



Application for Taught Degree Awarding Powers: Plymouth College of Art

Scrutiny team report

November 2018

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About this report

This report reflects the findings of a team appointed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) to conduct a detailed scrutiny of an application from Plymouth College of Art for the power to award taught degrees.

The application was considered under criteria approved by Government in 2015. In advising on applications, QAA is guided by the relevant criteria and the associated evidence requirements. QAA's work in this area is overseen by its Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP), a subcommittee of the QAA Board.

ACDAP's initial consideration of applications establishes whether an applicant has made a case to proceed to detailed scrutiny of the application and the evidence on which it is based. If satisfied on this matter, ACDAP agrees that a team may be appointed to conduct the scrutiny and prepare a report, enabling ACDAP to determine the nature of the recommendation it will make to the QAA Board.

Scrutiny teams produce reports following each of the engagements undertaken. The final report reflects the team's findings and is structured around the four main criteria contained in the 2015 TDAP criteria,¹ namely:

- governance and academic management
- academic standards and quality assurance
- scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff
- the environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes.

Subject to the approval of the Board, QAA's advice is communicated to the appropriate minister. This advice is provided in confidence. The minister determines whether it should be disclosed to the applicant. A final decision on an application, and the notification of that decision, is a matter for the Privy Council.

¹ The TDAP criteria are available in Annex A of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' *Taught Degree Awarding Powers and Research Degree Awarding Powers: Guidance for Higher Education Providers: Criteria and Process for applying for Taught Degree Awarding Powers and Research Degree Awarding Powers* (September 2015) at www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/526813/BIS-15-525-degree-awarding-powers.pdf (PDF, 535KB).

Executive summary

Governance and academic management

Plymouth College of Art has a Board of 17 Governors with appropriate subcommittees to discharge its corporate governance responsibilities. The Finance and Estates Committee and the Audit Committee keep scrupulous oversight of both the financial affairs of the College and the risks it faces, allowing the Board to provide appropriate challenge to, and support for, the Executive. The Director of Finance has overall charge of the budget, which is managed prudently and rigorously. Budget allocation, resource planning and the higher education strategy are effectively linked.

An external review of governance during the scrutiny year concluded that the College was well governed. Among several minor recommendations, the report noted that the senior leadership team (SLT) should engage more positively to keep Governors fully informed with the rationale behind proposals for development.

The previous Strategic Plan is three years old and following widespread consultation its replacement has gained strong support throughout the College. The new Plan, very recently approved, commits to a strategic review of its academic curriculum, and a restructure of its leadership and academic teams to deliver its programmes within a more effective subject-based framework. These developments will set the College's trajectory for a post-TDAP environment in which the curriculum specifically aligns with the new strategic plan.

Academic Board is the senior academic authority and is chaired by the Principal. Its reporting committees, whose roles are fit for purpose, bring strong self-reflection to the College's deliberative processes and properly oversee the development, validation, delivery and revalidation of its degrees. Regulations and procedures are fit for exercising degree awarding powers, although the College acknowledges that, if it decides in future to offer awards in partnership with others, some procedural and regulatory developments would be required. Overall, academic governance arrangements work well, and its higher education provision is in good health.

The Vice-Principal Higher Education has overall responsibility for higher education and provides strong leadership within the College. Members of her senior team are becoming accustomed to new roles, but they have a clear understanding of the external higher education environment and are able to provide strong academic leadership for the exercise of degree awarding powers.

On the basis of these findings ACDAP concludes that Plymouth College of Art meets Criterion A.

Academic standards and quality assurance

The College, while acting under the delegated authority of The Open University (OU), has developed its own quality culture and a body of good practice in quality assurance and enhancement. It has worked well under the regulations of OU and has now developed and adopted a set of prospective academic regulations which are generally complete and fit for purpose, and would enable the College to function effectively if granted taught degree awarding powers (TDAP).

The College has a dedicated and highly competent quality assurance team. Meetings are thoroughly prepared, and documentation for committees, and for validation, monitoring and review processes are of the highest quality. A regular mapping process is in place to ensure alignment with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). Programmes are

designed, validated and revalidated with care, taking full account of the business case and using external peers to comment on proposals. Annual monitoring is systematically and very effectively carried out at programme and institutional levels. External examiners are positive in their comments about the curriculum and its delivery, and the appointment of a Chief External Examiner adds further authority to the process.

The College has a mature and careful approach to managing quality. It is able to reflect on its activities and make appropriate adjustments. Through its management and deliberative processes it deals appropriately with issues and problems that arise. There are no serious weaknesses in relation to quality assurance and enhancement. However, as noted below under Criterion D, while in other respects the student voice is loud and clear, student views are not always sought before changes of policy and procedure are proposed at institutional level.

On the basis of these findings ACDAP concludes that Plymouth College of Art meets Criterion B.

Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff

Staff are well qualified academically and professionally. Those involved in programme leadership and management have experience of programme design and assessment as well as engagement with the higher education sector. The new higher education contract ensures that staff not only have subject and professional qualifications and experience, but many also have pedagogical qualifications. Staff development is available to all and appreciated by staff who make extensive use of the opportunities available. Human resource management systems are well developed and ensure that all staff participate effectively in annual appraisal.

Fractional staff who combine practice with teaching play a vital role in the College. However, participation in staff development events has historically been problematic for this group. In order to secure their continued teaching role, the College is taking measures to facilitate closer engagement.

The College has reinforced its academic leadership and is restructuring its teaching staff into subject-based departments with clusters of staff teaching in particular areas. A strength of the College is the engagement of academic staff in professional practice, which has a positive impact on the student experience through module design, curriculum development and pedagogy.

Restructuring has also provided the opportunity to reduce teaching hours, thus providing more support for research, which, as opposed to scholarly activity and professional practice, has historically been a weaker dimension of the College. Understanding of, and participation in, research is spread unevenly across the College. This is being successfully addressed through renewed research infrastructure, allocation of time for research and scholarship to all academic staff, and a focus on developing a research ethos. Work remains to be done in all these areas and, in particular, in developing research as a freestanding activity distinguishable from scholarship and practice. Financial, physical and human resources that can be targeted to research are limited, and external funding is at a relatively low level. However, despite its size and research history, the College has developed international recognition for its work in particular subjects and in creative arts education more generally.

On the basis of these findings ACDAP concludes that Plymouth College of Art meets Criterion C.

The environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes

The College provides a high quality learning environment that is well suited to its range of academic programmes. Students receive thorough inductions which are monitored for quality. Specialist technology and excellent industry-standard resources are provided, and students commented positively about their availability. Student support services are provided centrally, and additional counselling support is available externally. There is some pressure on staffing resources for mental health support services. However, students' feedback indicates that they are generally satisfied with the support provided.

Students receive written feedback on their assessed work within agreed timescales. Changes to the delivery of assessment feedback, in order to clarify constructive critiques by staff and improve links to learning objectives, have been well received by students. Well-publicised policies are in place to address confidentially any academic complaints or appeals.

The College has wide-ranging and effective mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, using evidence from external examiners and students. Students are represented on the Board of Governors and on committees at institutional and programme levels. Efficient and effective surveys are used to gain feedback from students. Engagement with students is effective overall, although student views are not always sought before changes are proposed at institutional level.

Staff are well supported by the College, and they have regular opportunities to give feedback through the staff survey. There is an appropriate range of opportunities for staff development, with a new qualification in place for technical staff and demonstrators. The College is clearly committed to equality and diversity initiatives, and it actively monitors qualitative and quantitative data in this area. Information about higher education provision is monitored and reviewed regularly, and is accurate and trustworthy.

On the basis of these findings ACDAP concludes that Plymouth College of Art meets Criterion D.

Privy Council's decision

The Privy Council's decision is to grant Plymouth College of Art taught degree awarding powers from 11 March 2019.

Introduction

This report provides a summary of the work and findings of the scrutiny team (the team) appointed by QAA to review in detail the evidence submitted in support of an application for taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) by Plymouth College of Art (the College).

The application was considered by QAA's Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP) in May 2017, when the Committee agreed to proceed to the detailed scrutiny of the application. The team appointed to conduct the detailed scrutiny comprised Ms Sarah Bennett, Professor Malcolm Cook, Professor Ian Robinson, and Dr Carol Vielba (scrutiny team members) and Mr Stephen Murphy (secretary). The detailed scrutiny was managed on behalf of QAA by Mr Alan Hunt (independent consultant).

The detailed scrutiny began in June 2017, culminating in a report to ACDAP in November 2018. In the course of the scrutiny, the team read a wide range of documents presented in support of the application. The team also spoke to a range of stakeholders and observed meetings and events pertinent to the application.

Key information about Plymouth College of Art

Plymouth College of Art was founded in 1856 and remains an independent specialist provider of education and professional formation in contemporary art, design and media practices. It has delivered higher education programmes for over 20 years, initially in a collaborative partnership with the University of Plymouth. In 2006, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) awarded directly funded student numbers to the College, which then began its present validation partnership with The Open University (OU). Following transfer from the further education to the higher education sector in 2014, and with the strong support of the incorporated Board of Governors (the Board), the College has committed itself to seeking taught degree awarding powers, and eventually university title.

The College aims to 'transform the lives, opportunities and professional horizons of students across the full learning continuum' in 'the high quality of the learner experience and their graduate attributes, . . . in the quality of studentship, and in [its] curriculum offer and specialist learning environments'. Its higher education provision is built around a range of vocationally orientated and practice-led honours degrees in a wide range of subjects related to the creative arts, and more recently a broad portfolio of taught postgraduate programmes. The College's continuum of learning embraces its further education provision, and its sponsorship of a free school, through all of which it seeks 'to provide a distinctive, innovative and supportive learning community in contemporary arts practice [and] to add value to the cultural, social and economic life of Plymouth and the South West region'.

