



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Millennium Performing Arts

May 2017

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Millennium Performing Arts. The review took place from 23-25 May 2017 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Elisabeth Cook
- Ms Catherine Fairhurst
- Mr Dan Derricott.

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

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

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

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#)² and explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).³ For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.

² QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.

³ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education.

Key findings

Judgements

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities is **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

Good practice

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

- the use of audition days to deepen applicants' knowledge of the College and their own practice (Expectation B2)
- the integrated professional practice environment which ensures the currency of the provision and delivers a high quality learning experience (Expectation B3)
- the embedded and holistic approach to supporting students' individual needs (Expectation B4).

Recommendations

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

By October 2017:

- articulate consistently the relationship between the College's and the awarding body's complaints policies (Expectation B9)

By July 2018:

- support student representatives to engage more fully with the business of College committees and the decision-making process (Expectation B5)
- develop the reflective culture into a more strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities (Enhancement).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following action already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students:

- the work undertaken to develop a new website and learning management system (Expectation C)

About the provider

Millennium Performing Arts (MPA) was created in 1997 by three professional performers and teachers. It is a private vocational college for training professional performers in three distinct disciplines (Singing, Acting and Dancing). MPA offers a range of programmes in the musical theatre subject area. The College's mission is to provide an outstanding opportunity for young performers in a progressive environment where everyone can realise their true potential.

In 2002 the College was included in the Dance and Drama Awards (DaDA) Scheme awarded to vocational colleges in the further education sector. At this time MPA affiliated to Trinity College London (TCL), the awarding body which validates the National Diploma in Dance and Performance, required for DaDA Awards. All of the College's provision is accredited by the Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET). The College relocated into its own building in Woolwich in 2008, which enabled it to expand its provision and to reach a less economically affluent community in their outreach and community provision.

MPA expanded its academic portfolio through the introduction of an undergraduate degree in Musical Theatre in 2015. The programme is validated by the University for the Creative Arts (UCA). At the same time specific course designation was achieved allowing students to access student loans to support their studies. In 2016 a Dance pathway within the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre programme gained UCA approval for operation from September 2017.

The College has 146 full-time students across all programmes, 27 of whom study on the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre.

The last QAA Review for Specific Course Designation (RSCD) took place in 2015 and the College has since successfully completed both the institutional and course validation by the awarding body. The College supported these developments through a focus on appropriate staffing and, in particular, through the introduction of academic and support staff roles and responsibilities and the development of its academic governance structures.

MPA has built on the good practice identified in the 2015 Review for Specific Course Designation report with regard to the format of audition days and the continuation of the weekly student review meetings. The College has addressed the six advisable recommendations from the review, with the action regarding programme information on the website still ongoing.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations

Expectation (A1): In order to secure threshold academic standards, degree-awarding bodies:

a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* are met by:

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 Millennium Performing Arts (MPA) delivers its higher education provision in partnership with the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) as the awarding body. MPA currently offers one undergraduate programme in Musical Theatre. UCA retains responsibility for the academic standards and sets the standards for MPA's higher education programme through its own academic frameworks and regulations. MPA's quality management cycle document and the Quality Manual describe its academic quality and standards framework. UCA awards the qualification and assigns credit values to units. The terms of reference of MPA's Teaching Quality and Enhancement Committee state that it is responsible for assuring the academic standards and quality of all academic provision and reports to the Academic Board. The approach taken by MPA in respect of the maintenance of academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.2 The review team tested this Expectation through scrutiny of approval and review documents from the awarding body, internal quality documents and in discussions with

senior and academic staff.

1.3 The awarding body's programme approval processes together with external examiner oversight fully secure the UK threshold standards and aligns the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre to the FHEQ. This is explicit in the programme specification. The unit specifications also clearly display the FHEQ level for each module and are aligned to the level descriptors. MPA has explicitly mapped learning outcomes to the relevant levels and areas of study. The awarding body's validation report confirms that the programme is appropriately aligned to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), with specific reference to Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ. The external examiner appointed by the UCA confirms that the standards set conform to Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ. MPA clearly communicates intended learning outcomes to students through programme documentation. Academic managers and teaching staff show a good understanding of the FHEQ and its implications for programme design, delivery and assessment.

1.4 There are thorough and effective processes to secure and maintain academic standards. The Expectation is met and the 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

1.5 MPA is responsible for setting, marking and moderation of assessment. The award of academic credit and qualifications is made in accordance with UCA's academic regulations. MPA adheres to the awarding body's academic framework and regulations in order to secure academic standards, in particular UCA's Common Credit Framework. MPA's Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy outlines the purposes and principles that guide assessment for the higher education programme. The Moderation Strategy describes the required processes for marking and standardisation.

