Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of KLC School of Design

June 2016

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at KLC School of Design. The review took place from 21 to 23 June 2016 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Elaine Crosthwaite
- Dr Nick Papé
- Mr Oliver Wannell (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by KLC School of Design 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)[1] setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

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

- makes judgements on
    - the setting and maintenance of academic standards
    - the quality of student learning opportunities
    - the information provided about higher education provision
    - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- 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 KLC School of Design 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,[2] 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.[3] A dedicated section explains the method for Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers).[4] For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code
[2] Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers):
www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx

Key findings

QAA's judgements about KLC School of Design

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at KLC School of Design.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at KLC School of Design.

- The use of interactive online teaching methods, which makes a significant contribution to the learning experience (Expectation B3).
- The comprehensive employer engagement embedded in all programmes, which enables students to fully develop their professional potential (Expectation B4).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following recommendations to KLC School of Design.

By December 2016:

- ensure alignment of the academic appeals process in the student handbook with the awarding body's academic appeals process (Expectations B9 and C)
- ensure staff are fully aware of the correct procedures for both academic appeals and complaints (Expectation B9).

By February 2017:

- ensure that all student representatives have access to training and ongoing support for their role (Expectation B5)
- ensure that students are formally involved in programme design, approval and monitoring processes (Expectations B5, B1 and B8)
- formalise and disseminate a customised assessment policy and processes for all validated provision (Expectation B6)
- articulate its strategy for enhancement (Enhancement).

By July 2017:

- develop the processes for analysing, evaluating and acting on student data on retention and achievement (Expectation B8 and Enhancement).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that KLC School of Design is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students:

- the introduction of student representation on the academic board from autumn term 2016 (Expectation B5).

Theme: Student Employability

Student employability is a major priority for the School. It seeks to meet local, national and international needs and make a major contribution to development of qualified designers through the provision of highly vocational, skills-focused programmes. The use of external expertise in both programme design and review enables it to maintain the vocational currency of its higher education programmes. This approach manifests itself throughout all curricula and includes provision for case studies, industry placements and visits. Industry specialists, acting as module tutors, also use their current work as live briefs for studio activities. This approach to student employability is appreciated by both employers and students.

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

Financial sustainability, management and governance

The financial sustainability, management and governance check has been satisfactorily completed.

About KLC School of Design

KLC School of Design (the School) was established in 1982 and is located in the heart of the Design Centre at Chelsea Harbour in London, the largest hub of interior design showrooms in Europe. The School is a career-focused, specialist school, providing professional and innovative interior and garden design courses for UK and international students and has extensive contacts with industry.

The School states in its overall strategy that it is committed to delivering socially purposeful higher education that serves and strengthens society and underpins the economy, contributes to the public good, enriches those who participate and equips graduates to contribute effectively to the interior or garden design profession and communities locally, nationally and internationally.

The School underwent a Review for Educational Oversight (REO) by QAA in June 2012. The review team identified three areas of good practice, two advisable and six desirable recommendations. The findings from this were summarised in an action plan compiled by the School and this was subject to QAA monitoring visits in 2013 and 2014. The latter of these recorded a 'commendable progress' outcome. Since the REO visit in 2012, the School has introduced new programmes in BA (Hons) Interior Design and a Foundation Degree in Interior Design in partnership with its awarding body, the University of Brighton.

At the time of the review visit, the School had over 600 students, 152 of whom were studying on validated programmes of study. The remainder were studying on a wide range of short programmes in both garden design and interior design. The University of Brighton is the awarding body for validated provision which consists of programmes (with current student numbers) as follows:

- Diploma in Interior Design (full-time) - 55
- Diploma in Interior Design (blended learning) - 66
- BA (Hons) Interior Design (full-time) - 9
- Foundation Degree Interior Design (online) - 22

At the time of the review visit, there were 32 members of academic staff, 14 of whom were full-time.

The School recognises that its key challenge is to compete successfully in an economically uncertain environment, with an increasing number of higher education institutions offering similar types of study programmes. It is attempting to address this challenge through reputational enhancement delivered by better marketing, building ever stronger industry partnerships, enhanced teaching and learning practice that leads to better retention and focused, career-relevant provision.

Explanation of the findings about KLC School of Design

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

Explanation of the findings about KLC School of Design

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* (FHEQ) are met by:

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1   The School has had a validating partnership with the University of Brighton for six years. The relationship is overseen by the University of Brighton Specialist and Overseas Partnerships subcommittee of its Academic Standards Committee, through a Common Academic Framework. The framework sets out the nature of the School's partnership and the operating principles for marking of awards. Examination and assessment regulations which the School is required to follow are set out in a comprehensive University document known as University of Brighton General Examination and Assessment Regulations for Taught Courses (GEAR). Programme and module specifications are required for all validated provision.

1.2   The University retains ultimate responsibility for setting threshold academic standards for awards as informed by appropriate external benchmarks, including the FHEQ, qualification characteristics, credit frameworks and Subject Benchmark Statements. Staff involved in the design of programmes are required to adhere to the relevant University quality assurance processes to ensure that proposals for new programmes are appropriately developed prior to formal approval. Validation of the School's programmes in interior design is carried out by the University in accordance with the relevant procedures.

1.3   Specific responsibilities for maintaining academic standards are set out in the Memorandum of Cooperation between the School and the University. The School is responsible for student recruitment and induction, setting, moderation and marking of assessments, feedback on assessment, provision of learning resources, student engagement, responding to external examiner reports and enhancement. The University retains responsibility for academic regulations, production of definitive programme information, appointment of external examiners and course leaders and financial matters related to programme approval processes. Other responsibilities are shared, including development of programme material, programme modifications, annual monitoring and student complaints and appeals.

1.4   The School's Academic Board is responsible for internal monitoring and maintenance of the standards of awards in compliance with University requirements. It is accountable for the development, management, oversight, monitoring and quality of all programmes across the School. The Board also has responsibility of ensuring assessment regulations are applied. The Board fulfils its functions through receipt and discussion of reports from other School committees, including course reports and external examiner reports. It is also responsible for the production, monitoring and review of an action plan.

1.5   The frameworks, regulations and processes in place would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.6   The team tested the School's approach to meeting this Expectation by reviewing University and School documents, including the Common Academic Framework, academic regulations, programme specifications, reports of programme approval events and the Memorandum of Cooperation. The review team also held meetings with senior and academic staff, including representation from the University.

1.7   The evidence demonstrates that the School operates comprehensive and well-documented processes. Appropriate consideration is given by the School to the academic level of programmes prior to submitting them for approval. Programmes are clearly titled in line with the FHEQ. Academic standards for each award are reflected on positively by students. External examiners confirm ongoing alignment of learning outcomes and assessment design to relevant external reference points.

1.8   Teaching staff make appropriate use of programme specifications as a reference point in the learning, teaching and assessment of programmes. Programme specifications vary according to the University's requirements and in each case the qualification is positioned at the appropriate level and there is reference to Subject Benchmark Statements. Module descriptors are in place for all modules and clearly stated in course handbooks and project briefs. The School is committed to ensuring that students are aware of the requirements of the different levels of study for their programmes. Students report that they have a clear understanding of the learning outcomes to be achieved through assessment and that they regard the volume of assessment as appropriate. Discussions in relation to academic level form a key theme in tutorials.

1.9   Programme teams have extensive experience of developing and writing programmes, and are appropriately supported by link tutors from the University. There is strong liaison between the link tutors and the School's Academic Partnership Director. Academic staff have a high level of awareness of external reference points, including the use of the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark*. Programme teams are also supported by the School's Higher Education Office, which ensures that staff have access to the latest version of University regulations and provides support in interpreting these requirements.

1.10   In conclusion, the processes in place for validation of programmes are clear and robust. There is effective communication between the School and the University regarding

development, validation and ongoing management of all programmes. Overall, the team concludes that the School takes appropriate account of external reference points in the maintenance of academic standards and there is close adherence to awarding partners' quality assurance processes. Therefore, Expectation A1 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

1.11   The School works with its awarding body's academic framework to govern how it awards its higher education qualifications and has operational responsibility for leading, coordinating and delivery of its validated provision. The School has its own quality monitoring and management processes, including annual monitoring and review. These processes would enable the School to meet this Expectation.