The College's higher education provision has been consolidated on its main campus in the city centre at Tavistock Place, which was upgraded and partly rebuilt in 2010 and 2014. In June 2018 the College had 1,276 (1,239 full-time equivalent (FTE)) higher education students, mainly from the UK and particularly from the south-west. Of the total number of students, 1,213 were undergraduates and 63 taught postgraduates. Numbers of European Union (EU) and international students are small.

The College employs 100 full-time and fractional academic staff teaching on its higher education programmes, and 24 academic support staff including technicians.

QAA carried out a Higher Education Review of the College in November 2015. The review team's judgements were as follows.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of 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 is **commended**.

Detailed scrutiny against taught degree awarding powers criteria

A Governance and academic management

Criterion A1

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers is governed, managed and administered effectively, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. Its financial management is sound and a clear relationship exists between its financial policy and the safeguarding of the quality and standards of its higher education provision. In the case of an organisation that is not primarily a higher education institution, its principal activities are compatible with the provision of higher education programmes and awards.

Financial planning, quality assurance, and resource allocation policies are coherent and relate to the organisation's higher education mission, aims and objectives

1 The College's Strategic Plan 2015-20, 'Live Make', has been and remains aspirational yet realistic. It has recently been reviewed and a new version for 2018-23 was approved in July 2018. This most recent version has wide ownership, developed following Governor direction, senior shaping and wide staff and student consultation. The Plan is inclusive, focusing upon twin aims of social justice and creative learning, and acknowledging the College's reputation nationally, internationally, locally and regionally. It aims to be sustainable and will require both modest growth and curriculum change. It has wide staff support to achieve this.

2 The College is an exempt charity within the meaning of the Charities Act 2011, and operates in accordance with its clear and well-established Finance Strategy, which itself draws from the Strategic Plan, and builds upon the precepts embedded in the higher education and other College strategies. It commits to managing growth, developing the estate, and operating sustainably. Annual reports and accounts show that budgets have been comfortably in surplus in recent years, and despite the current UK demographic trough, governors and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) have been diligent in minimising costs, developing prudent budgets that break even or predict a small surplus. The College finances are managed well, and consistently judged 'not at higher risk' by HEFCE.

3 Annual turnover is approximately £15m and borrowing is at a sustainable level. Overall staff costs in relation to turnover have been at the top end of the sector's range, reflecting low staff-student ratios within its further education provision. However, a rebalancing of budgets across the College's further education and higher education activity has ensured that future expenditures will better reflect the respective income streams. The College has aligned with the rest of the higher education sector, adopting the widely used Higher Education Role Analysis (HERA) framework of role specifications, which more appropriately recognise and reward staff contribution and also embed greater staffing flexibility.

4 There has been significant investment in the development of the higher education campus over the last six years, and there is a continuing focus on higher education developments in the longer-term Strategic Plan and Estates Strategy, addressing the Board's intentions to provide a 'learning environment to meet demands for a high quality student experience'. The College has ambitious capital plans for future development, but detailed funding strategies are, as yet, not in place. Meanwhile the Board continues to

allocate funding and prudently maintain momentum by exploiting synergies between essential annual maintenance, health and safety projects and small development opportunities to benefit students.

5 Students, staff and employers who work with the College all consider that learning resources are good, a view endorsed in the 2018 OU institutional review of the College and recent programme validations; reviewing panels considered that resources were in some respects sector-leading.

6 Finance procedures are well formulated, requiring governors' engagement for both major capital expenditure and approval of the College budget. The Board brings an appropriately robust level of challenge to the executive team in budget formulation. The College has mature internal audit arrangements in place which confirm that its processes are effective, with a number of aspects of good practice.

7 Details of the annual budget cycle are well articulated, including a resource allocation model at programme level, with programme-based academic and technical staff involved in identifying need and costs, which are later prioritised across the College in an inclusive and transparent process. Non-staff academic budgets are delegated to the Associate Deans, and staff posts (both new and replacement) are subject to a detailed business scrutiny before approval. Investment in central administrative systems has been timely, and the College has confidence in its student record and timetabling systems.

8 The arrangements for academic governance are well described and widely available within the College. The various committee structures and associated procedures for quality assurance of academic provision appear fit for purpose (see paragraphs 17-19).

Higher education mission and associated policies and systems are understood and applied consistently both by those connected with the delivery of the organisation's higher education programmes and, where appropriate, by students

9 The new, ambitious Strategic Plan (paragraph 1), which has evolved from its predecessor, was approved by governors as the scrutiny came to an end. It builds upon the College's intention to develop a more sustainable approach to securing student numbers. This includes the development of the 'continuum' concept, links with regional industry, business and arts, and engagement in the launch of regional incubator industries, which will develop greater career opportunities for graduates. It also envisages further Erasmus and other international relationships that are likely to attract overseas undergraduate and postgraduate students to Plymouth and provide fertile opportunities for staff development. Academic Board, SLT and the Board of Governors are committed to the College's mission and vision. Students and staff have a strong sense of the strategy, associated plans, and direction of travel for the College. The College is aware of areas where it is not meeting its strategic targets and has put corrective actions in place.

10 The College has a comprehensive suite of strategies, policies and procedures that underpin the delivery of its higher education mission. These include student-facing policies that guide recruitment and admissions; academic policies that guide staff and students in the teaching, learning and assessment processes; policies and procedures to support students; and policies relating to the day-to-day operations of a significant UK employer.

11 Strategies, policies, regulations and procedures are available on the staff portal, the student portal, and in staff and student handbooks. They are consulted upon and updated annually, and stakeholders are briefed on these in team meetings and newsletters. The College's internal auditors comment that the communications of strategy to staff and the routine updating of strategies are features of good practice, although there were signs that consultations with students are sometimes late in the process. The OU quinquennial

administrative audit in 2018 found that the College was assiduous in its approach to updating policies, and identified only very minor matters for which remedial action was necessary.

12 While modest, the College's growth trajectory is clear, and includes an intent to further develop its widening participation activities and to draw further on international and EU markets. The international plans are embryonic rather than ambitious and build upon current non-teaching relationships rather than speculative marketing. The College acknowledges that academic partnerships to deliver higher education programmes with partners carries additional risk, and that it is at an early stage in developing procedures for such activity.

There is a clarity of function and responsibility at all levels in the organisation in relation to its governance structures and systems for managing its higher education provision

13 The Board of Governors is 17 strong, meets four times each year, and aspires to an attendance rate greater than the 85 per cent which is currently achieved. New governors are inducted and undertake a rolling annual programme of development in order to remain current. The articles, instruments and associated scheme of delegation are clear, as are the terms of reference for the Board's committees. The Board has adopted the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) Higher Education Code of Governance and responded swiftly and appropriately to the national guidance on the operation of remuneration committees published by CUC in the summer of 2018.

14 The Board's committees (Remuneration and Employment, Audit, Finance and Estates, Nominations and Governance) work with diligence and effect, sharing a clear sense of the College Vision and Mission, the resources necessary to achieve it, and their own role in exercising oversight of the College leadership team.

15 The Board reviews its own, and its members' performance annually, supported by data and monitoring reports from the Clerk. Periodically an external review of governance is commissioned; the latest (by the Leadership Foundation for higher education) has very recently reported. The outcomes are positive, the College is well governed, and the few recommendations can be easily addressed. The most important recommendation recognises the need to address an emerging 'gap' between the Board and the SLT. This is an observation which likely reflects the heavy demands on the 'taut' SLT through a turbulent period in which there has been an unusual number of significant external sectoral changes. The subsequent Board discussions were positive and insightful, and augur well for the future.

16 In adopting the CUC Higher Education Code of Governance, the Board undertook a thorough review of oversight and relationships between corporate and academic governance, which initiated a review of committee effectiveness and confirmed the appropriateness of the current academic committee structure, which, with only small changes, has stood the test of time.

17 The committee structure for academic governance is well described and widely available within the College, although more proactive internal communications might broaden understandings of it, and thence student consultation and engagement. It appears fit for purpose, comprising the Learning, Teaching and Curriculum Committee (LTCC), Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC), Student Engagement and Experience Committee (SEEC), Research and Scholarship Committee (RSC) and Business Development Committee (BDC), all of which report to Academic Board, which itself reports to the Board of Governors. Committee members receive training for their role, and each committee formally reviews its effectiveness, terms of reference and remit each year,

any changes being considered by the Board for approval. The College has demonstrated a critically reflective approach in such reviews, for example in deciding to dissolve the Staff Development Committee, where matters could be more effectively taken as executive business and discussed in more detail within staff meetings.

18 Academic Board invites up to two governors and an external academic to observe its meetings. These roles permit governors to reassure the Board that academic committees discharge their responsibilities diligently and have reinforced the Board's confidence in academic governance arrangements.

19 Committees work well, are notably well supported, and are self-reflective. While they might seem somewhat heavily loaded with ex-officio membership, this in part reflects the size of the institution, and the need to ensure that senior academics are represented in committees in addition to their executive roles.

20 Operating in parallel with the deliberative committees, the SLT (Principal, Vice Principals, Director of Development, Director of Finance, College Registrar, and Director of Communications) appears to provide an effective executive function, operating as both an operational and planning team. The team meets regularly, although pressures of sector-initiated deadlines occasionally led the team to take executive action when a deliberative discussion might have been more helpful. Associate Deans, leading clusters of staff delivering cognate programmes, report to the Vice Principal HE. The annual Governors and SLT Joint Strategy away day is a positive approach to ensuring alignment of purpose between corporate and academic governance.

21 The College has announced a rearrangement of senior responsibilities for 2018-19, removing the Associate Dean roles, and replacing them with an Academic Dean (who will join the SLT) to whom three Heads of discipline-specific Schools will report. Both SLT and the prospective school structures appear fit for purpose in the context of preparedness for exercising degree awarding powers.