1.6 MPA exercises oversight of the maintenance of academic standards through its deliberative committee structure. Course Boards of Studies are subcommittees of UCA's School Board of Studies. The quality management cycle runs parallel to that of UCA. Academic policies and procedures are detailed in the Quality Manual. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.7 In considering this Expectation the review team scrutinised the awarding body's academic framework and regulations, MPA quality assurance procedures, minutes of meetings, and external examiner reports. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff and students.

1.8 MPA has developed formal arrangements for the oversight of the internal academic frameworks and to ensure compliance with awarding body regulations. There is an established, but not yet mature committee structure with minutes demonstrating that the Teaching Quality and Enhancement Committee reporting to the Academic Board has started to take responsibility for academic standards. The Curriculum Planning and Review committee reports to the Academic Board and reviews the student learning experience. The Finance Committee, chaired by one of the Directors, takes commercial decisions and the Academic Board, chaired by the Principal, determines academic matters so decisions on academic standards and quality of learning opportunities are not compromised by business imperatives.

1.9 Students have access to UCA's academic regulations governing their programme through electronic hyperlinks within the programme handbook. The regulations are also available on the internal file sharing system. Students and staff confirmed that they understand the regulations and know where they can be found.

1.10 The unit specifications clearly articulate the assessment requirements. The Examination Board fulfils its role in an appropriate manner. It receives assessment results, deals with resubmissions as appropriate and confirms awards. The report from the external examiner confirms that the delivery and management of the award is satisfactory.

1.11 MPA has ensured that its responsibilities in this area are fully understood by staff and are increasingly embedded in its governance processes. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.12 MPA has developed a programme specification and corresponding unit descriptors for the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre programme, which make use of the awarding body's templates. The programme specification sets out the key features of the programme, including the learning outcomes, the credit structure and the FHEQ level. The document was subject to scrutiny during the awarding body's programme validation process and the approved version forms a definitive, agreed record of the programme. This approach would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.13 In considering this Expectation the review team explored how the learning outcomes in unit descriptors map to those in the overall programme specification and examined the mapping exercise. The team also met senior and academic staff.

1.14 The clear and comprehensive programme specification and unit descriptors provide a helpful record of the programme and any changes to them are subject to a formal approval process. Staff are familiar with the documents and use them to inform the delivery and assessment of the subjects they teach. Staff are aware of the autonomy they have in their teaching and when they would need to seek approval for changes. While the relationship between the learning outcomes in the unit descriptors and the programme specification could be more explicit in order to reinforce the overall coherence of the programme, the review team were satisfied that the links existed and were recognised by staff.

1.15 Overall, there is an effective system for articulating and recording programmes which informs teaching and quality assurance. The Expectation is therefore met and the robustness of the approach means that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.16 MPA has responsibility for the development of new programmes. They are approved by the awarding body using its programme approval processes. These assign each award to an appropriate level within the FHEQ, scrutinise credit values in accordance with the Common Credit Framework for Taught Programmes (CCF) and approve unit descriptors. Each unit is assigned a credit level and volume. Unit descriptors include the unit learning outcomes and are mapped to the assessment methods and assessment criteria. The programme as a whole is mapped against the Subject Benchmark Statement for Dance, Drama and Performance. MPA follows the awarding body's requirements when developing higher education programmes for approval. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.17 In considering this Expectation the review team examined programme approval documentation and approval reports and met with senior and academic staff.

1.18 At the time of the review only one degree programme had been developed and approved. In the process MPA has been guided by documentation provided by UCA. The validation report for the BA (Hons) in Musical Theatre confirms that the programme is appropriately aligned to the FHEQ, takes account of the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement and complies with UCA's own regulatory context. Staff clearly articulated the awarding body's processes that are to be followed in programme approval and explained the considered way in which the College is preparing for forthcoming programme approvals.

1.19 MPA fully implements the awarding body's processes for the approval of programmes. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.20 Assessment of learning outcomes is overseen by UCA through the approval of individual unit descriptors at programme validation. Assessment components and criteria are mapped to unit learning outcomes to ensure that assessment schemes test the learning outcomes. The Examination Board ensures that credit and qualifications are only awarded where learning outcomes have been achieved. External examiners appointed by the awarding body are asked to confirm that standards are maintained at an appropriate level. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.21 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined unit descriptors, validation and external examiner reports, and relevant committee minutes. The team also met senior and academic staff.