1.12   The review team tested the effectiveness of the operational processes through the examination of a range of documentation, a survey of the School's virtual learning environment (VLE) and discussions with senior and academic staff and students. The staff meetings also involved representatives from the University.

1.13   The School has clear and well-established structures for managing its higher education provision and these operate with due regard to the University's requirements. Academic regulations are made available to staff and students through course handbooks in hard copy and via the VLE. Course handbooks contain information on the programme structure, including its aims, outcomes, descriptions of modules, specifications and assessment methodology. They also provide an overview of teaching and assessment methodology. Students stated that they knew where to find this information and confirmed that they had been briefed on the academic regulations for their awards and were clear on how these operated.

1.14   Staff are also made aware of their expected involvement in application of academic regulations through membership of relevant committees. The deliberative committee structure within the School includes the Senior Management Committee, which is responsible for setting higher education strategy, and the Academic Board, which monitors the performance of all School programmes. Minutes of meetings confirm that there is comprehensive oversight of higher education at both programme and School level. School-wide committees often give separate and detailed consideration to higher education-related issues. These committees and other fora allow effective discussion, monitoring and review of the application of regulations in practice.

1.15   Examination boards are convened by the University with appropriate School representation. These boards are responsible for the ultimate award of academic credit and qualifications, based on the marks provided by the School.

1.16   In conclusion, the School adheres effectively to University processes for the award of academic credit. There is a rigorous system in place to govern the award of academic credit at module and programme level and assessment decisions are effectively overseen by the Academic Board, prior to forwarding to examination boards at the University. The School has appropriate internal quality assurance and governance processes to fulfil its responsibilities to its awarding partner. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

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

Findings

1.17   The University has ultimate responsibility for the production of definitive programme documentation. The School maintains a definitive record of each programme in the form of a programme specification and these are aligned to University requirements. Course handbooks contain the relevant programme specification and module descriptors. Programme specifications are reviewed annually and when major or minor changes are made, they are scrutinised by the University before being approved and updated. The revision dates are marked on the programme specification themselves.

1.18   The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.19   The review team tested the effectiveness of these processes in practice by scrutinising the programme specifications, course handbooks, the School's self-evaluation document submitted for this review, and a student submission. The team also reviewed the Memorandum of Cooperation and responsibilities checklist between the School and the University of Brighton. In addition, the team held meetings with senior, teaching and support staff and students. Staff meetings contained representation from the University.

1.20   Draft programme specifications are effectively prepared by the School in conversation with the University before being approved. This process is followed for validation and subsequent review through periodic review and annual monitoring processes.

1.21   Definitive documents are kept by the School on a central computer drive, which is readily accessible to all staff. Version control is ensured through removal of outdated versions. The School's Quality Assurance Manager has operational responsibility for updating the programme specifications on the central drive.

1.22   Students reported that they have appropriate access to definitive information about their programmes through their course handbooks. They confirmed that they gain access to these online through the VLE, and in some cases via hard copy as well. Students also reported that they get an introduction to this information and its significance by teaching staff at the School.

1.23   The review team concludes that the provision and management of definitive programme information at the School is appropriate for its awards and meets the requirements of the University. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.24   The School's programmes are designed and developed in conjunction with its awarding body, which holds responsibility for approval and validation and ensuring that national academic standards are met. The University has set out its procedures for design and approval in a variety of policy statements.

1.25   The processes for programme approval and ensuring appropriate academic standards are established by the University. These entail a joint process of design and development of the curriculum by a course team at the School working with advisers at the University, culminating in approval and validation by a University-appointed panel. These processes include testing that new programmes are developed according to the University's Common Academic Framework of academic levels and credits.

1.26   The School is responsible for preparing the documentation for programme approval and validation, including a programme specification and module specifications on templates provided by the University.

1.27   The processes for programme approval implemented by the School in conjunction with its awarding body give appropriate consideration to academic standards and would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.28   The team reviewed the effectiveness of the School's processes for approval through consideration of validation documentation, programme specifications, and minutes of meetings. External examiner reports were scrutinised to confirm that appropriate academic standards are maintained. The team also met the Principal, senior, teaching and support staff, and University representatives.

1.29   The processes for the approval of validated programmes are effective and ensure that academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for each qualification. There is a robust and supportive relationship between staff in the School and University, ensuring that processes for programme approval take an appropriate account of national and University academic standards.

1.30   School staff work closely with University link tutors to ensure compliance with course approval and validation processes. Course proposals satisfy the criteria set out in the University policy documents and take account of appropriate UK academic standards.

1.31   Staff obtain an understanding of UK academic standards and levels through various mechanisms, including completion of the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, attending staff development workshops at the University, and participation in Validated Courses Committee meetings. The process of development of course proposals includes consideration of the FHEQ, benchmark statements and the Quality Code; for example, the development of the FD Interior Design included a mapping of the proposal to the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark*. The programme specifications prepared for validation indicate the relevant academic level, the intended

learning outcomes and assessment methods. Validation documentation and University reports confirm that programmes align with the University's academic and regulatory framework.

1.32   The review team concludes that the School implements effective and robust processes for the design and approval of taught programmes and that these meet threshold standards. The processes comply with the academic and regulatory framework of the awarding body. Therefore Expectation A3.1 is met, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.33   The University sets the academic standards for awards and confirms through programme approval panels that programmes operate at or above threshold standards. Programme proposals must satisfy explicit criteria to test whether modules, programmes and qualifications meet the University's academic framework. Programme approval panels are remitted to check whether the assessment process enables students to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

1.34   The University's qualification framework and assessment regulations provide explicit guidance for the award of academic credit and qualifications. The School is required to follow this guidance in the design of programmes for validation, including how the School is able to demonstrate how students will achieve intended learning outcomes. Programme specifications state the assessment strategy and marking scheme, and module descriptors set out the assessment tasks and assessment criteria linked to the intended learning outcomes. Marking and internal moderation enables a check that the assessment criteria have been consistently applied and that the grade is appropriate. The University appoints external examiners to confirm that academic standards are appropriate and comparable with other institutions. The implementation by the School of the University's regulations and the use made of external expertise in setting and maintaining standards would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.35   The review team tested this Expectation by considering University regulations, validation documentation, programme specifications and module descriptors, and external examiner reports. The team also met staff responsible for assessment and moderation, and students.

1.36   The School has robust and effective processes in place to ensure that the achievement of intended learning outcomes is demonstrated through assessment and that academic standards are maintained. The design of programmes and modules and their associated assessment gives appropriate attention to the University's academic and regulatory framework, and this is confirmed through validation processes. Assessment of student work is undertaken by staff who are appropriately trained and have an understanding of UK and University academic standards. Assignments and assessment criteria are clearly linked to learning outcomes which are stated in course handbooks and project briefs. Summative assessments are appropriately double-marked and internally moderated. This process entails reviewing a sample of students' assessed work to check that assessment criteria are consistently applied and the grade and feedback are appropriate.

1.37   External examiners appointed by the University review a representative sample of assessed work that contributes to students' awards and ensures that the School meets the

UK and University's academic standards. The reports of external examiners confirm that the achievement of learning outcomes is satisfactorily demonstrated in assessment, and is comparable with other institutions.

1.38   The review team concludes that the School has robust systems in place to ensure compliance with the qualification framework and academic regulations of its awarding body, and that these are working effectively. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.39   The School has processes for programme monitoring and review to address both internal and University requirements. These include reflection on the comments of external examiners regarding the maintenance of academic standards.