22 The College provides strong academic support services; deliberative meetings run well, both at corporate and academic governance level; supporting paperwork is generally exemplary; meetings are well chaired and well attended; and members all contribute to discussion.

There is depth and strength of academic leadership across the whole of the organisation's higher education provision

23 The Board is populated with members with significant experience and strength, and the Nominations Committee exercises its responsibilities for succession diligently and effectively. This gives confidence that the Board will also be successful in the longer-term succession planning for senior academic staff, particularly the Principal, who was the leading 'architect' of the successful mixed economy further education/higher education approach in the College.

24 The College has significantly strengthened its senior academic leadership team in recent years, their experience clearly reflecting the College's higher education mission and bringing resilience to the senior layer (paragraphs 20-21). The majority of appointments to senior roles have now been made, some internally and some externally, attracting high quality candidates with strong teaching and broader research and scholarship credentials. Most, together with the Head of HE Quality, have current and extensive knowledge of

curriculum development and assessment design in art, design and media programmes, which augurs well for the forthcoming curriculum review and revalidation of all higher education programmes.

25 Senior staff operate well both individually and as the SLT. The Associate Deans and programme leaders have demonstrated clear academic leadership in validation and review activities, as well as in their subject-specific roles. Senior staff know the creative higher education sector well, albeit with little detailed experience in delivering programmes with partner institutions. With one exception, the current Associate Deans will remain in senior positions in the new structure, and there can be every confidence that the new arrangements, further strengthened with external appointments, will take the College forward positively.

The organisation develops, implements and communicates its academic policies and systems in collaboration with those responsible for the delivery of its higher education programmes, and with relevant stakeholders

26 Custodianship, both in terms of staff and committee responsibilities, for the development and maintenance of strategies, policies and processes is clearly defined in the Guidelines for College Key Documentation. Where necessary, handbooks have been developed to disseminate matters among staff and students. All key documents are published, and procedures are in place to control annual updates and modifications, under the direction of the Deputy Registrar (Quality Systems and Performance) who also routinely audits the various documents to assure continued alignment with national and College requirements. They are promulgated widely, are readily available to all stakeholders, and are updated effectively (paragraphs 10-11). The executive and deliberative structures, including SLT, Academic Team Meetings and Cluster Meetings, function coherently to implement the various strategies, policies and procedures.

27 The College is obliged to use the OU Academic Regulations for all its higher education programmes, but having previously operated its validated provision under the auspices of its own regulations, and gaining further experience with the more recent OU framework, the College has developed its own prospective regulations in preparation for achieving taught degree awarding powers. While students had not been consulted beforehand, these have been considered and discussed robustly by Academic Board and programme leaders, and have gained broad ownership in the wider academic community.

28 The College has developed a number of relationships in Europe and further abroad, some precipitated by its reputation in a specific discipline, others with the support of external funding bodies such as Erasmus or the British Council. In the case of Erasmus relationships, these have resulted in structured student exchanges; in other cases they have led to the development of networks and staff scholarly relationships, which have the potential to develop reputation. In further instances, the College has successfully negotiated formal, detailed articulation agreements with overseas institutions; and although none has yet resulted in student progression, these agreements appear fit for purpose. There are currently no plans to franchise or validate College provision in other institutions and as a result no partnership policies or procedures have been developed either within or outside the prospective academic regulations.

29 The College has undertaken a pilot reciprocal student exchange with a Canadian arts university, using the Erasmus procedures as a model to undertake planning, preparation, monitoring and assessment. A draft memorandum of agreement (MoA) was in preparation and although the exchanges somewhat naively took place in the absence of any formal agreement or due diligence, the OU had been consulted beforehand to confirm the process for importing credit into the College programme. In retrospect the College

acknowledges that this pilot scheme carried elevated risk and is planning further work to conclude the MoA and to develop formal procedures and regulations to properly manage and quality assure such relationships.

Academic policies, systems and activities are monitored and reviewed, and appropriate and timely action is taken when deficiencies are identified

30 The College follows the OU's academic regulations, although it is also developing, promulgating, operating and reviewing its own underpinning policies and procedures (paragraphs 10-11, 17-19, 26). During the scrutiny a number of such reviews were observed, including its annual reflection on admissions procedures, the review and approval of the College's prospective academic regulations, and discussions in preparation for making its application for registration by the Office for Students (OfS). These all demonstrated a keen attention to regulation and detail, identifying what currently worked well, and what could usefully be developed.

31 The College's academic quality cycle is designed to ensure that relevant committees and management groups monitor and review quality and standards in a timely and systematic way, developing appropriate action plans to address deficiencies, which are included in the Annual Programme Evaluations (APE) and the Annual Institutional Overview (AIO) for the OU (paragraph 57). Validated programmes are themselves subject to a critical appraisal and revalidation process every five years, or earlier if significant changes are required. The APE process attracted a commendation in the College's QAA Higher Education Review in 2015.

Higher education activities take full account of relevant legislation, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and associated guidance

32 The College makes wide use of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) to inform its various academic frameworks (paragraph 51). To this end it has comprehensively mapped its various policies, strategies, regulations and procedures to the Quality Code, against which alignment is strong. The College reviews the mapping annually, and reports any resultant policy changes to the OU, as the validating university, in its AIO report. The Quality Code has also provided guidance which the College has found helpful in the necessary culture change during the transition from the further education to higher education sectors; for example, 'inclusivity' was identified as a year-long, cross-College development theme and informed the agenda for one of the staff Learning and Teaching development days.

33 In its preparations for registration with the OfS, the College has been able to demonstrate that its policies and procedures took only minor amendments to align properly with the requirements of a Student Protection Plan, and to demonstrate that its terms and conditions provide the protection expected by the Competitions and Marketing Authority (CMA). Its approach to aligning policies with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), while burdensome, was handled with attention to detail.

Academic risk and change management strategies are effective

34 The College has a mature, well documented and effective approach to the management of risk. Its guidelines set out its overall approach, including the key roles and responsibilities for the management of risk. The College maintains a comprehensive Risk Register with risks clustered according to its strategic aims. The Board, Audit Committee and the SLT all play key roles in the oversight of risk.

35 The College's 'bottom-up' approach ensures that any proposals for changes to policy and procedure address associated risk, and how that might be mitigated. These

considerations are discussed at SLT and embedded within any accompanying papers. Thus, while members of SLT may be designated as risk 'leads' within the risk register, all staff and students engaged in developing new or changed procedures are involved in the consideration of risk.

36 Risk management is a regular item on meetings of SLT where the top risks are actively considered. The College's risk register is formally owned and actively managed by the Audit Committee, which is attended by key members of the SLT. It meets four times a year and on each occasion the register is discussed, potential and embryonic risks are explored, and a short list of top risks is identified for sharing with the full Board. This work is supported by a robust process of internal audits conducted on the College's behalf. Disaster planning and business continuity arrangements are periodically tested and inform discussions at Audit Committee.

37 The Board considers the full risk register annually, and at each other meeting discusses the current top risks identified by the Audit Committee, accompanied by a perceptive update and commentary from the Director of Finance. Governors are conscious of both business and reputational risk, always give mature and perceptive consideration to risk when making strategic decisions, and have not been afraid to reject proposals or refer them for further work where necessary.

38 While the College did not offer any specific examples of managing change, its risk management processes alert the Board of Governors to any associated heightened risk. The scrutiny has also identified a number of significant change programmes, all of which have been successful, and which demonstrate the College's capacity to manage change. These include the transfer from the further education to higher education sector; significant growth in student numbers; managing a significant estate investment programme that includes new buildings and notable summer work programmes; transfer from its own academic regulations to those of the OU; the launch of its sponsored free school; securing funding and partnership for, and the launch of its community incubator initiative, 'Cut, Make and Trim'; and most recently the introduction of Higher Education Role Analysis (HERA) and the restructuring of the senior higher education leadership team.

39 HEFCE's judgement that the College is 'not at higher risk' is the best outcome that could be achieved, together with the College's internal auditors' similar conclusion reinforce the view that the College's approaches to risk and change management are effective.

Robust mechanisms are in place to ensure that the academic standards of the organisation's higher education awards are not put at risk

40 The College's new strategic plan includes focusing on completing the establishment of a strong and effective leadership team with the vision and energy to achieve the College's strategic aims; the development of a more effective discipline-focused curriculum for the future; and clearly identifying the risks associated with all the plan's objectives. This evidences that the College has a solid appreciation of the risks to its academic standards and academic offer, and these will be monitored through its normal risk management arrangements.

41 A number of policies and processes are in place to safeguard the academic standards of awards, including programme validation, APE, AIO, and programme revalidation every five years. Further details are given below in connection with Criterion B.

The organisation has the capability of managing successfully the additional responsibilities vested in it were taught degree awarding powers granted

42 The College's ambition to secure degree awarding powers was explicit in its 2015 Strategic Plan, and together with its aspiration to achieve university status, remains at the front of its 2018 successor. Initial activity to support its aim of achieving TDAP was based around staffing, including the appointment of an Academic Registrar, establishing a higher education quality team and more recently restructuring both its senior and higher education leadership teams to better fit them for autonomous degree-level working. The College established a TDAP Working Group (TWG) to monitor developments and to give momentum to the necessary regulatory and organisational preparations, identifying the various areas and supporting systems that would need to be in place if TDAP was achieved, including the development of its own academic framework.