1.22 The BA (Hons) in Musical Theatre includes units of a credit size not typically used by the awarding body. Unit descriptors clearly align learning outcomes to assessment and all unit learning outcomes are mapped against programme learning outcomes. The external examiner's report confirms that the design of the programme allows for the achievement of the learning outcomes and that processes for assessment and for the determination of awards are sound.

1.23 Achievement of learning outcomes is demonstrated through assessment set by MPA. The awarding body's assessment moderators confirm that the assessments set are appropriate for the level of the qualification and allow students to demonstrate that they have met the unit learning outcomes. UCA staff also attend the Examination Board to ensure that assessment processes are consistent with the awarding body's requirements. Minutes of the board confirm that assessment decisions are robust.

1.24 MPA has effective systems in place which ensure that credit is only awarded on meeting relevant learning outcomes and academic standards set by the awarding body have been satisfied. The review team concludes that 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

1.25 MPA has completed one cycle of annual programme monitoring. Annual monitoring reports follow a UCA template and consider data relating to student achievement and external examiner comments. Reports are presented in full to the relevant UCA School Board of Study for consideration. A summary is then made by the University, which is presented to the MPA Course Board. The awarding body will also carry out periodic programme reviews, the first one being scheduled for 2017-18. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.26 In considering this Expectation the review team examined documentation relating to programme monitoring and met senior and academic staff.

1.27 MPA has fully implemented the awarding body's annual programme monitoring procedures. The annual monitoring report meets the awarding body's reporting requirements, but with the higher education provision only in its second year, data to support annual monitoring is limited and analysis of trends not yet possible. However, staff confirmed the usefulness of feedback from the University link tutor on the report and by the external examiner in relation to understanding and maintaining academic standards.

1.28 MPA has processes in place and that ensure appropriate monitoring of the provision and enable academic standards to be maintained. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.29 MPA makes use of external and independent expertise at key stages to maintain academic standards through its awarding partners' validation procedures, link tutors, external examiners, and professional links. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.30 The review team tested the effectiveness of the processes for the use of independent external expertise by examining procedural documents and external examiners' reports. The review team also held meetings with senior and academic staff.

1.31 MPA makes extensive use of external and independent expertise at key stages of the quality processes. UCA's programme approval processes require external membership of validation panels who verify that threshold academic standards are set in accordance with national reference points and confirm that the University's internal requirements are implemented consistently.

1.32 The University provides independent expertise by appointing link tutors who comment on draft assessments, proposed programme modifications, and advise on academic standards. MPA makes appropriate use of the expertise of the University's link tutor, particularly with regard to assessment and programme monitoring.

1.33 To support the maintenance of standards, external examiners appointed by the awarding body ensure that the University's regulations are being implemented consistently, fairly and in line with national standards. MPA has clear processes for the consideration of external examiner reports.

1.34 External referencing is also achieved through professional links. MPA routinely invites a wide range of external professionals to observe performances and scrutinise formal assessment tasks. It confirms that the programme's comparability with professional standards is appropriate and current. MPA's overall provision is accredited by the Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET), which undertakes a full institutional review every four years resulting in a report, thus providing additional external input.

1.35 Overall external and independent expertise is used fully at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.36 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All seven of the Expectations for this judgement area are met and the associated level of risk is low in each case. There are no recommendations and affirmations in this judgement area.

1.37 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding body 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 MPA follows UCA's processes for the development and approval of programmes. The University provides guidance and templates to the College, which supports the various stages of approval, from initial idea to the approval event. The University conducts the approval events and ensures appropriate involvement of independent and external experts in them. MPA is responsible for developing the programme including the programme specification and unit descriptors and the programme handbook.

2.2 The Curriculum Planning and Review Committee is responsible for overseeing curriculum development including the development of new programmes and modifications to existing provision. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3 In considering this Expectation the review team examined programme approval documentation and reports, and relevant committee minutes. The team also met senior and academic staff, and students.

2.4 MPA has taken one programme to approval to date. A new programme is currently under consideration. The College's approach to the design and development of programmes has matured since the introduction of its first higher education programme, as has scrutiny of curriculum matters by the Curriculum, Planning and Review Committee (CPR). Staff reported increasing confidence in developing new programmes for approval and more sophisticated internal processes to support this work. CPR minutes confirm appropriate oversight of curriculum development and staff spoke of the usefulness of CPR meetings for shaping ideas. Plans are in place for practitioners and students to participate in the development of the new programme. A working group reporting to CPR has been established though at the time of the review had yet to meet.