1.40   The School is required to prepare an annual course monitoring report, called a Course Programme Report, for its awarding body, using a prescribed template which includes a commentary on any issues raised in external examiner reports and proposed action as well as a summary of progress on previous action points. The School also has its own internal processes with a series of meetings at different organisational levels, from course leaders to the Academic Board. These meetings discuss feedback from external examiners and the effectiveness of assessment of learning outcomes, and agree actions. The School also participates in the University's five-year periodic review process which includes a review of the maintenance of academic standards. The processes and procedures for monitoring and review operated by the School would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.41   The review team tested this Expectation through scrutiny of annual and periodic review documentation, academic board minutes and action plans, and external examiners' reports. The team also met a range of staff to discuss the implementation of processes for annual monitoring, periodic review, and oversight of academic standards by the School.

1.42   The School appropriately fulfils the University's requirements and also has its own effective internal processes for monitoring and review of the maintenance of academic standards. Course reports include consideration of the comments of external examiners received during visits to the School as well as their formal annual reports. External examiners' reports explicitly address the achievement of UK threshold standards and maintenance of the University's standards. These confirm that academic standards and the level of student achievement are comparable with other institutions.

1.43   The agenda for meetings of the Academic Board is appropriately informed by data from external examiner reports and any recommendations are incorporated into action plans. The School is assisted by the link tutor appointed by the University to work with course teams to ensure effective management of quality and standards, including monitoring the achievement of students against academic norms.

1.44   The BA (Hons) and Diploma programmes have recently undergone their first periodic review by the University. The process of fulfilling the University's requirements for documentary evidence provided the School with an opportunity to evaluate the currency of programmes and to ensure that these remain aligned with Subject Benchmark Statements and UK academic standards.

1.45   The evidence from documentation and meetings confirms that the School has systems in place for programme monitoring and review and is fulfilling the requirements of

its awarding body. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A3.3 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.46   The University of Brighton (as awarding body), is responsible for externality in relation to the setting of academic standards. It appoints an external member to programme approval panels and external examiners for validated programmes at the School, as part of the Memorandum of Cooperation. Under this agreement with the University, the School suggests appropriate subject-specific external candidates.

1.47   The School's main responsibilities in meeting this Expectation are to ensure that appropriate consideration is given to the feedback provided by the appointed external examiners in their annual reports to the University.

1.48   The School engages with various external stakeholders in the development and review of programmes. This includes representatives from industry and academic consultants. This principally occurs through dialogue with externals during the development of initial proposals for new provision.

1.49   The School is currently preparing to review its strategic priorities for governance and the subsequent implications for course development. It intends to reconstitute its Corporate Board later this year with external representation. The School has an active Academic Board which promotes skills and employability as being central to its plans. As part of planning, the Board uses a variety of external viewpoints to gather information on future course proposals.

1.50   Threshold academic standards are set and scrutinised by the University's School of Art, Design and Media Curriculum and Assessment Committee. The School is represented at appropriate meetings of this committee. Assessment and moderation takes into account the relevant assessment criteria derived from the learning outcomes.

1.51   The policies and procedures that the University has in place and the School's approach to the operation of these would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.52   The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements for this Expectation through the examination of documentation, including the Memorandum of Cooperation, external examiner reports, annual programme review reports and minutes of Assessment Boards. The team also held meetings with senior, academic and support staff, employers and alumni. Staff meetings include representatives from the University. The team also met students.

1.53   There is effective engagement of externals in the maintenance of academic standards within the School. School staff, University representatives and employers all confirmed that external expertise is used in programme validation, periodic subject reviews and advising on changes to existing programmes. For example, employers and alumni contribute significantly to the development of course curricula through regular liaison

between School staff and representatives from industry. University staff become involved at an early stage and this ensures that all such proposals meet threshold academic standards.

1.54   The School takes robust steps to engage directly with external stakeholders, and fulfils its responsibilities to its awarding partner for making appropriate use of the expertise provided by external approval panel members and external examiners. For example, the sample of external examiner reports reviewed by the team confirms that the School maintains academic standards on behalf of its awarding partner. The School effectively summarises the findings from external examiner reports and takes appropriate action on their findings. This helps to ensure the currency and quality of the awards being offered. Individual programme teams have good links with employers and feedback from industry is used to inform the design and management of the portfolio of higher education offered by the School. This dialogue is also supported by use of employer feedback questionnaires to facilitate design of new programmes.

1.55   The School makes effective and appropriate use of relevant external experts at key stages of maintaining academic standards. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

1.56   In reaching its judgements about the maintenance of the academic standards of awards at the School, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.57   Overall, the School is effective in managing its responsibilities, in conjunction with its degree-awarding body, and is effective in maintaining academic standards.

1.58   From its scrutiny of a wide range of evidence, and through meetings with staff, and students, the review team found 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. The review team also confirms that effective use is made of input from external examiners and link tutors from the degree-awarding partner.

1.59   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body 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 has processes for programme design, development and approval that culminate in submission of proposals to its awarding body for validation. The development process within the School is articulated in the Quality Manual.

2.2 The internal process for design and development of a new programme entails the establishment of a development team which considers market research and the viability of a course outline. If a proposal is approved by the Executive Committee, a course leader and team take responsibility for the detailed development of course content. This includes consideration of external reference points such as the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements, the University's academic and regulatory frameworks, and the views of industry. Course documentation is submitted to the Executive Committee for an internal validation check before being submitted to the University for approval and validation.

2.3 The University offers support during course development through the link tutor, and provides feedback at formal stages, including scrutiny by the School's Academic Scrutiny Committee. The development team makes any amendments to its validation documentation, programme specifications and handbooks prior to making a submission to the University for validation. The structures and processes for programme design, development and approval would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.4 The review team tested this Expectation by considering the effectiveness of processes and procedures through examining course development and validation documentation, committee minutes, and programme specifications. The team tested the implementation of processes through a detailed review of the development and validation of the Foundation Degree in Interior Design. The team also held meetings with senior, academic and support staff, University representatives, students, and employers and alumni.

2.5 There are effective operational processes for design, development and approval of programmes within the School. Staff have a clear understanding of the procedures for course development and approval at School level and work closely with University staff in an iterative process of development and drafting the programme specification for approval and validation. Development teams make appropriate reference to external benchmarks and the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark*, as well as University requirements.

2.6 The School obtains advice through consultation with academic contacts and industry experts on curriculum content. For example, it has obtained feedback from alumni in the development of the Foundation Degree in Interior Design. Additionally, the School carried out extensive research and commissioned an independent software provider to create a new online learning platform for the development of the online mode of learning. The School effectively ensures that programmes are adequately resourced by identifying staff needs and preparing a resource plan for other learning resources early in the stages of course development.

2.7   The Executive Committee provides effective oversight of course development through receiving regular reports on progress and approving key stages of the School's processes, including internal approval prior to submission to the University for validation. Student representatives met by the team confirmed that they give feedback on their learning experience which informs development processes. However, the lack of formal consultation with students during course development and approval has contributed to the associated recommendation in Expectation B5 (paragraph 2.49).

2.8   Overall, the School has effective processes in place for oversight of the programme design and approval process. There are clear and robust internal mechanisms that provide for sound curriculum development and internal validation and thus enable the requirements of the awarding body to be met. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.9   The School has an Admissions Policy which is articulated in the Quality Manual and made available in hard copy by Student Support Services. It has been reviewed over the last year to ensure that it is fit for purpose, including adherence to the UCAS enrolment process. The Academic Board has the responsibility for setting the admissions criteria. The School has incorporated the University's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy into its Admissions Policy.

2.10   The School makes use of templates for interview confirmation letters, interviews and offer letters to ensure a consistent approach to admissions. Information on how to apply and details of entry requirements for each course are found on the course information page of the School's website. Applicants are considered on academic achievement and the required portfolio or evidence accompanying their application. Applicants are interviewed using the process outlined on the School's website. Applicants receive information on how to apply in advance by the admissions team and in the information confirmation letter.

2.11   Successful applicants are given access to the VLE before the start of term and participate in a formal induction process with the School. The policies and procedures in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.12   The review team reviewed this Expectation through testing the effectiveness of the policies and procedures in place, by analysing documents, including the Admissions Policy, the interview confirmation letter template, the Policy for RPL, the offer letter template and interview template. The team also met senior, academic and support staff, and students.

