded employability skills within unit delivery and assessments as well as through work placement units. Students are helped to understand the current trends within the sector, develop practical and theoretic skills and engage with sector professionals to build their practice-based knowledge and skills. The role of employers and sector professionals in informing curriculum development through Istituto Marangoni Advisory Committees and local employer contacts and forums further ensures that employability skills are embedded in programmes, and that students are supported to build their knowledge and practical skills which will help them secure future employment.

## 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 22 to 25 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#).

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

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

### Academic standards

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

### Award

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

### Awarding organisation

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

### Blended learning

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

### Credit(s)

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

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

### Dual award or double award

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

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

### **Enhancement**

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

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

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

See also **distance learning**.

### **Framework**

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

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

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

### **Quality Code**

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

### **Reference points**

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

### **Self-evaluation document**

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

### **Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

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

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

### **Threshold academic standard**

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

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

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

### **Widening participation**

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

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