2.5 MPA has appropriate processes in place that support curriculum development the approval of programmes by the awarding body. The review team concludes that Expectation B1 is met and that the 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

2.6 Entry to MPA is via application and audition. The College has a single policy governing admissions across all its programmes, including higher education programmes. The policy outlines a high level commitment to equality of opportunity. Additionally, the Auditions, Admissions and Enrolment Procedures elaborate on the practical steps involved in applying to MPA and being considered for a place on the programmes, some of which is also summarised on the website. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.7 In considering this Expectation the review team examined the admissions policy and procedures and held meetings with senior, academic and professional support staff and students.

2.8 The Admissions Policy specifies the entry criteria and fitness to study requirements. It also includes the right to appeal admissions decisions. The Auditions, Admissions and Enrolment Procedures are sufficiently detailed and provide valuable information for students about the application and auditions process. Students can access the application form online via the College website. Students found the admissions process straight forward.

2.9 MPA has built upon the feature of good practice with regard to admissions identified in the 2014 review report. The approach to auditions has further evolved through engaging staff in a dialogue about possible improvements to the audition day, which is the major decision making point in the admissions process. The College actively encouraged greater interdisciplinary working of admissions staff, resulting in student singing and acting competences now being assessed jointly. A workshop model is used for auditions to give applicants real-time feedback. This gives staff an insight into the applicant's capacity for growth, which is a core attribute for MPA students. It also gives the applicant an invaluable insight into the teaching and learning strategies used by the College. Staff are proud of the results this yields and reported that the quality of students admitted has improved. Students endorsed the approach as being helpful in making a decision about where to study. The use of audition days to deepen applicants' knowledge of the College and their own practice and inform their decision is a feature of **good practice**.

2.10 The value added by the College to its audition days greatly benefits staff and applicants. This is reflective of the overall approach to ensuring an engaging, inclusive and fair admissions process which tests applicants' suitability for the programme. The Expectation is therefore met and the robustness of the process means that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.11 MPA articulates and reviews the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices through various methods including external examiners' reports, annual programme reviews, teaching observations and student feedback. These processes are underpinned by the Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy. The approaches to learning and teaching are explained within each unit descriptor, detailed in the student handbook and introduced to students during their induction.

2.12 The Course Board of Studies has student representation and reports to the Academic Board. Formal student feedback feeds into the annual programme review process which comments on learning and teaching.

2.13 There is a performance appraisal scheme underpinned by an appraisal policy. The staff development policy specifies opportunities for internal training and continuing professional development. The arrangements in place would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.14 In considering this Expectation the review team examined policies and strategies relevant to learning and teaching, committee minutes, reports and teaching observation forms. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, professional support staff and students.

2.15 MPA's policies and procedures for maintaining and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning are sound. Key features of the higher education programme are the high number of contact hours combined with substantial one-to-one teaching with industry practitioners and extensive studio space. The external examiner comments favourably on the coherent and individualised teaching approach. The teaching team are primarily professional practitioners on part-time contracts. This enables the learning content to be current and accessible, which has a positive impact on the student experience. Students who met the team confirmed that they appreciate the learning opportunities presented, which is supported by the results of the internal student survey.

2.16 MPA recognises the importance of preparing students for professional practice. The teaching staff demonstrate a sound understanding of the requirements of delivering and assessing the practical aspects of the programmes underpinned by a thorough application of academic skills development. The external examiner comments favourably on the strong vocational focus of the programme. The review team considers that the integrated professional practice environment, which ensures the currency of provision and delivers a high quality learning environment makes a positive contribution to the students' learning experiences and is **good practice**.

2.17 New academic staff undergo an induction process with respect to strategies for learning and teaching and assessment. Additionally, all teaching staff have access to staff development to enhance their teaching practice and assessment knowledge. There are also funded opportunities available to complete teaching qualifications and higher degrees.

Good practice is shared formally at committee meetings and informally through team teaching. Teaching staff explained how the latter had positively impacted on their teaching practice.

2.18 All full-time teaching staff and visiting guest lecturers are routinely formally observed. There are plans to develop this into a wider appraisal scheme using peer review methods.

2.19 MPA obtains formal feedback from students on the quality of teaching and learning at regular intervals. The programme review and evaluation processes, using datasets from both UCA's internal student survey and MPA's own evaluation activity provide an overall analysis of student views. This includes views on programme delivery and resources which indicate that students are very satisfied with the teaching quality and learning resources receive high positive ratings.