2.13   The policies and procedures for recruitment, selection and admissions work effectively in practice. The process is reviewed regularly and is aligned with relevant UCAS requirements. Students met by the team reported that the recruitment and admissions information provided prior to application was accurate and accessible. They also reported that the website, open days and promotional material were all helpful sources of information when applying to the School.

2.14   Students stated that staff were helpful and offered good advice throughout the admissions process. For example, they were given valuable advice during the admissions process to ensure that they made the correct choice of course, suited to their skills and interests. Students were also made aware of the opportunities for RPL.

2.15   The policies and practices in place within the School provide a robust and effective recruitment, selection and admissions process for students. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.16   The School has a number of policies and operational practices relating to the development of teaching and learning activities. The Quality Manual contains a brief overarching Learning and Teaching Strategy and this, together with the Internationalisation Policy, are used to influence teaching and learning practice on programmes. Approaches to learning and teaching are explained on the School's website and in interview leaflets, programme specifications, module descriptors, and student handbooks.

2.17   Teaching methods are also explained during induction with emphasis on how to study the abstract concept of design. The induction process is designed to facilitate students' understanding of the creative process of design and tutors emphasise that each student will have an individual learning style.

2.18   The School places considerable emphasis on the quality of learning, teaching and assessment which are kept under constant review as part of the School's quality assurance cycle. Core values in learning and teaching are stated as including building a positive supportive learning environment. Emphasis is placed on the School's mission in achievement of maximising student potential and enhancing the physical environment. Further, the overall approach is designed to broaden students' experience through extensive use of client environments, workshop facilities and live projects.

2.19   The Director of Studies has overall responsibility for ensuring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through organisation of staff development programmes and review of practice. Student data is gathered at the end of each module and analysed by the Director of Studies. The module tutor is then informed of the feedback and writes a report for discussion at the relevant course committee and contributes to the Academic Health Report submitted to the University.

2.20   Academic staff are involved in updating and enhancing their learning and teaching skills and are supported in personal development through the Staff Development Policy, operation of which is the responsibility of the Remuneration and Staff Development Committee. The School states that the majority of tutors on validated programmes are either qualified with a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, or are most of the way through this programme delivered by the University. Additionally, they are encouraged to regularly reflect on and discuss their teaching practices through informal peer discussions and through various formal meetings. The School also operates a peer observation scheme to encourage academic staff to reflect on and further develop their practice.

2.21   The policies, procedures and mechanisms in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.22   The team tested this Expectation by reviewing the School's strategies and policies, annual programme review reports, minutes of the committee meetings, recent higher

education self-evaluations and evidence of peer review. Meetings were also held with senior staff, teaching staff and students across the full range of higher education provision.

2.23   Overarching learning and teaching policies are clearly and effectively stated in the Quality Manual, the Internationalisation Policy and through programme specifications, module descriptors, and student handbooks. Staff use appropriate teaching and learning methods in line with stated policies. For example, there is extensive use of 'flipped-classroom' techniques that actively encourage interactive teaching and learning styles. Lectures are recorded and broken into small sections that can be used to emphasise particular concepts during interactive sessions as well as for revision purposes. These approaches are also effectively suited to online modes of delivery. The use of interactive online teaching methods, which makes a significant contribution to the learning experience, is **good practice**. Also, the School effectively addresses independence and individuality in learning in a variety of ways. This starts at the interview stage and extends throughout the students' study period. Student handbooks also outline appropriate information on how students may access appropriate resources and other learning support.

2.24   There is an effective approach to staff development, promulgated through the Staff Development Policy and managed appropriately by the Remuneration and Staff Development Committee. For example, all staff met by the team have qualified for or are currently studying for the University of Brighton's Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. Other staff have also undertaken more advanced research degrees in teaching. Student feedback indicates that they are satisfied with the skills and experience of academic staff.

2.25   There is also an effective approach to continuing scholarship of teaching. For example, the Futures of Education Group has recently been set up as an outcome of staff studying for teaching awards and is effectively pursuing a number of research projects allied to new methods and approaches and using new technology in teaching and learning.

2.26   A teaching observation process is in place for all staff. Observations are ungraded and are based on collaborative reflection and action planning. Teaching staff said that this was a valuable process.

2.27   Regular monitoring and review of teaching practice is conducted through various committees and meetings. For example, minutes of the Academic Board demonstrate that this Board is effective in its role of monitoring and enhancing learning opportunities. Additionally, regular course team meetings ensure that the quality of the student learning experience is kept under review throughout the academic year. The Academic Board and course committees will appoint student representatives from the start of academic year 2016-17. There are regular opportunities for students to give informal and formal views on teaching and learning quality. For example, through regular one-to-one and group discussions with course tutors and leaders. The School draws on a wide range of information in its review of learning and teaching. Sources of information include student achievement and progression data, external examiner reports, results of student feedback surveys and the outcomes of peer observations. This is discussed further under Expectation B8.

2.28   The review team concludes that the School has effective processes for the review and enhancement of learning opportunities, pedagogical practice and the learning environment. Further, scholarship in teaching and learning methodology is appropriately undertaken. These processes make appropriate use of information and are adequately informed by the student voice. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.29   The Higher Education Strategy, which is underpinned by a set of strategic objectives, outlines the School's commitment to providing high quality academic and appropriate support. The School's mission statement refers to giving all students every help in transitioning to the workplace. The School has clearly defined administrative and academic roles to support students in achieving their qualification. There is a student welfare system and a careers' service. Both of these services are represented on the School's Academic, Operations, Careers and Welfare Committee. This committee oversees the provision and monitoring of support services and resources and reports to the Academic Board.

2.30   Careers staff also contribute to the relevance of content and development of the programmes through visits to current and potential industry centres and provide input to the annual Course Programme Report. The careers service provides support in all aspects of employability (further discussed in section 5), including advising course teams on the provision of a career-based relevant curriculum and facilitating graduates' progression into their chosen careers.

2.31   Ongoing support for student learning and personal needs is provided post-induction through tutorials with academic staff and through services provided by the central administrative and support team. The School has developed a formal tutorial policy which is integral to the approach to formative assessment. The policy sets each student's entitlement to timetabled tutorials. Students are allocated a dedicated tutor who supports their academic and personal development. Information is given to students about the role of tutors at induction and in their student handbooks.

2.32   Tutorial activities are supplemented through personal development planning, scheduled meetings with specialist tutors and meetings with the Careers Department to discuss future prospects and opportunities. Additionally, course leaders meet individually with all of their students during their studies to discuss academic and personal development. Students also have access to support services and resources at the awarding body. The School provides students with a variety of resources such as learning spaces and services to support their learning, including the library, and a range of online learning resources. Students have access to a VLE and specialist Internet-based programmes, either directly from the School or through relationships with local industry.

2.33   The School states that it involves employers in the educational experience of students as much as possible through the provision of work experience and placements and through the use of industry experts as part-time tutors.

2.34   The policies and approaches in place to provide, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.35   The review team evaluated the School's arrangements for enabling student development and achievement through a review of formal policies in this area, minutes of relevant committees, evidence of support services and personal development planning. The team also met senior, academic and support staff and students.

2.36   The School has an effective and robust strategic approach to the support of learning and teaching which manifests itself in a variety of clearly defined ways; for example the provision of online resources, including a well-received VLE. Within this new VLE, an online Virtual Work Experience (Studio K) 5-day course has been developed. This version is designed to be more intuitive and student-friendly and such enhancements have been recognised by online students. The new version will be rolled out to all programmes in the near future. Students are satisfied with the availability, range and quality of the resources housed on online platforms and the online resources available through the University.

2.37   Students are provided with comprehensive guidance and support on how to make the transition to the next level of study, particularly regarding the expectations of higher level study. Students confirmed that this happens through appropriate induction activities at the start of each year, through course handbooks and direct support from academic tutors and support services. Students also have effective opportunity to develop their study skills as part of induction activities. Students complete an appropriate feedback survey on their induction experience, the results of which are used to make improvements to the induction process for the following year. Study skills support is available for students transitioning from diploma to honours degree level.