43 Over the period of its partnership with the OU, the College has developed a comprehensive suite of academic policies and procedures which signal confidence in its ability to exercise TDAP should this be granted (paragraphs 10-11, 26-27, 32 and 42). The prospective Academic Regulations have been thoroughly debated and are now approved. The scrutiny team has also seen the College's strong sense of ownership of academic process and standards, evidenced by the confidence of external examiners in assessment processes and standards; the mature discussions regarding preparedness to bring validation in-house; Academic Board's self-critical evaluation of its own effectiveness; the integrity of assessment board and other data; its preparedness to select, appoint and manage external examiners; and the forward planning to manage the certification of students, in addition to the existing diploma supplements/transcripts.

44 There is an element of risk associated with the lack of any detailed provision for managing collaborative working with other degree awarding bodies, but this is acknowledged, and plans to develop appropriate policies and procedures are emerging.

45 For the future, the College intends to develop an accredited postgraduate research degree relationship with another higher education institution, as its research profile further develops, and the College hosts programmes leading to the award of doctoral degrees.

46 The senior team and other staff are academically collegial, inclusive, enthusiastic, and engage very effectively with visiting validation panels. They inspire confidence in their ability to manage and develop the College and deliver on its academic offer. Visiting panels were clearly impressed and said as much in their feedback. The OU, the current validating partner, has confidence in the College's day-to-day operations and procedures for validation and is supportive of the application for taught degree awarding powers.

B Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers has in place an appropriate regulatory framework to govern the award of its higher education qualifications.

The regulatory framework governing the organisation's higher education provision (covering, for example, student admissions, progress, assessment, appeals and complaints) is appropriate to its current status and is implemented fully and consistently

47 The College's present body of academic regulations and procedures is set out in the 'Quality Cycle Handbook for undergraduate and postgraduate studies, 2016-17'. This Handbook is comprehensive and clear, and it is fully and consistently implemented at all levels in the College.

48 The College has a dedicated and highly competent Quality team, led by the Head of HE Quality. Board and committee meetings are well planned, with preparatory documents, minutes, and action trackers of the highest quality. Documentation prepared for programme validation, monitoring and revalidation (paragraphs 53-57) are likewise thorough and effective. Where appropriate, standard templates are provided and used well.

The organisation has created in readiness a regulatory framework which will be appropriate for the granting of its own higher education awards

49 A full set of draft regulations was approved by the Academic Board in March 2018, for use in the event that taught degree awarding powers are granted to the College. The regulations cover the full range of expectations, from admissions through to completion; they include sections on admissions including accreditation of prior learning, assessment and progression, the classification of degrees, academic misconduct, external examiners, appeals and complaints. The regulations are appropriate and broadly complete. However, regulations and procedures relating to collaborative activity are lacking; these, and some minor changes, will be required as the College moves forward. The new regulations have not been tested in use as the College is currently working under the authority of the OU. However, the College has worked well under the regulations of the OU and is now equipped and able to work according to its own regulations, which are generally complete and fit for purpose.

Criterion B2

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for defining and securing the academic standards of its higher education provision.

Higher education awards are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the Qualification Frameworks

50 The College's validation activity is overseen by the ASQC. This committee, which reports to Academic Board, ensures alignment with the *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) in order to ensure that each qualification is specified at the appropriate level. It does so primarily through the College's

validation and revalidation processes. These use a standard template that requires a complete appraisal of the programme in question. It also ensures that learning outcomes and assessment methods are clearly identified in programme specifications, which are made available to staff and students on the College website. Definitive module records (DMRs) give details of learning outcomes and assessment methods for each module. The Head of Learning and Teaching is closely involved in the setting and maintaining of academic standards and supports appropriate staff development in this area. Validation and revalidation reports confirm that the FHEQ is always referenced when developing potential new programmes for validation.

Management of its higher education provision takes appropriate account of the Quality Code, characteristics statements; credit frameworks; relevant Subject Benchmark Statements; and the requirements of any relevant professional and statutory bodies

51 In October 2017, ASQC received a substantial and detailed mapping document which confirmed that the College's policies, regulations and procedures were fully in alignment with the Quality Code. This mapping document gives full details of how the College manages its various activities in the areas covered by the Quality Code (and how it has done so over a period of some nine years), identifies the senior postholder in the College who has lead responsibility in each area, and notes which committees will take oversight responsibility for particular areas. This mapping exercise is carried out annually. The College also makes effective use of Subject Benchmark Statements in programme development and validation (paragraph 67). The College's programmes have no relationships with professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

In establishing, and then maintaining, comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent-level programmes, the organisation explicitly seeks advice from external peers and, where appropriate, professional and statutory bodies

52 In the preparation of new programme proposals, the OU appoints a facilitator to support and advise the development team as it prepares documentation for validation. Validation reports for 2014-15 and 2015-16, and observation of such events in 2017-18, indicate that each validation panel includes external subject-specialist peers who comment on the programme, and whose views are acted upon, following the principles of the OU quality assurance system.

Programme approval, monitoring and review arrangements are robust, applied consistently, have at all levels a broadly based external dimension and take appropriate account of the specific requirements of different levels of award and different modes of delivery

53 The College's current programme validation, monitoring and review arrangements are specified in the Quality Cycle Handbook. These arrangements are governed by the OU's Handbook for Validated Awards; they are all aligned with the Quality Code and approved by the OU. The arrangements are carried out under the oversight of the OU and reported to it, as well as to ASQC.

54 Programme validation takes place in two stages, internal and external. The internal preliminary event allows the College to confirm programme documentation for presentation at the second stage, conducted by a panel of external academic peers chaired by a member of OU. This external panel evaluates the proposed programme and makes recommendations to the OU's validation committee. Key documents prepared for programme validation are: a detailed business case in the form of a background document; a proposed programme specification; programme handbook; and module handbooks containing the definitive module records DMRs. Panels for programme validation always

include two external academic peers as advisers. Evidence seen by the scrutiny team confirms that the process is well managed by the College. Its documentation for programme validation is exemplary. At validation meetings, College managers and academic staff participate willingly and usefully in discussions with validation panels, demonstrating clarity and rigour of evaluation. The College proposes, if granted taught degree awarding powers, to form a Validation Committee that will take the place and fulfil the role of the OU's validation committee. This new, internal Validation Committee will include input from all College support areas and from industry and employers.

55 Module evaluations take place every six to 12 weeks, through Staff-Student Liaison Groups (SSLGs). Details of the module evaluation process are given in the Higher Education Assessment and Moderation Procedure set out in the Quality Cycle Handbook. Programme leaders inform tutors of the modules that are to be sampled for evaluation so that over a three-year period all modules are evaluated.

56 Annual monitoring is systematically and very effectively carried out at programme and institutional levels. Programme Performance Reviews (PPRs) take place every term for each programme; they are designed as a mechanism to assure the good 'health' of the programme. Together with SSLG meetings they feed into the APE that takes place in the autumn. APEs make use of data from external examiners' reports, the National Student Survey (NSS), internal student surveys, and other student feedback mechanisms (paragraphs 121-124). APE reports, produced using an electronically accessed standard template, are sent to ASQC, Academic Board, and the OU. The PPR and APE processes are managed by the Head of HE Quality and work efficiently and effectively. The College's Annual Institutional Overview (AIO) reports to the OU are derived from the APE process; they are submitted to Academic Board, the Board of Governors, and then the OU.

57 Programmes are periodically reviewed through the revalidation process, which takes place at five-year intervals and essentially re-runs the validation procedure. Revalidation panels include student representation through the Students' Union President. Minor changes to programmes are initiated by APEs, approved by the Academic Board and reported to the OU. Major changes to programmes require revalidation.

58 The OU carried out a quinquennial partnership review and administrative audit in March 2018. This review raised no concerns about academic standards and quality and identified only minor matters for which remedial action was necessary (paragraph 11). This outcome, together with the evidence read and observed during the scrutiny, demonstrates that the College has the necessary internal strength to carry out these activities consistently and effectively.

There is an explicit and close relationship between academic planning and decisions on resource allocation

59 Resource allocation is determined by SLT (Planning) and is closely related to academic planning, taking account of particular requirements for programmes that have special needs in terms of materials and studio facilities. Some programmes require industry-standard equipment, and programmes are costed differently according to their particular requirements. The budgetary process is well established and open. SLT discusses bids with budget-holders, acts as a 'moderation' panel to prioritise the bids, and allocates funds. The process has recently been made more transparent: all 'bids' can be viewed online by all budget-holders. This has enabled key players to plan bids together and amend them as joint bids where appropriate. The Head of Learning Resource Environment and the Head of Information Technology may coordinate such joint bids in order to maximise benefits, and SLT signs off the final budget.

Criterion B3

The education provision of an organisation granted taught degree awarding powers consistently meets its stated learning objectives and achieves its intended outcomes.

Strategies for learning and assessment are consistent with stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes

60 The College has a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy appropriate to the nature of the institution and its provision, and the LTCC receives a termly report on its implementation. The strategy is updated annually as part of the review procedure for all strategies and policies. The implementation plan is monitored and updated throughout the academic year. Programme specifications, definitive module records and programme handbooks are developed and approved for student and staff reference; they provide clear information and understandings of expectations to maximise learning, teaching and assessment opportunities. There are helpful standard templates for programme specifications and module records.

61 Modules are clearly defined in terms of the approved aims, learning outcomes, timescales and modes of delivery. All formative and summative assessment activity is through coursework. All assignment briefs are moderated before issue to students to ensure that the aims and learning outcomes have been accurately defined and aligned with the approved DMR. Links between learning, teaching and assessment are tested at validation and revalidation. Students met during the scrutiny confirmed their understandings of assessment methods and requirements.

Relevant staff are informed of, and provided with guidance on, its policies and procedures for programme design, monitoring and review

62 The College's policies and procedures for programme design, monitoring and review (paragraphs 54-58) are communicated to all staff through the Quality Cycle Handbook on the staff portal. The Head of Learning and Teaching provides appropriate staff development to support the Head of HE Quality's role in ensuring compliance with College policies and procedures. Until recently, programme development teams have been assembled under the leadership of the Vice-Principal Academic and a designated programme leader, or the Head of the Graduate School. Under present arrangements the Associate Deans have assumed that responsibility, but this will change as a new management structure is introduced (paragraph 21).