2.20 The arrangements in place to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning are appropriate and robustly executed. The Expectation is therefore met and the level of 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

2.21 Student development and achievement at MPA is determined by the Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy, which emphasises creative achievement and personal professional growth. The College has an Equality and Diversity Policy which applies to students and staff. The Principal is also the Head of Welfare and a Welfare Committee has oversight of the student support systems. Students have access to a range of academic and pastoral support services, including health care. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

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

2.23 Student support is wide ranging and systems are robust. All new students receive an induction which consists of a series of talks about the requirements of the programme including an overview of the singing and acting elements, where to go to for help, and general rules and regulations of the College. An induction booklet details the academic and pastoral support routes open to students. Similar information is available in the programme handbook.

2.24 The academic support is thorough and continuously evolving. All staff have an 'open door policy' and personal tutorials with teaching staff can also be booked. Weekly student review meetings discuss individual students' progress and monitor and evaluate their development.

2.25 The study skills handbook outlines the key skills and their assessment for each discipline. External professionals are regularly involved in practical assessment panels to ensure the currency of the provision. Students have the opportunity to participate in professional auditions which enables them to develop their professional potential. This was commended in the UCA validation report and the external examiner report commented on the strength of the students' employability.

2.26 Students have access to a dedicated Counsellor who meets them regularly; all first year students weekly and other students formally once a term. The emphasis of the meetings varies and ranges from settling in and meeting course expectations in year 1 to personal development and career planning in the following years.

2.27 There is a health care system and body management provision for students providing in-house access to a range of specialist expertise including osteopathy, physiotherapy, speech therapy and laryngology. If students are injured individual arrangements, including remedial timetables, are made for them with evidence that early intervention improves retention and class attendance.

2.28 Students who met the review team reported that they are comfortable approaching any member of staff if they are having difficulties and are very satisfied with the support arrangements in place. Minutes of the Welfare Committee confirm that it maintains appropriate oversight of the various student support systems. The review team considers the embedded and holistic approach to supporting students' individual needs to be **good practice**.

2.29 MPA has robust systems in place to help students develop their academic, personal and professional potential, which are carefully monitored. The review team therefore considers that this Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

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

2.30 Student views feed into the College's management and governance structures, thereby informing broader monitoring and review activities. The College uses a range of methods for engaging the views of students, including student surveys, discussing topical issues with student representatives, and addressing real-time issues through an open-door policy. Student representatives are members of key academic committees such as the Academic Board and the Course Board. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.31 In considering this Expectation the review team examined relevant committee minutes and student survey results. The team also met with students and their representatives, and senior and academic staff.

2.32 MPA's higher education provision is still evolving and the College has built on its previous experience of student engagement to ensure students are satisfied. There is a consensus among staff and students that the small size of the higher education student body and open-door culture of the College successfully encourages students to raise any concerns directly, which ensures they are resolved quickly. Students are satisfied that their voice is heard this way and that the College is responsive to their comments.

2.33 Students complete two major surveys of their satisfaction: UCA's internal student survey, which mirrors the National Student Survey, and the College's own survey on satisfaction with admissions, teaching, support, facilities and information. The College considers the results of these surveys through its Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee and in discussion with student representatives and monitors the outcomes through its action tracker.

2.34 Higher education student representatives have been recently added to some committees, notably the Academic Board and the Course Board, however, where they do attend, their contributions are limited to student issues agenda items rather than being full and active participants throughout the meetings. The College recognises that its approach to student engagement is more akin to consultation than partnership, but does not have clear strategies to deepen students' engagement. The review team therefore **recommends** that MPA supports student representatives to engage more fully with the business of College committees and the decision making process.

2.35 The College has adequate systems in place for student engagement. However, the vision of how students can engage as partners and start to collaborate more in decision making on the quality of their learning experience is underdeveloped. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the risk to quality and standards is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.36 MPA is responsible for setting assessments and for first marking, but shares responsibility for moderation and second marking with UCA. The assessment strategies for the programme were approved at validation. The UCA Link Tutor monitors internal assessment processes and annual monitoring reports consider issues relating to assessment.

2.37 The degree programme aligns with UCA's Common Credit Framework for Taught Programmes, which covers matters relating to assessment, award calculation and conduct of examination boards. In addition, MPA has a range of strategies and policies such as the Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy, Moderation Strategy, Academic Misconduct Policy and Security of External Assessment Policy to support assessment practices. The programme handbook includes guidance for students on assessment approaches, academic misconduct and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

2.38 The Head of Studies has overall responsibility for ensuring the suitability of teaching, learning and assessment activities. A UCA staff member chairs the Examination Board and the University produces student transcripts. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.39 In considering this Expectation the review team examined assessment policies and strategies, external examiner reports, student feedback and programme monitoring reports. The team also met senior and academic staff, and students.