2.38   The process of supporting student learning through tutorials is effective in practice. The format of personal tutorials varies according to the needs of each programme. Group tutorials tend to be used with larger cohorts of students and individual sessions to review portfolios of creative work. Tutorials are used to support students' academic development and a record of the meeting is kept to aid personal development planning. Students confirmed that they had scheduled tutorial time but expressed a desire for more of this activity. Staff explained that, due to the intensive nature of teaching and study activities, a balance needed to be reached between available tutorial time and the needs of the full curriculum. Overall, students felt well supported by academic staff and commented on the positive way in which tutors challenged them to develop their academic potential and to achieve better grades.

2.39   The School offers a comprehensive and effective range of additional support services, including additional learning support, careers advice and active welfare support. There is a close and collaborative working relationship between academic and administrative staff to ensure students are provided with appropriate support. This includes the provision of careers advice or group tutorials to meet the needs of a particular group of students. Students who had accessed these support services confirmed positive experiences. The School is taking appropriate steps to promote the availability of support services to higher education students to encourage further uptake. Feedback on support services is also embedded into programme evaluation processes. Staff involved in providing these services also use an evaluation of their own data collected on the types of support provided to identify thematic issues that can be addressed more strategically.

2.40   The review team found that students are generally highly satisfied with both the academic and tutorial support available to them and that they specifically value the support from tutors with current and recent industrial and vocational experience. Students spoke favourably of the specialist facilities available in addition to good teaching, substantial industry contacts and voluntary work placements and experience. They were of the view that these facilities enable them to develop their academic and professional skills. Students were also satisfied with access to the School's careers and welfare support services and resources provided by the University.

2.41   There is particularly effective employer engagement in all programmes. This gives students access to people working successfully in the industry and to cutting-edge facilities, enabling them to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Many

programmes include opportunities for work placements as an integrated part of the programme. There are also close links with employers to ensure that both curricular and extracurricular learning opportunities are closely aligned to the employment sector and enable students to develop current vocational skills. A number of programmes make regular use of guest speakers from industry, and students who have been exposed to these opportunities find this a useful way of linking theoretical learning to practice. Additionally, the School employs industry experts to teach on the whole range of programmes. The comprehensive employer engagement embedded in all programmes, which enables students to fully develop their professional potential, is **good practice**.

2.42   In conclusion, the School has a number of robust and effective mechanisms to support students in developing their academic, personal and professional potential. In particular, students are provided with comprehensive support for learning and are encouraged to develop their employability skills through a range of initiatives. The team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.43   The School has developed close working relationships between its students and staff. The largely informal settings lead to many opportunities for student engagement. There are also several conduits used for more formal engagement practices. For example, the School has elected student representatives for all validated programmes. Course leaders brief student representatives on their role and they are also given a Guidelines for Student Representatives document.

2.44   Student Representative Meetings take place twice each term for on-site programmes and once per year for blended-learning programmes and provide the main opportunity for students to feed back anonymously to their course staff and student support services staff through their elected representative. The meetings are organised by the Quality Assurance Manager. Minutes of the meetings are made visible to all students on the VLE.

2.45   In addition to the student representative structure, the School has ongoing formal engagement with students through a 'This Week/Next Week' process and student feedback meetings. The School also makes use of anonymous module feedback forms where students have the opportunity to evaluate their modules, as well as course-based questionnaires at the end of each course. Student feedback is discussed at Course Team meetings, course leader and Validated Courses meetings and at Academic Board. Outcomes of these discussions are included in the course leaders' End of Year Report and are represented via 'You Said We Did' posters and online summaries.

2.46   The procedures in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.47   The review team examined the effectiveness of the procedures in place to engage students by examining documentation, including course handbooks, the student submission, minutes of Academic Board Action Plan and Student Representative Meeting minutes. The team also held meetings with senior, teaching and support staff, students, and student representatives.

2.48   The procedures for engaging students in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience work effectively in practice. Students reported that there is a supportive and open environment within which they and staff freely engage in discussions, both formal and informal. The review team found evidence of changes being made as a result of student feedback. For example, students requested additional computational support in studio and this was implemented by the School after discussion. Additionally, students requested changes in the format and methods of teaching used in one module and this was promptly rectified by staff.

2.49   Student representatives reported that they felt listened to by the School and other students said that they felt able to make use of their student representatives when needed. All student representatives have access to a useful resources tab online and the Guidelines for Student Representatives. However, they reported a mixed response on how appropriately trained and equipped they felt to carry out their role. All student representatives should receive a briefing from course leaders on their role, but the review team found that not all had received this, or any other training in addition to the documentary information

provided for them. In addition, student representatives reported that they were not aware of any dedicated person who they could go to for support in their role. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the School ensures that all student representatives have access to training and ongoing support for their role by February 2017.

2.50   The Quality Manual states that students are represented on the Academic Board, either as full or co-opted members. Minutes of Academic Board are made available to students through the VLE. However, the terms of reference and composition of the Academic Board do not include students as members. Further, students and staff confirmed that students are not currently represented on any committees other than Student Representative Meetings. As a consequence, students are not able to formally contribute to discussions on programme design nor in the annual monitoring process (as discussed in section B8). Therefore, the team **recommends** that the School ensures that students are formally involved in programme design, approval and monitoring processes by February 2017.

2.51   The University review in 2015 recommended that the School continues to reflect on student engagement in committees involved in quality assurance and the student experience. The School responded to that recommendation by stating that it was difficult for students to be available to attend Academic Board meetings as all programmes delivered on-site have a duration of one year. The review team was given assurances that student membership of Academic Board will be reintroduced with the commencement of the two-year foundation degree. The review team **affirms** the introduction of student representation on the Academic Board from autumn term 2016.

2.52   Overall, the review team was assured that the School makes effective use of a number of ways of gathering student feedback and that there is evidence of real change as a result of this. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is met. The level of risk is moderate however, as, notwithstanding the affirmation above, there remains an insufficient emphasis given to including student representatives on School committees; and there is a shortcoming in the access to training for elected student representatives.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.53   The School asserts that it complies with the University's assessment policies and regulations, and obtains approval for assessment strategies through the course approval and validation process. Intended learning outcomes and assessment methodologies are stated in programme specifications and module descriptors. These are validated by the University and aligned to its requirements. The University appoints external examiners to check that the assessment process measures student achievement against the intended outcomes of the course, and is conducted in line with its policies and regulations.

2.54   The University's assessment and progression regulations, including arrangements for the conduct of assessment boards, are set out in a document which is referenced in course handbooks and also available to staff and students through the VLE. The School's Quality Manual outlines its assessment policies and practices and includes a policy for RPL. The Quality Manual indicates that a range of assessment methods is to be used, with assessment to be appropriate to the level of the course and module. The School recognises the importance of varying modes of assessment to provide equal opportunities for a diverse student body.

2.55   The School has delegated responsibility from the University to undertake a range of assessment tasks, including setting assessments, first marking and moderation of student work, and giving feedback on their work to students. Student assessment is designed on the basis of coursework and students do not sit formal examinations. The constitution and procedures of Examination Boards are governed by the University's regulations.

2.56   The School's arrangements for operation of the University's framework of regulations, policies and procedures with respect to assessment would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.57   The review team considered documentation relating to the principles of assessment, including University assessment regulations, course handbooks, programme specifications and module descriptors, and documentation on the operation of assessment including assessment briefs, external examiners' reports, and course leader reports. The team also met staff and students to discuss the operation of assessment and feedback processes.

2.58   The School has effective processes in place to conduct assessment and meet the requirements of its awarding body. This is confirmed by external examiners' reports. The assessment process is appropriately managed by course leaders, and staff involved in assessment are aware of marking and grading criteria. Quality and standards are assured through tutors double marking summative assessments and internal moderation. This ensures that the assessment criteria have been consistently applied and that the grade and feedback is appropriate.