Responsibility for amending or improving new programme proposals is clearly assigned and subsequent action is carefully monitored

63 Associate Deans are currently responsible for the development of programme proposals and oversee the key documents and a detailed business plan. However, in future Heads of School will take these responsibilities. The proposal is overseen by SLT, which ensures that all the necessary safeguards are in place, in terms of resource and all the College support areas including library and wider student support services. Academic Board oversees all aspects of programme development including proposals for amending or proposing new programmes, and monitors subsequent actions. It undertakes these roles consistently and effectively.

Coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained

64 The College currently does not offer programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways. It is aware of the complexities involved including parity of student opportunity and experience, tutorial support, and potential additional timetabling issues. However, fundamental changes are being planned for 2019-20 which will require the College to address these matters in projected developments that include common modules and pathways.

Close links are maintained between learning support services and the organisation's programme planning, approval, monitoring and review arrangements

65 The College's Quality Code mapping document (paragraphs 32 and 51) indicates that links between learning support services and the organisation's programme planning, validation, monitoring, and revalidation arrangements are present and are clearly defined. PRRs (paragraph 56) particularly demonstrate the close links. The external examiner report form asks explicit questions about the nature of the learning support services that are considered, and would be addressed, through APEs (paragraph 56). Support services give presentations to staff at Cluster Meetings. Of particular note is the introduction of the Enhancement Bulletin which is discussed in programme meetings and sent to all students through the Students' Union. This is produced by the Head of HE Quality and enjoys wide distribution. It represents a response to a number of shared comments and themes recorded in a variety of forums across the College.

Robust arrangements exist for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to those students that may be studying at a distance from the organisation are adequate

66 The College has not offered and does not currently offer programmes involving distance learning.

Through its planning, approval, review and assessment practices, the organisation defines, monitors, reviews and maintains its academic standards

67 Planning, validation, monitoring, and revalidation arrangements are discussed in paragraphs 53-58. All programme leaders and programme teams are continually involved in these processes. Through the processes of programme validation and revalidation, care is taken to ensure clear articulation of alignment with the FHEQ and with relevant qualification and Subject Benchmark Statements, to secure the threshold academic standard for the new award, and to ensure that the qualification is at the appropriate level. The process also ensures that learning outcomes and assessment methods are clearly identified and appropriate.

68 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which is updated annually as part of the College's review procedure for all strategies and policies, sets out clearly the overarching principles for assessment within the context of this specialist College's academic subject areas. Full details of the College's marking and moderation processes are given in the annually updated Undergraduate and Postgraduate Assessment and Moderation Guidelines. External examiners' reports comment favourably on the assessment processes within the College across the range of programmes. Progression and Award Boards work to precise regulations, ensuring that academic standards are upheld and decisions are made in accordance with the regulatory framework. The Boards allow ample discussion about individual cases and take full account of comments from external examiners. External examining at the College is discussed in paragraphs 71 and 72.

Assessment criteria and practices are communicated clearly to students and staff

69 Students are informed about assessment requirements and processes, including how work is set, submitted, marked, and returned, in individual programme handbooks and module guides. The Undergraduate and Postgraduate Student Handbook provides a generic overview of assessment and appeals processes in the College. All these sources of information about assessment criteria and practice are clear and comprehensive.

Assessment practices fully cover all declared learning objectives, learning outcomes and modes of delivery

70 Assessment methods and practices relate consistently to the intended learning outcomes of programmes. They are defined in programme specifications and, with more detail, in module records, all of which are approved at programme validation and reviewed at revalidation. In addition to their essential emphasis on students' creative outputs, they include assessment of artistic research and theoretical elements by, for example, group presentations and final written coursework. Consistency of assessment practice is secured through the deliberations of Assessment and Award Boards (paragraph 73) and the work of external examiners (paragraphs 71-72), who have indicated that assessment practices are appropriate to particular programmes.

Appropriately qualified external peers are engaged in the organisation's assessment processes and consistency is maintained between internal and external examiners' marking

71 The College operates an effective system of external examining which enables it to secure external comparability of standards in assessment and provide external assurances of standards. They are sought by the College, and selected and nominated by Academic Board for approval by the OU. Each appointment is based on criteria derived from the Quality Code, *Chapter B7*. Explicit guidelines are followed to ensure the independence of external examiner nominations. Examiners are provided with induction training to ensure they understand the nature and context of the College, its academic regulations and details of the relevant programme. The training also promotes a professional and effective relationship with the staff of the College with whom they will be working. The College proposes, if granted taught degree awarding powers, to introduce its own handbook for external examiners, and it has established an External Examiner Committee that reports to Academic Board.

72 External examiners visit the College twice each year: for an interim review in February or March when they meet with staff and students of particular programmes, and again in the summer for a final review and attendance at Award Boards. They attend end-of-year exhibitions to see work produced by students. External examiners' reports are submitted both to the College and the OU; they are considered separately in order to create formal responses and are monitored at present by the OU and by Academic Board through the APE process and ASQC. The College also appoints, with the approval of the OU, a Chief External Examiner who provides a broad overview of all external examiners' reports and produces a report of their own to which the College responds. External examiners in their reports comment on a wide range of issues, on the nature and fairness of assessment, and in particular whether the assessment process relates fairly to the stated objectives and learning outcomes of the particular programme.

The reliability and validity of the organisation's assessment procedures are monitored, and its assessment outcomes inform future programme and student planning

73 Staff participate willingly and rigorously in discussions at Assessment and Award Boards. Issues arising at Boards in relation to assessment and moderation practice are reported to Academic Board. Termly PPRs (paragraph 56) provide an effective way of monitoring operational delivery. Assessment procedures are discussed across the range of review processes and most particularly are a focus of the reports from external examiners. The APE process, overseen by the Head of HE Quality, ensures that assessment outcomes inform ongoing review for continuous improvement and programme planning.

Clear mechanisms are in place for use when a decision is taken to close a programme or programme element, and in doing so, students' interests are safeguarded

74 The College's agreed procedure for the closure of a programme is effectively overseen by Academic Board. The procedure includes a requirement for consultation and emphasises the need for care to ensure that academic standards and the quality of the student experience are maintained until the programme is completed by all remaining students. In 2013-14 the closure of a Craft Textile programme led to a formal complaint to the OU and the OIA, but this complaint was not upheld. Nevertheless, as a result of the complaint, the College now places more emphasis on consultation with students affected by programme closures. In February 2018, Academic Board received documented details of the closure of the Creative Advertising and Brand programme. This closure was managed appropriately, taking full account of the needs of the one remaining student.

Criterion B4

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers takes effective action to promote strengths and respond to identified limitations.

Critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the organisation's higher education provision and action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review

75 There is a culture of self-assessment at all levels within the College. The Board of Governors undertakes a thorough self-assessment review every year, and this leads to action where appropriate (paragraphs 15 and 17). The same process applies to the Academic Board. Programme monitoring review includes module evaluation surveys, student feedback mechanisms, APEs, and feedback from external examiners, all of which informs reflection on provision and identifies areas for development. Appropriate action follows such self-assessment. PPRs, which include all programme staff, and SSLGs provide opportunities for continuous self-analysis and enhancement. While the Critical Self Analysis submitted with the application is not notably self-critical, observations throughout the year have demonstrated a College community that is always alert and self-critical and constantly seeking improvement.

Clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny, monitoring and review of agreed learning objectives and intended outcomes

76 The Quality Cycle Handbook gives clear guidance about the management of all monitoring and review processes, and the College consistently follows its procedures. Issues related to programme delivery are raised at PPR and SSLG meetings, and appropriate remedial action is taken by Programme Leaders, and at senior management level where necessary. A good example of such responsive activity is the timely way in which the

College has responded to the most recent NSS results, details and analysis of which were promptly reported to the SLT (Operations), identifying areas for early action through Programme Leaders and the APE process (paragraph 121).

Ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation (for example on programme design and development, on teaching and on student learning and assessment) are drawn into its arrangements for programme design, approval and review

77 Development of programme proposals and their associated documentation is supported by business support areas (technical resources, library resources) and market research. The involvement of external advisers, who might be independent academics and industry professionals, leads to a pooling of ideas and expertise from within and outside the College. Under the present arrangements with the OU, two external academics are always involved in validation meetings. The planned Validation Committee (paragraph 54) will include input of internal and external expertise.

Effective means exist for encouraging the continuous improvement of quality of provision and student achievement

78 The College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Strategy sets out the institutional-level framework for continuous improvement. It specifies a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) including, for example, NSS scores, and numbers of students graduating with Firsts/2.1s (expected to rise from 59 per cent in 2016 to 67 per cent in 2020). These KPIs are systematically monitored by the SLT, ASQC, Academic Board and the Board of Governors.

79 The College has a good record in its approach to the encouragement of continuous improvement. The QAA Higher Education Review in November 2015 commended the College on its approach to continuous improvement. It particularly noted as good practice the rigour of PPRs and APEs, supported by comprehensive performance data. Also noteworthy is the role of the Chief External Examiner who takes a broad overview of College activity, noting good practice and producing an annual report to which the College produces a comprehensive action plan in response. The recently introduced Enhancement Bulletin further raises the profile of quality improvement and enhancement activities (paragraph 65).

C Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff

Criterion C1

The staff of an organisation granted powers to award taught degrees will be competent to teach, facilitate learning and undertake assessment to the level of the qualifications being awarded.