2.40 Staff explained that, with the exception of a pilot project in 2014-15 which enabled students to transfer to the degree programme having completed only two years of diploma study, enrolment directly into Level 6 of the degree is either after having completed three years of diploma study or after having been accepted with APEL via the professional route. APEL decisions are made by MPA and confirmed by the University.

2.41 UCA's annual link liaison document specifies the basis for sampling and auditing assessment. In order to improve the quality and consistency of written feedback to students, previously identified in internal and external reports as in need of improvement, MPA has provided staff training and introduced a standard electronic template for the provision of written feedback. Staff confirmed the usefulness of these interventions and students reported improvements in the clarity and quality of written feedback on their work. Electronic templates have also improved the promptness of feedback.

2.42 Annual programme monitoring highlighted low scores in student satisfaction for marking criteria having been made clear in advance of assessment submission. In response MPA developed assignment specifications and teaching staff spoke informatively about their use of level descriptors in assessment. Students appreciate that assessment becomes progressively more challenging as they move through their programme and understand the significance of percentage marks. They seek, however, clearer information about grade boundaries and the honours' classification system. Staff indicated that this information was

explained to students face to face and is also outlined in the programme handbook. A review of the handbook reveals that it only provides reference to levels descriptors and a hyperlink to the explanation of these in UCA's CCF.

2.43 Staff have received training and are aware of allowances that can be made in teaching and assessment to support students with particular learning needs. This includes additional study support and early marking of written work by the Student Support Advisor. Students are aware of plagiarism and how to avoid it. The College supports them through discussion of good academic practice in lectures and written guidance in the course handbook.

2.44 MPA has run one internal summer Examination Board to date. Minutes of the Board confirm assessment decisions are made in accordance with the awarding body's assessment regulations. The external examiner's report confirms that processes for assessment and for the determination of awards are sound.

2.45 MPA has reliable assessment processes in place which enable students to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that 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

2.46 The awarding body appoints, employs and trains the external examiner for the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre following nominations by MPA. The external examiner submits a written report to the University on a template. At MPA the report is considered by the Course Board, TQE and Academic Board. It is also considered in annual monitoring resulting in an action plan with responses made to specific concerns raised by the external examiner. Both the report and the action plan are submitted to the awarding body. UCA formally responds to the external examiner. The programme handbook explains the role of the external examiner to students. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.47 In considering this Expectation the review team examined external examiner and annual monitoring reports and relevant committee minutes. The team also met senior and academic staff and students.

2.48 MPA is clear about the responsibilities with regards to the appointment and induction of external examiners and uses external examiner reports appropriately to maintain academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The TQE monitors the outcomes of the external examining process. Any issues raised feed into the annual monitoring action plan. Students show some awareness of the function of the external examiner and report that they can request copies of the external examiner report. Staff reported they can access the reports online, but not all the teaching staff contribute to the development of the resultant action plan.

2.49 The review team concludes that MPA, makes good use of the external examiners. The Expectation is met and that 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

2.50 The annual quality management cycle sets out a staged process of quality assurance with regard to the monitoring and review of programmes which is overseen by the Course Board, TQE and CPR. Annual programme monitoring is led by the Head of Quality Management, Strategic Development and Academic Enhancement who completes an annual programme monitoring report and action plan using the awarding body's template. UCA approves the report, monitors the action plan and completes an annual monitoring report on each collaborative partner institution. The awarding body is also responsible for conducting periodic programme reviews. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.51 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined the annual programme monitoring report and action plan, and relevant committee minutes. The team also met senior and academic staff, and students.

2.52 The annual monitoring report MPA produced is comprehensive and includes consideration of key data, student feedback, external examiner's comments, and an action plan. The awarding body's report template encourages reflection and a systematic consideration of key data such as course performance data (retention and final degree results) and an analysis of achievement in each individual unit. Trend data is not available as the degree is only in its second year. Results from the student survey, which follows a UCA model, have shaped the action plan and led to improvements in assessment and library resources.

2.53 Processes for programme monitoring are sound although only a summary, rather than the full report, is provided to the Course Board and to TQE, the committee with oversight of annual monitoring. Key performance data is circulated to TQE members outside of meetings rather than discussed formally within these. The College recognised that there are weaknesses with current data capture systems and has taken steps to improve this with the introduction of a learning management system (see affirmation in paragraph 3.7).

2.54 There has been no periodic review yet as the programme is only in its second year of operation.

2.55 The College has adequate processes in place for the regular monitoring of programmes. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.56 The College has developed policies governing academic appeals and complaints that form part of the overarching Quality Manual. Academic appeals can be lodged based on clear grounds set out in the policy, following several different stages including informal resolution. Complaints can be lodged under the provider's policy or under the degree awarding body's complaints procedure. The policies are made available to students in hard copy and electronically through a cloud-based file hosting facility.