2.59   Tutors receive appropriate training on the assessment and moderation processes through internal peer discussions, attendance on the University's Postgraduate Certificate in

Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and other staff development events at the University. However, information for staff and students on assessment regulations and policies is contained online in the very lengthy and detailed University of Brighton General Examination and Assessment Regulations for Taught Courses (GEAR). This includes information of no relevance to the School. The School's recently developed Quality Manual contains a brief outline of assessment; however, there is no statement of the School's assessment policy to facilitate a course team's understanding of the quality process in relation to assessment. The review team **recommends** that the School formalises and disseminates a customised assessment policy and processes for all validated provision by February 2017.

2.60   The School has incorporated the University's RPL Policy into the process for establishing prior learning for direct entry to programmes. The University's Partner College Review Report noted that the School has a rigorous process for students who wish to apply for RPL. Applicants who may be eligible are made aware of RPL and supported throughout the process of application and assessment.

2.61   There are robust processes in place to inform students about assessment requirements. For example, students receive assessment guidance through course handbooks which contain programme specifications and state generic grading criteria and marking criteria at module level. Information about the assessment of learning outcomes and assessment criteria is communicated in several ways, including verbally at the start of each project, in writing in project briefs and in marking sheets, and as part of other written and verbal feedback. Course leaders also have a timetabled session, called 'This Week/Next Week', to pass on important information to students on a weekly basis, in particular ensuring that there is no confusion over assessment briefs or hand-in dates. Students confirmed that they are effectively made aware of assessment requirements through all of these methods. Further, students confirmed that they are given clear information on what they are expected to submit for assessment and how work is assessed and marked. Accommodations are made for disability and other personal factors where necessary; for example, by the conversion of a 3D model submission to a digital submission, and allowing a student with impaired speech to deliver verbal presentations using software and text.

2.62   Students are provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the skills to demonstrate, good academic practice. This includes tutor sessions and online resources on referencing and avoiding plagiarism, and statements on academic misconduct in course handbooks. Students submit written coursework through plagiarism-detection software.

2.63   Students receive feedback on assessment within 20 working days of submission. Students are generally satisfied with the content and timeliness of feedback return. External examiners have commended the School for timely and high-quality feedback. The range of methods used to deliver feedback is continually being reviewed and students have welcomed the recent introduction of online audio feedback.

2.64   Overall, the review team concludes that the School has valid and reliable assessment processes. It complies with the requirements of its awarding body, and enables students to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes through the effective operation of assessment processes that are confirmed by external examiners. Notwithstanding the recommendation to formalise and disseminate a customised assessment policy, Expectation B6 is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code*, Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.65   External examiners are appointed by the University on the recommendation of the School. The University outlines the role of external examiners as to provide standards advice, to be part of the monitoring and evaluation process and to identify good practice. Operationally, their function is to approve assessment marks, meet course leaders and provide reports for the University.

2.66   The School suggests potential external examiners to the University by nominating suitable experts from the national body of Interior Design Educators. This body has been established by subject-specific academics to create a pool of potential candidates for external examining. Nominations are made using the criteria outlined by the University. The University appoints one or more external examiners to all validated programmes to review a representative sample of students' summative assessed work. The School offers induction sessions for new external examiners. The University issues all new external examiners with its Handbook for External Examiners.

2.67   The School provides guidance to staff for working with external examiners, which includes roles and operational responsibilities. These include informal dialogue with staff over such areas as project briefs/assignments and formal approval of marked assessment. The School states that formal and informal feedback from external examiners is constructive and pivotal in course development, as well as helping the School identify and disseminate good practice. The annual reports from external examiners are viewed by the School as a vital part of its academic health cycle. Students have opportunities to meet external examiners during their visits to the School.

2.68   The external examiners are mainly required to endorse that the grades, credit and awards are at an appropriate level compared to other institutions before they are presented for ratification at Examination Boards. External examiners attend meetings of Examination Boards which are run jointly by the University and the School. The School is required by the University to formally respond to any actions raised by external examiners in their annual report.

2.69   The processes in place at the School to make scrupulous use of external examiners and would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.70   The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements and resources for engaging with external examiners through the examination of a variety of documentation including an evaluation of external examiner reports, minutes of assessment board and the awarding body's requirements for external examiner appointments and engagement. The team also met senior, teaching and support staff from the School, University representatives, and students.

2.71   There is a robust system in place within the School for making effective use of external examiners. External examiners do not formally review assessment briefs before they are issued to students. However, there is appropriate informal dialogue with external examiners prior to new ideas for assessment are implemented. Also, these dialogues afford the School opportunities to amend assessment briefs as required.

2.72   Staff value the role of external examiners who actively work with them in a supportive capacity rather than just for the purpose of verifying academic standards.

Advice from external examiners has been used to make improvements across programmes. For example, when examiners had identified some overlapping content in modules on two different programmes, both teams were able to work together to streamline the delivery of content leading to an enhanced student experience.

2.73   External examiner reports show that the examiners are satisfied with the assessment process at the School and that standards are appropriate for the validated awards. The School engages positively with external examiners and has a well-established system for responding to their formal reports for the purposes of quality assurance and enhancement. Recommendations made by external examiners are responded to through an action plan developed by the programme team and monitored by the School, through its Academic Board. This also enables any cross-School themes to be identified and addressed. Detailed written responses are also provided to the external examiner. Programme teams also use external examiner reports to develop their end-of-year action plans as part of formal programme review.

2.74   Some actions may also be identified and taken through to the School's Academic Health Report, now referred to as Course Programme Report. For example, the Academic Health Report for academic year 2013-14 identified an action to assist students with the transition from diploma to degree level.

2.75   Students met by the team had a good understanding of the role of the external examiner in assuring the quality of their learning experience. However, the process of publishing external examiner reports through the VLE was not universally recognised by these students.

2.76   In conclusion, the processes and practices for all aspects of dealing with external examiners is robust and fit for purpose. External examiners are satisfied with the assessment process at the School and that standards are appropriate for the validated awards. There is a clearly established system for receiving, discussing and actioning external examiner reports within the School. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.77   The School has a structured annual quality cycle for programme monitoring and review with processes to address internal and University requirements. The processes and procedures, terms of reference for committees, areas of responsibility and the role of student representatives are set out in the Quality Manual. This is supported by the Annual Quality Planner which provides a schedule for staff and students of activities, including the preparation of monitoring reports.

2.78   There is an academic committee structure with meetings for monitoring and reporting according to an annual quality plan. This entails senior academic staff meetings for course leaders and for validated course leaders three times per term, and an end-of-year course teams review. Informal meetings of student representatives with senior management and academic staff, careers and student welfare staff are held once per term for full-time programmes, and once per year for other study modes. Course leaders hold regular weekly meetings with student cohorts, called This Week/Next Week. In addition, course leaders and members of operations, careers, and welfare teams meet weekly. Outcomes of all of these meetings contribute to the agenda of the Academic Board, which meets once per term.

2.79   The Academic Board has strategic oversight of quality. It approves the annual review report and action plan, and is responsible for ensuring that actions are taken. The Executive Committee composed of senior managers, monitors operations through monthly reports and also contributes to the agenda of the Academic Board. The Quality Manual contains the terms of reference for all committees.

2.80   Course leaders prepare termly and end-of-year reports for internal use and an annual monitoring report for the University using standard templates. Student data, student feedback, and external examiners' reports inform the process of review and action planning. The School also undertakes end-of-course student surveys and module evaluations to obtain student feedback.

2.81   In addition to annual monitoring processes, the School undergoes a five-year periodic review with the University which includes consideration of quality processes and arrangements to enhance the quality of learning opportunities.

2.82   The structures and processes that the School has in place for monitoring and review would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.83   The effectiveness of the School's processes in this Expectation area was examined through a review of committee terms of reference and minutes of meetings, including academic board minutes and action plans, as well as consideration of annual course leader and programme review reports, and periodic review documentation. The review team also held meetings with senior, teaching and support staff and with students.

2.84   The School operates systematic and effective processes for annual monitoring and review that inform internal quality assurance and also address the requirements of the University. For example, course leaders prepare termly reports that inform the annual review report for the Academic Board. The programme of meetings between academic and support staff and with students provides a system of regular monitoring of learning opportunities.