All higher education teaching staff have relevant academic and/or professional expertise

80 The College's 100 academic staff teaching on its higher education provision are divided roughly 40 per cent full-time and 60 per cent fractional. This staffing profile reflects the College's commitment to practice-led teaching through the use of fractional appointments which bring artists and creative professionals into the classroom. Practice-led teaching is also enhanced through the use of visiting artists and lecturers, for whom each

programme receives an annual budget. The College has reviewed its staffing model in response to the development of its strategy, and greater change to the staffing profile is planned. The College intends to re-balance staffing levels in different subject areas to reflect changing student demand and planned new provision. A shift from fractional to full-time posts and a reduction in small fractional posts is proposed. Greater emphasis on employing research-active as well as practitioner teaching staff is reflected in recruitment to new posts and vacancies. As might be expected in a College with a studio-based learning environment, there is a naturally close working relationship between staff and students.

81 Only three members of academic staff do not hold graduate qualifications, while 55 have master's degrees. Nine academics have doctorates and others are registered for doctoral studies. This pattern of qualifications held is broadly similar across full-time and fractional staff. The long-term aim is that all teaching staff should be qualified at least one level above the level at which they teach. Job descriptions prepared for all academic posts make clear the College's expectations of incumbents' knowledge, qualifications, experience, and creative practice. These expectations are reflected in the curriculum vitae of staff seen by the scrutiny team.

82 The College's new academic contract requires that within two years of employment, staff obtain a recognised relevant teaching qualification. Currently just over 60 per cent of academic staff hold either a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) or other teaching qualification. The College actively promotes and supports the achievement of Higher Education Academy (HEA) fellowship. There are currently seven fellows, one at senior level; and some 38 staff are at various stages of application.

83 The College has implemented a new human resources database on which staff are required to upload details of their academic and professional qualifications; engagement with pedagogical developments in their discipline; evidence of knowledge and understanding of research and advanced scholarship relevant to their teaching; staff development; experience of curriculum design and assessment; and external engagement with the higher education sector. The database underpins appraisal and performance review (paragraph 103).

All higher education teaching staff have relevant engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline (through, for example, membership of subject associations, learned societies and professional bodies)

84 The Strategic Plan 2015-20 (paragraph 1) sets out the College's vision, ethos, purpose and values including the commitment to learning through practice and participation, and the notion of the College as a crucible, or laboratory, for artistic experiment, exchange, entrepreneurship and innovation, and for new thinking in the service of wider communities. The updated Strategic Plan for 2018-23 (paragraph 1) is built round the twin themes of creative learning and social justice; the former focusing on pedagogical innovation and learner agency, the latter on community impact and social mobility.

85 The College encourages all staff to engage with professional and industry bodies, discipline associations, and networks spanning the creative arts and education, and engagement is widespread. The expectation of this is written into the academic staff contract as a requirement to evidence scholarly activity, professional currency including participation in conferences and exhibitions and involvement with subject associations.

86 Fifteen days a year of each member of academic staff's time is earmarked for innovation and scholarly activity in a variety of forms. Support is available to cover subscription costs. Staff external activity is recorded on the human resources database referred to above and monitored through the appraisal process. The database and curricula vitae seen by the scrutiny team confirm that engagement is widespread. Data showing the College's research and scholarship outputs for the past academic year include a reasonably

high number of items relating to pedagogy such as conference papers, publications and exhibitions.

87 The College is heavily involved in educational networks within the creative arts providing further opportunities for staff to engage in pedagogical development. An example of such networks includes Tate Exchange, of which the College is a founder member. The College's international symposium, Making Futures, explores aspects of learning as well as practice in the arts. Opportunities for exposure to international practice in pedagogy for the creative arts are also provided through Erasmus partnerships which facilitate staff mobility. The College is a participant in multi-institutional international projects, such as Made@EU and Crysalis, supported by European funding. As part of a continuum of learning in the creative arts through its further education provision and its links with a free school (page 5), the College has opportunities to debate and develop pedagogy in the creative arts more broadly.

All higher education teaching staff have relevant knowledge and understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline area and such knowledge and understanding directly inform and enhance their teaching

88 The College's mission, strategy and approach to education are based on the interplay between research, scholarship and practice. These are distinctive characteristics of creative arts institutions. Understanding of, and participation in, research is spread unevenly across the College. The College is currently stronger with respect to scholarship and practice, and has made classically defined research a key developmental priority. To address this objective, it is growing its research infrastructure and fostering a College-wide research culture and ethos. In doing so the College is committed to ensuring that research, like practice, informs teaching and does not stand apart. The College's Research Director post has been renamed Head of Academic Research, reporting to the Academic Dean in the revised academic structure. The role has a wide-ranging remit for developing research activity across the College.

89 The College's RSC normally meets three times a year and reports annually to the Academic Board. It was previously chaired by the Principal, but this role has now been taken over by the Vice Principal. The Committee has appointed an external advisory member with experience as research director of an art college and working with the Consortium for Research Excellence, Support and Training (CREST).

90 The College has a broad three-year research strategy adopted in 2017. The recently appointed Head of Academic Research is taking steps to review the strategy in the light of the revised institutional strategy and priorities, and a realistic assessment of available resources. A new Research Strategy is expected to be presented for approval early in the academic year 2018-19.

91 The College's research budget is relatively small and there is currently limited external research funding. The RSC supports conference and attendance and makes small research grants. Research grant applications are currently on hold pending issuance of clearer guidance on eligibility and publication of key priorities. It is expected to resume applications later this year.

92 The College does not yet have formally defined research centres. As part of the development of the revised research strategy, work is taking place to define research interest groups which would form the basis of such centres. The College does not have formal research partnerships with other higher education institutions. However, it recognises the importance of doctoral research and the benefit to staff of undertaking doctoral supervision with others. PhD partnerships are seen as a key means of developing the College's research culture. The College has received approaches from several higher

education institutions interested in involving it in doctoral supervision. A working party has been set up to develop a PhD partnership model as a first step in response to these approaches.

93 The College recently undertook an audit of staff research skills and experience, comprising a survey and follow-up interviews. The audit revealed research experience and activity spread across all categories of staff as well as areas where engagement with formal research is very limited. Issues that emerged from the audit, which are currently being addressed, include developing and embedding further the College's research culture, and the need for a wider awareness of the difference between routine creative production and practice-based research that could be submitted to the Research Excellence Framework (REF).

94 The Board of Governors, on the advice of the Academic Board, has approved the setting up of a professorial committee to consider applications for the titles of Associate Professor, Professor, Emeritus Professor and Honorary Professor. A policy paper details the criteria for the award of such titles which may be based on academic leadership, teaching scholarship, or research and practice. The aim of this committee is to recognise, promote and attract highly qualified and research-rated staff, and it has the potential to meet these aims. The initial meeting of this committee in the summer of 2018 considered applications from existing staff, including the new senior appointees.

95 The new academic staff contract reduced teaching hours to 700 from over 800. However, 700 hours is still high, and steps are being taken to reduce this further in order to accommodate the 15 days of development and research and scholarly activity time mandated in the new contract. The College is now working to reduce required teaching loads to 540, which is closer to the sector norm. Staff may also apply to the RSC for support in the form of funds and remission of teaching time. External research funding can facilitate allocation of further research time.

96 The College has decided that submission to the 2021 REF would not be appropriate. In preparation for submission to the 2028 REF, or its successor, the College is taking steps to ensure that all staff understand the REF process and is developing appropriate criteria for the internal evaluation of research proposals, activity and outputs. Impact, as defined within the REF, is already a strong feature of the College's research strategy and activity.

97 An Annual Research Development Day is held that includes presentations on current research projects, and sessions designed to inform staff and engender research related discussions. The attendance at the 2018 event was high. A Research, Scholarship and Practice portal has been created for staff which includes policies, resources and news. A research mentoring scheme was established in 2017 and eight research-active members of academic staff are currently mentoring 19 mentees. It is proposed to extend the scheme further.

98 The College currently has a small but significant research output spanning subject, practitioner and pedagogic audiences in the creative arts. Outputs during the last academic year have been split roughly three ways between exhibitions, conference presentations and publications including journal articles and book chapters. The College is an active participant in CREST (paragraph 89), which gives staff access to training events and a summer school. The College itself organises and participates in a number of conferences and events in the creative arts, several of which attract international participants and audiences from North America, China, Europe and elsewhere. The biennial, internationally recognised Making Futures Symposium has been a central plank of its research activity. Other events such as

an international symposium on surrealism, Seeking the Marvellous, are extending the scope of the College's research output.

99 The College emphasises the integration of research and teaching. This is encouraged through the requirement for all staff to engage in research or scholarly activity, internal workshops and seminars, and reporting back, including the annual research day, which this year featured sessions on embedding research in the undergraduate curriculum.

All higher education teaching staff have relevant staff development and appraisal opportunities aimed at enabling them to develop and enhance their professional competence and scholarship

100 The College has set out formally its policies and priorities for staff development, including continuing professional development (CPD), in line with the College's academic strategy. Staff development is seen as essential to the delivery of the College's Learning and Teaching Strategy and prioritises teaching skills and qualifications. All academic staff are required to complete 30 hours per year of CPD (pro-rata for fractional staff with a minimum of six hours). CPD must be recorded on the Human Resource (HR) staff database. In addition, academic staff are allocated 15 days per annum for professional development to be used for research and scholarly activity.

101 Staff development is a standing item on both RSC and LTCC. The staff training and development budget, which is approved centrally, is held and administered by the human resources department. Staff may apply for funding for development using a standard form. Requests must indicate how the proposed development relates to College priorities and state how learning from the activity will be disseminated more widely among colleagues. Requests are signed off by the head of Learning and Teaching and the relevant Associate Dean (in future the Head of School). The College supports staff to undertake professional qualifications including master's degrees and teaching qualifications. Fractional staff are eligible for staff development funds on a pro-rata basis. However, time is often an issue for part-time staff who may have professional and practice commitments outside the College, and participation in staff development events has historically been problematic for this group. In order to ensure and enhance their continued role in teaching as the College moves forward, there has been a move to larger fractional contracts and a redrawing of the timetable to facilitate group cohesion and participation in development activity.