2.57 In considering this Expectation the review team examined the College's and the awarding body's policies relating to academic appeals and complaints. The team also met senior, academic and professional support staff and students.

2.58 MPA has not had any academic appeals and formal complaints, therefore the effectiveness of the procedures for managing them could not be tested. Given the small scale of the higher education provision and the open-door culture of MPA most issues are being resolved informally. Knowledge among students and teaching staff of the formal appeals and complaints policies is limited, however, key contacts for escalating queries are clear, with the Principal playing a pivotal role. Nevertheless, greater student awareness of the ability to lodge a formal academic appeal would be helpful should more serious issues arise.

2.59 There is potential for confusion regarding the use of the complaints policies of the College and the awarding body. When exploring the role of the awarding body's complaints process, the review team was told that students could directly engage that process, whereas the programme handbook given to students states that the College's own complaints procedures should be exhausted first before escalating a complaint to the awarding body. Furthermore, the College's complaints policy itself states that complaints of 'an academic nature, relating to higher provision at MPA' may be referred to the awarding body's process, but makes no reference as to whether this should happen immediately or after exhausting the College's own policy. This ambiguity could lead to complaints being handled in different ways, potentially raising issues of equal treatment of students. Furthermore, students will likely engage with the formal complaints process in a time of difficulty or distress and will need absolute clarity on the process they should seek redress through. The review team therefore **recommends** the College clearly articulates the relationship between, and scope of, its own complaints process and that of the awarding body.

2.60 MPA has robust policies in place to govern the management of appeals and complaints. There is a framework for handling both complaints and appeals which is yet to be tested. The relationship between the College's and the awarding body's formal complaints procedures is in need of clarification. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.61 MPA does not manage provision with others, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

Expectation: Not applicable

Level of risk: Not applicable

Expectation (B11): Research degrees are awarded in a research environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols. This environment offers students quality of opportunities and the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees.

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.62 MPA does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

Expectation: Not applicable

Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.63 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. Of the 11 Expectations in this section nine are applicable to the College. All applicable Expectations are judged to be met with a low level of risk.

2.64 There are three good practice features in this sections with regard to admissions and the use of audition days (Expectation B2), the integrated professional practice environment (Expectation B3) and the approach to supporting students (Expectation B4).

2.65 Two recommendations have been identified this section. The first one relates to student engagement and the support for student representatives (Expectation B5). The second recommendation concerns the articulation of the relationship between the provider's and the awarding body's complaints procedures (Expectation B9).

2.66 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the provider **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 College acknowledges its role in ensuring that the student experience and provision at MPA is accurately represented. MPA routinely publishes information for a range of audiences through the website, social media channels and a prospectus, and occasionally through other channels. This includes programme information, which gives an overview of programme content, learning and teaching strategies and graduate destinations. Some information about the admissions process is published online, which guides prospective students through the audition component. This is in addition to the entry requirements published as part of the programme information. The website also provides corporate information on the mission, values and leadership of the College, details of support available to all students, and an overview of strategies for learning, teaching and assessment.

3.2 MPA shares its formal policies, including those relating to academic standards and quality, with staff through the Quality Manual. Student and course handbooks are provided to students in hard copy and electronically through an online document repository. The College are required to seek the awarding body's approval before programme-specific information is published.

3.3 MPA has an Information Management Policy, which sets out staff responsibilities for assuring the accuracy of printed and digital published information. Responsibility for managing the information published and ensuring its accuracy rests with the Vice-Principal and the Directors with regard to information for students. The Head of Quality Management and Academic Enhancement is responsible for the currency and accuracy of academic policies and procedures published. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.4 In considering this Expectation the review team examined a range of information published in print and digital formats and held meetings with senior, academic and professional support staff and students.

3.5 MPA has invested in the development of a new website to promote its programmes to prospective students. This has involved the addition of valuable new information, including multimedia content, on student life at the College. The development of the website is ongoing, with key information such as the programme structure, programme specification or APL/APEL policies not yet available, and further content that will give greater insight into the curriculum and structure of the programme still to be developed. Students commented positively on the presentation of information on the new website.

3.6 MPA currently publishes programme information and learning materials to students via a file sharing repository. This is carefully managed by the Principal's office to ensure content is accurate and organised across subjects, year groups and programmes. However, the functionality of this system is limited to being a repository rather than a useful tool in its own right for managing and supporting independent learning.