2.85   Relatively minor action points arising from these meetings are addressed by members of the relevant committees, and wider matters concerning a module or course are taken forward in the Academic Board agenda. All Academic Board meetings receive updates and discuss progress on each item in the action plan. For example, the issue of a smooth transition from the Level 5 Diploma to the Level 6 BA (Hons) course, which was identified by an external examiner, was discussed at the Academic Board and taken forward by inclusion in the action plan.

2.86   The Annual Academic Health report for the University draws on a range of information, including course reports, student evaluations, external examiner reports, and feedback from industry and employers. The School makes the report available to staff and students and builds on good practice to enhance learning opportunities. The University commended the School for identifying good practice and acknowledging areas for review in its 2015 report.

2.87   The School has recently undergone a five-yearly periodic review by the University of the BA (Hons) and Diploma programmes, which led to commendations from the review panel for several aspects of learning opportunities. The periodic review included consideration of the trends that the School identified from analysis of student cohort data on age and gender profiles, retention, progression and achievement. The School undertakes monitoring of retention statistics at course level, and achievement data with reference to assessment results and external examiner reports is discussed at Academic Board.

2.88   Module evaluation has recently been introduced with the full-time BA (Hons) and Diploma cohorts, and the results will contribute to analysis and evaluation of performance and achievement data for end-of-year course reviews. There is no use of statistical data on retention to monitor quality of student support and achievement, as stated by teaching staff. The School acknowledges that analysis of student data is an area for further development, and the Academic Board recently decided that evaluation of achievement data should be undertaken as part of the quality cycle at the end of each course. The review team **recommends** that the School develops the processes for analysing, evaluating and acting on student data on retention and achievement by July 2017.

2.89   Students are consulted and contribute their views through surveys, module evaluation and meetings between staff and student representatives. Students whom the review team met confirmed that they have opportunities to give feedback on their learning experience and suggest changes to which the teaching team are responsive. Student representatives met the Periodic Review Panel. However, they do not participate formally in course end-of-year review meetings, or have any representation on the Academic Board. The lack of student participation in School quality assurance structures has contributed to an associated recommendation in Expectation B5 (paragraph 2.49).

2.90   Overall, the School has appropriate structures and processes in place for the conduct of programme monitoring and review. These involve all levels of staff, engage with industry and employers, use external examiner reports and take account of student views, and enable the requirements of the University to be met. Therefore, the review team concludes that Expectation B8 is met. However, the associated level of risk is moderate since the School is not routinely using data on student retention and achievement to monitor and enhance the quality of learning opportunities and as it is not formally involving students in the quality assurance process.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.

Quality Code, *Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints*

Findings

2.91   The School has responsibility for handling student complaints. There is a student complaints procedure which is detailed in the Course Handbook and referenced in the Quality Manual.

2.92   Students are encouraged to raise complaints informally either with their course leader directly, or through their student representative. If there is no resolution of the informal complaint, students can raise a formal complaint following the internal complaints procedure. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint and all internal processes have been exhausted, they can raise the complaint to the University via a Stage 4 Review. If the student is still unhappy after receiving a 'completion of procedures' letter, the complaint can be taken to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

2.93   The University has overall responsibility for handling academic appeals. The School has an academic appeals process. Academic appeals are handled by the School in the first instance before being progressed to the University when internal processes have been exhausted. When academic appeals are progressed to the University, they follow its processes as found in GEAR.

2.94   The policies and procedures in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.95   The Memorandum of Cooperation clearly states that the handling of academic appeals is the responsibility of the University. The academic appeals process makes provision for informal appeals to be dealt with locally by the School. Those who wish to raise a complaint formally are directed to the University's procedures. However, the review team found that the academic appeals process appended to the course handbooks describes a different process. This document states that appeals are handled internally by the School at both the informal and the formal stage. The University is then involved at a review stage where students can follow its regulated process if they are unsatisfied with the outcome of the formal appeal.

2.96   In addition, staff stated that academic appeals would be handled informally by the School and formally by the University, but were not able to fully articulate the process that a student raising an academic appeal would follow. Although staff were clear that a process is articulated in the course handbooks, that process does not fully align with the University's policies and procedures. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the School ensures alignment of the academic appeals process in the course handbook with the University's academic appeal process by December 2016. In this respect, the review team also **recommends** that the School ensures that staff are fully aware of the correct procedures for both academic appeals and complaints by December 2016.

2.97   The team concludes that the processes and procedures in place for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement. Despite the procedures for academic appeals and student complaints being broadly adequate, there is a lack of clarity as to the School's responsibility for academic appeals at the formal stage. The team formed the view

that this is more of an oversight than a serious error. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated risk is 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

2.98   The School does not consider any of its higher education provision to fall within the scope of this Expectation. Work placements are offered across a number of programmes but these are optional rather than mandatory. Placements are managed appropriately and there is no contribution from placements towards any learning outcomes or assessment. The School, in collaboration with its awarding body is clear about the status of work-based learning within programmes. Therefore, the review team concurs with the School's own viewpoint that this Expectation is not applicable to this review.

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

2.99   The School has no research degrees and no research students. Therefore, this Expectation is not applicable to this review.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.101   The School has effective policies, processes and practice in place for most Expectations in the Quality Code associated with assuring the quality of learning opportunities. There are considerable strengths in the teaching and learning activities of the School and all students benefit greatly from this. Two areas of good practice are recorded (Expectations B3 and B4). These concern the use of interactive online teaching and the comprehensive employer engagement embedded in all programmes. Students were very appreciative of the overall approach to ensuring the quality of their learning opportunities.

2.102   All teaching and learning activities, together with the support received from professional staff, help to enhance the quality of the learning experience, enabling all students to achieve the required skills and competencies to progress towards their final award. Employers, external examiners and alumni were also very positive about the learning experience of students in the School.

2.103   The School's approach to the design, moderation and practice of assessment of students provides appropriate opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes for each stage of study.

2.104   Overall, there are six recommendations concerning practice with respect to the quality of learning opportunities (two each in Expectations B5 and B9, one each in B6 and B8). These are concerned with ensuring that students are formally involved in programme design, approval and monitoring processes; ensuring that all student representatives have access to training and ongoing support for their role; formalising and disseminating a customised assessment policy and processes for all validated provision; developing the processes for analysing, evaluating and acting upon student data on retention and achievement; ensuring alignment of the academic appeals process in the student handbook with the awarding body's academic appeals process and ensuring that staff are fully aware of procedures for this area.

2.105   There is one affirmation (Expectation B5), which is concerned with the introduction of student representation on the Academic Board from autumn term 2016.

2.106   Three Expectations have an associated moderate risk. However, overall, the review team deems the risk to be low. The team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **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 provides a range of information about its higher education provision on its website where information for prospective students, parents, sponsors, industry and the wider public is published. For example, the mission statement, core values and overall strategy of the School can be found on the website. This information also includes programme specifications, course information and study methods found via the course pages on the website.

3.2 Information for current students is published on the VLE and is also available in hard copies. When students enrol they are provided with a student handbook tailored to their course, a timetable for their course and a Learning Agreement that sets out the expectations between them and the School.

3.3 Information for staff is published on the staff intranet. External examiners have access to the VLE to obtain the information they require. This information is also available in hard copy.

3.4 The School has a Public Information Policy which is included in the Quality Manual. The School gathers feedback on its public information from prospective, current and past students through surveys, questionnaires and the student representatives.

3.5 The University maintains the definitive information about the School's higher education provision, and any alterations to validated documents undergo an approval process, involving School and University processes.

3.6 The School's arrangements for the production of information would enable it to meet the Expectation.

3.7 The review team tested the effectiveness of the School's arrangements for publication and assurance of information by exploring the availability and accuracy of information on the website and VLE. It also scrutinised the Quality Manual, course handbooks, programme specifications and the Public Information Policy. The team held meetings with senior, teaching and support staff and students. Staff meetings included representation from the University.