102 Arrangements for academic staff induction are in place. The College's probationary system provides for the identification of necessary training and development needs and checks that all mandatory training has been completed. These and other matters related to staff development are spelled out effectively in the Staff Handbook.

103 HR management systems are well developed, including the HR database, which includes all full-time and fractional staff, holds employee data, standard CVs and performance appraisal documents for all full-time and fractional staff. Performance appraisal takes place in May or June and training is provided earlier in the term for appraisers and appraisees. Appraisal is the trigger for staff to update their entry and their CV. Staff development that has been undertaken and is proposed or is needed to achieve future objectives is discussed during appraisal. The HR systems ensure that all staff participate effectively in annual appraisal. Ninety-five per cent of annual appraisals were completed during the last academic year (the remainder being explained by illness or agreed absence). Over 90 per cent of appraisal reports indicated that expectations had been met or exceeded (the remainder being explained by illness or agreed absence). The teaching observation scheme also provides a trigger for staff development.

104 As well as funding attendance at external events, the College organises a full programme of staff development activities open to all staff. Learning and Teaching Days are

held twice a year. The most recent event held in summer 2018 was very well attended and involved highly participative activity focused on the themes of the revised Strategic Plan.

105 For the last two years a staff survey has been conducted, focusing on staff engagement and satisfaction. In response to the first survey the College more than doubled investment in staff development: this contributed to generally positive views among academic staff recorded in the last survey.

Staff with key programme management responsibilities have experience of curriculum development and assessment design

106 The development of curricula and assessment is the responsibility of senior academic managers. Under the new management structure these are the Vice Principal; the Academic Dean; and the Heads of Design and Communications, Arts and Media, and Critical and Cultural Studies. Reporting to these heads are 22 programme leaders, each responsible for a particular degree or group of inter-related qualifications.

107 Vacancies for programme leaders are advertised internally and a formal appointment process takes place. All programme leaders have job descriptions based on a common template. The template identifies qualifications, experience and skills both essential and advantageous for curriculum development and assessment design. Staff with programme leadership responsibilities, such as programme leaders and assessment coordinators, are required to record their experience of curriculum development and assessment design on the HR database. CVs seen by the scrutiny team demonstrate that all programme leaders have appropriate knowledge and experience to undertake curriculum and assessment design and development. Many programme leaders bring experience of programme design from other higher education institutions, and some have international experience.

108 Programme leaders are regularly involved in curriculum review and development through the OU's processes for annual review and validation. Internal PPR meetings for each programme are held three times a year chaired by the Head of Quality. These meetings are an effective forum for programme leaders, in a reflective and developmental way, to develop their critical annual review documents, and for exchange and exposure to good practice.

Staff with key programme management responsibilities have engagement with the activities of providers of higher education in other organisations (through, for example, involvement as external examiners, validation panel members, or external reviewers)

109 Academic staff are encouraged to undertake external roles within the higher education sector such as external examining and panel membership. The expectation of such activity is incorporated in the academic contract and programme management job descriptions. Data on staff external activity is recorded in the database that underpins annual appraisal discussions and provides reports to senior management on the nature and extent of external engagement. For example, programme leaders and all those with responsibilities for assessment are required to record details of their engagements with the activities of other higher education institutions. Staff CVs and the database indicate that all staff involved in programme leadership have relevant external engagement with higher education.

110 Five of the College's 22 programme leaders, and five other senior staff responsible for programme management and development, currently hold external examiner posts. In addition, five other programme leaders have recently held external examiner appointments or acted as external advisers and panel members for programme validation and revalidation at UK higher education institutions.

D The environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes

Criterion D1

The teaching and learning infrastructure of an organisation granted taught degree awarding powers, including its student support and administrative support arrangements, is effective and monitored.

The effectiveness of learning and teaching activities is monitored in relation to stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes

111 The College oversees the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities through the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2016, which is written in line with the Quality Code, Part B.

112 Mechanisms for monitoring the quality of teaching include peer observation, PPRs, student feedback through SSLG meetings, an annual Teaching and Learning Day, and monitoring of teaching and learning by the LTCC and Academic Board. The LTCC receives reports of peer observation and teaching, the HE Observations Report, which collates and analyses the quality of teaching and learning and themes arising from observers' comments. The HE Teaching Development and Peer Observation Process aims to engage all academic staff with ongoing professional development and evidence-based approaches to teaching.

113 Teaching observations take place in October and February, with outcomes linked to action plans. The College actively shares good practice through developmental support for new teaching staff, discussion with peers, and at Learning and Teaching Symposia. An HE Teaching Observations Report is presented annually to the LTCC, where any changes to the observation scheme are discussed and approved. Staff considered that the academic teaching observation review process supported and complemented the annual personal development appraisal system and helped them to share good practice.

114 In response to the College's AIO report for 2016-17, the OU gave feedback praising the excellent industry-standard resources and specialist areas available to students at the College, collaboration between taught programmes and flexibility of the working space. Good practice was also observed in opportunities for students to network through live projects, industry-related visits and guest speakers. The Chief External Examiner's 2017 report also praised the College's strong industry and professional links, supportive creative environment, excellent learning resources and well established staff practitioners. Overall, learning and teaching are managed and monitored effectively by the College.

Students are informed of the outcomes of assessments in a timely manner

115 The provision of assessment outcomes to students is based on clear expectations set out in the College HE Assessment and Moderation Procedure. It is the responsibility of the module leader to ensure that assessed work is returned to students within three weeks of the submission deadline, with the exception of contextual and final modules. However, students indicated that they were informed of marks and given feedback on average within two weeks.

116 The majority of practice-based assessments take the form of face-to-face critiques of students' work, allowing them to relate their work to theory, practice and associated industries, and students actively encouraged to book a feedback or tutorial session to discuss their grade. Students reported that they were able to discuss feedback with their personal tutor and were aware of the need to understand the grading structure. Changes to

the delivery of oral in-class feedback, in an effort to clarify the differences between criticism and questions from academic staff, had been well received, and students gave positive feedback to staff.

Constructive and developmental feedback is given to students on their performance

117 Students receive formal feedback through the College student record system, and are able to view their own results. A spreadsheet providing module details, deadline dates and feedback due dates is updated on a weekly basis. Students typically receive feedback statements of between 300-500 words.

118 Staff receive a range of guidance on giving assessment feedback, including the HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, programme handbooks, Undergraduate and Postgraduate Tutorial Practice Guidelines, and the HE Assessment and Moderation Procedure. The 2016-17 OU institutional overview indicated that feedback had featured in a number of student complaints. In light of this, feedback has been mapped to an improved grading matrix and written feedback is made available to students automatically on a predetermined date. In addition, staff training sessions on critique feedback have been incorporated into the annual Teaching and Learning Day. External examiners have reported that assessment procedures are appropriate, transparent and clearly understood by the vast majority of students. Overall, assessment feedback is helpful and is delivered to students in accordance with pre-agreed timescales.

Feedback from students, staff (and where relevant) employers and other institutional stakeholders is obtained and evaluated, and clear mechanisms exist to provide feedback to all such constituencies

119 The College aims to work in partnership with its student population through a range of representation opportunities. The Principal meets regularly with students on each programme, and with Students' Union representatives in an effort to encourage engagement and feedback. Termly Student Voice Committee meetings, managed by the Students' Union, give all students the opportunity to comment and resolve common issues. Student representatives are invited, as members, to share feedback at a range of committees. These include PPRs, APEs and termly SSLG meetings. The Students' Union President is a member of Academic Board, and of the Board of Governors as a student governor. Student representatives from a wider range of backgrounds are members of other committees. However, student views are not always sought before changes are proposed at institutional level. For example, when Academic Board considered the College's prospective academic regulations in March 2018 there had been no prior consultation with students (paragraph 27). In another instance, students were not consulted regarding a proposal for shared use of the College lecture theatre with external partners. Nevertheless, the College is still working to optimise the role of students in formal decision making, and, overall, student representation is effective.

120 Feedback is gained from students in the form of evaluation surveys and feedback mechanisms that feed in to the termly PPR process. Student feedback at APEs influences minor changes to programmes (paragraph 57). Students are not involved in programme design or validation. However, they are represented on revalidation panels through the Students' Union President, and the College has plans to increase student representation on these panels in the future.

121 The College operates several surveys to gain student feedback and takes the results of both the NSS and its own surveys seriously. The College has responded swiftly and strongly to the 2017-18 NSS results (paragraph 76), which indicated a drop in overall student satisfaction. These results were thoroughly presented and analysed in an evaluative report at an SLT (Operations) meeting, which decided that detailed NSS action plans will be

drawn up by programme leaders, considered in the forthcoming APE, and monitored through regular PPRs.

122 In addition to the NSS, a formal student survey early in the autumn term obtains feedback from first-year students regarding induction, the results of which are considered at programme team meetings, and targets set and discussed with students in SEEC meetings. Module evaluation surveys assess whether students have received sufficient advice and support with their studies. The interim HE Survey in February uses questions based on the NSS, with a summary of results reported to the SEEC. Mechanisms also exist to provide feedback to students in the form of 'You Said, We Did' updates featured on the student portal and on posters displayed throughout the College. Students were complimentary about efforts made to engage them as partners and reported that their views were heard. For example, student complaints regarding the feedback they received through tutorials and assessments led to significant changes, with assessment feedback now more closely linked to learning outcomes. Clear and effective mechanisms for the collection, analysis, and consideration of student survey results are in place.