3.7 The College has recently invested in student management software which will help to manage the administration of the entire student journey, from enquiry to graduation, as well as provide a learning management system to support and enrich student learning. The platform is currently being developed with a particular focus on enabling the student management functions first. MPA is exploring its more powerful learning management system functions and will be well placed to research best practice in technology enhanced learning in higher education to inform their use of the system for the full benefit of students and staff. The review team **affirms** the work undertaken to develop a new website and learning management system.

3.8 Programme and student handbooks provide useful information to existing students. The student handbook gives broad information about the history, direction and management of the College, together with key policies and guidance about practice. The programme handbook for the BA (Hons) Musical Theatre provides general academic guidance; details of each module's aims, assessment and reference materials; an assessment schedule; and summaries of quality assurance processes. There is also a study skills handbook, which provides information about key skills and their assessment, however, this is not higher education specific. Students are satisfied with the quality and accuracy of the information provided in handbooks.

3.9 There are clear lines of responsibility for the sign off of published information which are well understood by staff. Staff responsible for creating information are required to submit a document approval form for consideration by the Administration Committee. Programme information is signed off by the Directors to ensure its accuracy and currency before being published through the primary channels, particularly the website and the prospectus. The Vice-Principal is the administrator of the website and chairs the Administration Committee.

3.10 The College publishes a range of information to different audiences in support of its activity. Overall, the approach to publishing and managing information is robust and several significant projects to further improve this are underway. The review team concludes the Expectation is met and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.11 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. Expectation C is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations or good practice in this judgement area. There is one affirmation with regard to the work undertaken to develop a new website and learning management system.

3.12 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the provider **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 There is an ethos of continuous improvement at MPA. It is expressed in the Strategic Plan as a commitment to ensuring 'staff... nurture a creative, inspirational teaching and learning experience for every student.' This ethos is embodied in a culture of informal and formal reflection on teaching and learning. At institutional level, the Teaching Quality and Enhancement Committee is responsible for the development, implementation and review of MPA's systems, policies and procedures for enhancing the quality of students' learning experience. MPA uses its quality monitoring cycle to identify opportunities for enhancement, particularly the annual programme monitoring process, and shares good practice identified in staff meetings. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.2 In considering this Expectation the review team examined relevant strategies, policies and committee minutes and met with senior, academic and professional support staff and students.

4.3 The Teaching Quality and Enhancement Committee has extensive terms of reference, some duplicating those of other committees, and is part of a governance structure that is still relatively new. Committee minutes demonstrate that the TQE has been developing its quality assurance role (see paragraph 1.8), but there is no evidence of the committee engaging with enhancement initiatives. Similarly, the activities articulated in the quality management cycle focus on quality assurance. The annual monitoring template invites the course leader to summarise course-level achievements and enhancements and meetings of departmental heads explore options for helping staff to develop and discuss their personal practice.

4.4 MPA has created a Resource Development Plan through which it aims to monitor enhancements. The plan outlines expenditure over a three-year period in areas including expanded library and IT provision, the new website and learning management system. While this will have a positive impact on the student learning experience, investment in these areas to meet student demand and awarding body requirements is a feature of annual resource planning common across higher education.

4.5 Since the start of the degree programme staff have experimented with some cross-curricular initiatives. These comprise a joint audition process across the acting and singing disciplines, an Acting through Song module and intensive musical theatre workshops in the final year. In addition, staff have been encouraged to observe colleagues teaching in other disciplines. Time is factored into their working day and hourly-paid staff are remunerated for these observations. Academic staff value the opportunity to engage with colleagues in this cross-disciplinary way and the informal benefits this brings, however, there has been no formal drawing together and evaluation of these experiences as yet.

4.6 Staff reported frequent reflection on teaching in meetings of Heads of Departments with the Principal. The introduction of degree-level study has required a more systematic approach to developing students' study skills and while this has been received well by students, the impact of this recent initiative has yet to be evaluated formally.

4.7 Staff across all levels give thought to the quality of the student learning experience, but enhancement initiatives are not yet integrated in a systematic and planned manner. The College is not yet using its existing quality management structures to strategically identify opportunities for enhancement, monitor their implementation and formally evaluate the impact on the quality of student learning. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College develops its reflective culture into a more strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

4.8 There is an institutional commitment to improving the quality of students' learning opportunities and a culture of reflection at discipline level. The management of quality enhancement at institutional level through the existing governance and quality management structures is underdeveloped. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is not met. The level of risk is therefore deemed to be moderate.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.9 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation is not met and the associated risk is moderate. The Expectation attracted one recommendation relating to the development of a more strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities. There are no features of good practice or affirmations in this judgement area.

4.10 The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the provider **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 21-24 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#).

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Awarding organisation

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Self-evaluation document

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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