3.8 Overall, the review team found the procedures for producing information about higher education provision to be effective in practice. Students confirmed that the information on the website was relevant, accurate and useful during the application and enrolment process. However, the review team found discrepancies in information about the academic appeals policy between course handbooks and the University's published policy, and this inaccuracy has led to an associated recommendation under Expectation B9 (paragraph 2.96).

3.9 In conclusion, the review team finds that the information produced by the School for its intended audiences about the higher education it offers is fit for purpose, accessible and

trustworthy. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is met. The inaccuracy noted in the information on academic appeals is deemed by the team to be of a minor nature, therefore the associated risk is low.

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

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

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

3.11   One area attracted an associated recommendation (with Expectation B5) regarding the need to ensure alignment of the academic appeals process in the student handbook with the University's academic appeals process.

3.12   Overall, the review team finds that the School has considered the formal requirements, and can demonstrate its compliance with the Expectation. The School has appropriate approval mechanisms in place for ensuring that published information is accurate.

3.13   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's approach to enhancement of learning opportunities is underpinned by its strategy to deliver socially purposeful higher education that equips graduates to contribute effectively to the interior design profession and communities locally, nationally and internationally. The current strategic focus with regard to the validated provision is on embedding new programmes and enhancing quality following a period of extensive development work. Strategic aims include ensuring that a new teaching and learning information technology platform provides an improved student learning experience, and a focus on student employability.

4.2   The School's mission to enhance opportunities for individuals to fulfil their potential starts with its admission procedures. This focus ensures applicants select the correct course to suit their needs, aspirations and abilities. The School's Principal established a charitable trust in 2015, Design Changes Lives Foundation, to provide bursaries to support the School's strategy to widen student participation.

4.3   Additionally, the School's strategic approach to enhancement involves students undertaking community-based projects with charities as part of a module on the Diploma in Interior Design. These are typically group projects enabling students to apply the principles of design to address live briefs from clients. Recent examples are design projects such as 'Regenerate', which is concerned with a youth community centre; a major hospital; and the premises of a charity for children.

4.4   The School takes deliberate steps to accommodate different types of learning and modes of study, with significant investment in developing information technology to support and enhance online student learning. These developments also improve resources for onsite students and widen participation for students who are unable to study onsite or who wish to study through a blended learning mode of study.

4.5   The committee structure and procedures enable enhancement opportunities to be identified. For example, the Validated Courses Committee provides a forum for discussion of curriculum assessment, learning, teaching and the sharing of good practice. Student Representative Meetings enable student views to be considered and contribute to quality enhancement. The Academic Board has strategic oversight of quality and receives reports from committees, including the Validated Courses Committee, Student Representative Meetings, course leaders, and end-of-year course teams review. All of these groups consider enhancement opportunities. Academic Board Action Plans indicate the priorities for continuous development of the provision.

4.6   The commitment to improve the student learning experience and the structures in place to identify and support enhancement would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.7   To test this Expectation, the review team considered the School's Learning and Teaching Strategy, a variety of policies and minutes of senior level meetings for evidence of discussion of improvements in the quality of students' learning opportunities. In addition, the team held meetings with the Principal, senior, teaching and support staff, employers and alumni, and students.

4.8   The School demonstrates effective strategic leadership and an embedded ethos to encourage continual improvements that enhance student learning opportunities. At

operational level, there are effective structures and processes to identify and share good practice and to lead to further enhancement. However, the School has not articulated its strategy for enhancement in its policy statements and staff do not have a clear overview of the approach to enhancement. The review team therefore **recommends** that the School articulates its strategy for enhancement by February 2017.

4.9   Additionally, quality assurance procedures do not currently undertake a strategic review of student data on retention and achievement in order to identify further opportunities for enhancement. This finding has contributed to the associated recommendation in Expectation B8 relating to student data on retention and achievement.

4.10   The School has a number of innovative enhancement initiatives in place, and a significant development relates to delivery of online learning. The School created a new VLE primarily to support students on the new online Foundation Degree in Interior Design. This enhanced learning tool will ultimately underpin all validated programmes (see paragraph 2.36). The system is a customised blend of platforms that will enable students to create journals, upload files, embed social media resources from the web, and collaborate in groups. It will provide students with a single point to access all learning resources and student information. The development of the customised VLE constitutes a deliberate and strategic approach to enhancement of student learning.

4.11   The development of a virtual work experience programme called Studio K is another example of a deliberate strategic step towards enhancement. The programme has been developed to provide experience of professional practice to students who are excluded from work experience due to visa restrictions or their location. Studio K simulates the activities of an interior design and architecture practice and students complete the course online through the School's VLE. It was launched in April 2016 as part of the Foundation Degree in Interior Design (Blended Learning) and access is being extended to all students. This initiative is a significant enhancement to learning opportunities, especially for international students and those studying at a distance from the School's London base.

4.12   The Future of Education Group has recently been established to identify and encourage excellence in teaching practice, for example in using new technology and online teaching that can be incorporated into the teaching and learning strategies of validated programmes. The Group operates in the form of an action learning set, meeting twice per year, and identifies projects that can be trialled with students, and then disseminated. Examples of successful innovations are the use of video to record individual students' presentations on the full-time Diploma in Interior Design, and KLC TV to provide live streaming of students' presentations at the School to students studying online.

4.13   The Design Changes Lives Foundation is a further School initiative that supports its strategy to widen student participation and contribute to the interior design profession. The Foundation provides bursaries and enables students to undertake group projects in industrial settings. It has received a response from both industry and students, and is being extended with the involvement of organisations such as Mencap.

4.14   Overall, the review team concludes that the School has taken deliberate and strategic steps to enhance the quality of students' learning experiences in a variety of ways, including the use of technology and online learning and links with industry. Although the strategy for enhancement is not articulated in policy statements, there is an ethos of strong commitment to continual improvement in learning and teaching. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.16   The School's approach to enhancement of learning opportunities is underpinned by its strategy to deliver socially purposeful higher education that equips graduates to contribute effectively to the interior design profession and communities locally, nationally and internationally. The School takes deliberate steps to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities. It has a strong and effective approach to ensuring regular and systematic initiatives that enhance student learning opportunities.

4.17   The team found two areas where it recommends action to be taken: the first recommends that the School articulates its strategy for enhancement, and the second (associated with Expectation B8) concerns developing the process for analysing, evaluating and acting on student data on retention and achievement.

4.18   The review 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 theme of employability includes an exploration of the School's current career services as a higher education provider and the various methods it adopts to develop students' employability skills, enterprise skills and entrepreneurial skills.

5.2	In evaluating the School's student employability initiatives, their effectiveness and their role in enhancing the students' experience, the School seeks to meet local, national and international needs and make a major contribution to the development of qualified designers. Therefore, employability is a very important focus for the School as it seeks to produce very high calibre graduates for the design profession and be regarded as the leading institution for training designers.

5.3	Engagement with employability is central to the student experience, is curriculum-wide and begins at the induction stage. All programmes have employability designed into module specifications and assessed learning outcomes. There are specific modules designed to develop generic employment-related skills. There is also provision for voluntary student placements in industry. The School takes steps to help students think beyond their areas of study when considering and pursuing career options.

5.4	Employer links are strong throughout all programmes and these provide opportunities for students to gain practical skills and thus enhance their employability prospects. The review team met employers and alumni, whose companies operate a successful work-based learning relationship with the School. Modules are selected to develop effective employability skills and students considered these to be valuable to them. Industry specialists, acting as module tutors, use their current work as live briefs for studio activities. There are also industry case study workshops and work-based learning opportunities both in simulation and in practice. Students and academic staff confirmed that employability was effectively covered on their programmes.

5.5	The School also articulated several examples of employability-focused learning opportunities. These include opportunities for students to consult with employers, student visits and an extensive range of visiting speakers. Employability advisers have been appointed to work in all areas. Careers advice is appropriately provided and students confirmed it is of value to them. The overall finding is that the School has clear strategies and effective practices for developing and promoting employability skills and activities for its students.

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 22-25 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

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

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

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

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

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