123 Staff have a wide range of opportunities to provide feedback, through Principal's Briefings, regular staff meetings with line managers and PPR meetings. PPR meetings allow for scrutiny and programme evaluation, with staff feedback listed as a recurring item within the meeting minutes. Staff also provide comment through the staff survey (annual to date, but henceforth biennial), the results of which are overseen by the Equality and Diversity Committee, the Remuneration and Employment Committee, senior management, and the Board, and feed into the AIO report to the OU.

124 The College's proactive and collaborative approach to employer engagement in the programme validation process was identified as good practice in the 2015 Higher Education Review. A central '3Es' (employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship) team (now the Careers and Enterprise programme), was founded in 2013 to better support employer engagement activities. APEs from 2015-16, and feedback from representative local employers, recommended that an improved system for collating employer input was required to ensure that employers always receive feedback as a result of their input. This has been formalised through a new Careers and Employability Manager to support work-based learning, and the development of an Employer Satisfaction Survey by the Business Development Committee. A very small number of employers responded, but all were satisfied. Representative employers met during the scrutiny were very positive regarding students on placement and work experience, and praised the excellent quality of work produced by students.

Students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way, and account is taken of different students' needs

125 Students are provided with an inclusive 'Welcome Pack' through email on acceptance of their offer. These packs include a range of general College information and programme-specific guidance. Students receive inductions at the start of every year, and refresher inductions relating to new equipment in Years 2 and 3. Students are given the opportunity to give feedback on their induction process in the autumn term survey, the results of which are reported to SSLGs. Overall, students in the 2017 cohort reported high levels of satisfaction with the induction process.

126 The induction process is considered, with student feedback, during February and March SSLC and PPR meetings, coordinated by the Head of HE Quality for each programme, where first and second year induction survey and NSS survey scores are analysed, examined, and reported to Academic Board. Staff are encouraged to examine areas relating to their programme and identify targets and solutions for improvement when

required. Students have complimented the College on its induction process, describing it as very informative.

Available learning support materials are adequate to support students in the achievement of the stated purposes of their study programmes

127 The College provides a range of IT and library services, including a new Library Management System with email reminder. The College offers a range of books, journals provided by Jstor and Art Source, DVDs and eBook providers. Library staff provide students with Information/Digital Literacy sessions at regular intervals during the year and changes have been made to the radio-frequency identification (RFID) system. Continuous investment has been reflected in positive NSS scores of 91 per cent (compared to a sector average of 87 per cent) for satisfaction with learning support services. Library staff have initiated an opportunity for students to provide feedback in the form of the Library Focus Group and to test the new library website. Students were happy with the currency and availability of learning resources including 3D printing and access to industry-standard equipment and technician support. Overall, learning support materials are considered adequate, and the College has plans for development of digital collections and learning resources in the 2018-23 Strategic Plan.

The effectiveness of any student and staff advisory and counselling services is monitored, and any resource needs arising are considered

128 The College is aware of the range of challenges that students might face, and students have the opportunity to access a range of dedicated support services. Finance support, wellbeing advice, counselling, and support for students with disabilities and additional learning needs are provided by the Student Hub, which is central and easily accessible. The Head of Student Support is responsible for managing the delivery of support services to students, including learning support, counselling, health and well-being, student finance and student representative activities. They are also accountable for the delivery of enrichment services and overseeing the running of the Students' Union. Students and staff can self-refer to support services in person, by phone, email or using the referral form, which is available to students online.

129 The College faced difficulties in 2017 as it tried to recruit to a Mental Health Practitioner role, so it changed its approach in 2018 and appointed a Health and Wellbeing Adviser, further supported by two general student welfare advisers. Student advisory and counselling services are provided by the Hub, and also externally through an app or by phone and email; these services are advertised to students on posters throughout the College. Students can have an initial assessment, followed by a further six sessions of counselling, extending up to nine sessions if necessary. Staff counselling services are provided externally. Although student counselling has some problems regarding long waiting-lists, and an occasional need to appoint temporary counsellors to assist with demand, students were aware of counselling provision and contacts. In general, students' feedback indicates that they are satisfied with the support provided.

130 Students' use of support services is monitored using data from the Student Information Management System (SOMIS) and student feedback and reported to SEEC and Academic Board. The outcomes of the annual report are considered by the SEEC to identify any resource needs and organise the well-being provision offered the following year. For example, February 2018 reports indicate that, due to low uptake and the cost of implementing remote counselling, advertising of support and counselling services will be improved in 2018-19. Observation of the Appeals Board also indicated clear mechanisms in place for the support of students with mental health problems. Despite some difficulties with recruitment of mental health support practitioners, effective procedures are in place for the

monitoring of advisory and counselling services, and resource needs are kept under regular review by the SEEC and Academic Board.

Administrative support systems are able to monitor student progression and performance accurately, and provide timely and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs

131 Student progression is monitored by an information management system. KPIs, including enrolment, student satisfaction, non-continuation, achievement, and progression to employment are monitored by ASQC and the Board. SOMIS is used as the main information management system to manage student progression data and information regarding personal tutorials. This data is typically compiled by the Head of Management Information and Data Services and their team, who compile data reports for all committee meetings, working closely with the Registry team to assure the integrity of data presented during the annual monitoring process. The Programme Support team incorporates timetabling and room bookings within their remit and provides data on student attendance.

132 Appropriate, accurate data is produced to inform committees about the progress being made against predetermined KPIs, and that the progression and performance of students is presented clearly and in an accessible format. Overall, the administrative support systems provide information accurately and in a timely way, and transition to any new information management system occurs with the consultation of staff and students and is managed well. For example, admissions staff use data from the SOMIS intelligence management software, the student records system, the UCAS apps tracker and HEIDI, which allows staff to track Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data. Admissions staff meet with Associate Deans and members of the SLT in fortnightly Data Group meetings, where staff can examine forecasting for numbers of applications. The resulting outcomes of Data Group meetings and any issues are passed on to the SLT.

Effective and confidential mechanisms are in place to deal with all complaints regarding academic and non-academic matters

133 The College has appeals and complaints procedures and guidelines that allow students to raise matters of concern without fear of discrimination and both procedures encourage informal resolution. If students are dissatisfied with the outcome of a formal complaint or appeal, their right to contact the OU and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) is made clear. Academic appeals and complaints procedures are readily accessible in student handbooks and results letters following Progression and Award Boards, and on the College intranet and the website. These and other sources of information, such as tutors, College staff or student advisers were clearly recognised by students met during the scrutiny, who were all aware of how to appeal or complain and where to find the relevant details online.

134 Complaints procedures are overseen by the Deputy Registrar (Quality Systems and Performance), while final responsibility lies with the Registrar. A register of appeals and complaints is reviewed at ASQC and in an annual report to the Academic Board and the Board of Governors. The annual Complaints and Disciplinary Summary report identifies the number and nature of complaints, any themes arising from the data, and how the College compares to benchmark data published by the OIA. The Deputy Registrar (Quality Systems and Performance) is responsible for ensuring any lessons learned are actioned and works closely with Associate Deans and Programme Leaders. The College's arrangements for dealing with complaints are effective.

Staff involved with supporting the delivery of the organisation's higher education provision are given adequate opportunities for professional development

135 Staff receive annual performance appraisals in which they are encouraged to critically evaluate their performance in discussion with their manager. A range of extensive CPD activity is offered to staff, and the College has recently introduced a new CPD tracking system supported by the Staff Development Plan. Any new national training requirements are identified by heads of department and at committee meetings.

136 Examples of staff CPD applications show attendance at numerous events and staff can apply to the College for funding to attend external events and activities. Evidence from staff CVs confirms that engagement with staff development activities is good. The Staff Development Committee was dissolved at the beginning of the year, and staff development is now a standing item in the RSC and LTTC. Recent developments have seen the introduction of a level 3 qualification in Education and Training for technical staff. Generally, staff involved in delivery of higher education have a variety of suitable opportunities for professional development.

Information that the organisation produces concerning its higher education provision is accurate and complete

137 The College's Information Procedure sets out the intended subject matter of information, the content, media used, and the person responsible for the information and review date. The College has aligned its information procedures with the Quality Code, Part C, and the QAA 2015 Higher Education Review report found that the College provided information that was clear, accessible and fit for purpose. The College also takes steps to ensure that information provided meets the requirements of legislation and regulatory requirements, including CMA guidance as well as the requirements of any awarding body. Students met during the scrutiny confirmed that information made available to them prior to the start of their programme was accurate and complete.

138 The College publishes the PCA Guide to Information, which outlines the information provided by the College on its website. The majority of information is provided to prospective and current students, alumni and staff through the website, which provides ease of access to programme and application information.

139 Overall responsibility for reviewing and amending published information, such as the College website, marketing, outreach, press relations, external communications and student recruitment lies with the Director of Communications. The website and any information promoting programmes is subject to checks by the SLT and the OU, who review and approve the content. These measures are effective in ensuring that information provided by the College is accurate and complete.

Equal opportunities policies are in place and implemented effectively

140 The College has mapped its Equality Scheme onto the requirements for the Equality Act (2010). This is supported by the College Equality and Diversity Policy, which replaced the Equality and Diversity Protocol in July 2018. The Policy works in partnership with other protocols, such as the College Admissions Policy, PCA Learning and Disability Support Policy, Dignity at Study Policy, and the College Guide to Information. The College has also proposed Equality Objectives for 2016-20 to better meet its own vision and values. Staff receive compulsory equality and diversity training within six weeks of starting at the College.

141 Progress against these considerations is monitored by the College Equality and Diversity Committee, chaired by the Deputy Registrar, who report to the SLT and the Board.

The Equality and Diversity Annual Monitoring Report includes community partnerships, disability awareness, legislative changes, and student support data. The College's equal opportunities policies are executed well and effectively.

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