

# Application for taught degree awarding powers: Ravensbourne

## Scrutiny team report

May 2017

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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 Ravensbourne for the power to award taught degrees.

The application was considered under criteria approved by Government in 2004. 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 2004 TDAP criteria,<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> The TDAP criteria are available in Appendix 1 of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' *Applications for the grant of taught degree awarding powers, research degree awarding powers and university title: Guidance for applicant organisations in England and Wales (August 2004)* at [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/32388/11-781-applications-for-degree-awarding-powers-guidance.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32388/11-781-applications-for-degree-awarding-powers-guidance.pdf) (PDF, 304KB)

## Executive summary

### Governance and academic management

Ravensbourne (the college) delivers higher education courses in design and media leading to the awards of the University of the Arts London and is situated on a single purpose-built, state of the art campus on the Greenwich Peninsula.

Governance and academic management responsibilities and roles are widely understood and form a solid base for the college. Formal meetings are effectively managed. Risks are considered within the context of the regularly monitored Strategic Plan. Careful account is taken of legislative and environmental changes and guidance, developments in higher education and professional and industrial sectors, and of student feedback. The college's taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) Steering Group has overseen the TDAP process and reviews the development of the necessary academic preparations. The University of the Arts London supports the application, having been in a validation partnership with the college since 2013, renewed in 2016.

The key strengths of the college are the commitment, enthusiasm and professionalism of the Board of Governors which is both highly supportive of the Director and very adept at effectively holding to account Executive team members. The Director has a clear vision for the college, has made effective structural and senior management changes to deliver the vision, involving significant input from external professions and industries in the college's sector, and has developed a strong, supportive and open relationship with the governors, particularly the Chair. The detailed analysis and monitoring of risk is a strength. The college's academic quality assurance arrangements, involving significant devolution from the degree awarding body, have given the college significant experience in meeting the requirements of a degree-awarding organisation for which staffing and transitional arrangements are in place.

The key structural change of moving from six small schools (now departments) to two larger schools in April 2016 appears to have bedded in well and there have been a number of changes to the composition of the Executive team and the role and membership of the Senior Management Team, now known as the Senior Management Team Monthly. Whilst these changes were welcomed and understood by the groups involved, it is too early to judge fully their effectiveness. Given the significant changes to the curriculum anticipated by the outcome of the Portfolio Review, the Research Strategy and the review of IT provision, the Director has signalled her intention to undertake a major structural review. Such a review is in keeping with the commitment to ensuring that college structures continue to reflect the requirements of its strategic direction.

### Academic standards and quality assurance

Ravensbourne has an appropriate regulatory framework and is demonstrably self-critical in its procedures relating to programme approval, monitoring and review. It demonstrates detailed knowledge of the UK Quality Code and is well-informed by external input in all of its procedures, as well as in its strategic activity, such as in portfolio development where it has a robust and consistent procedure. The college produces clear and comprehensive records from quality assurance activities.

The use of external examiners ensures standards are maintained and are comparable with other institutions. External examiners were in general impressed by the activities and procedures of the college. Statistics are used to good effect, especially linked to the monitoring of completion and assessment. The appointment of a Head of Planning has enhanced the college's ability to compare itself with the sector.

External input is extensive and wholly relevant to what is needed in the professional practice areas of the programmes: the college rightly positions itself at the cutting edge of the areas of its programmes, and can demonstrate that its programmes are kept up to date through professional advice. Close attention is paid to the needs of students within the professional areas in which programmes are offered and the student voice is facilitated in all activity. Student representation is a distinctive feature in all relevant committees and reviews.

The college has a large proportion of part-time staff and, while efforts are being made to ensure all staff are aware of procedures, there is a dependency upon a core of full-time permanent staff to deal with quality assurance. A key role here is played by the associate deans and course leaders.

Learning and assessment is appropriate for the programmes offered. Sound practice can be seen here in the project briefs which students are given for every unit and which link learning outcomes clearly to assessment. Feedback to students on their work is highly structured, and delivered effectively through the VLE. Learning space is at a premium. There have been some revisions to use of space but this continues to be a constraint, especially in the open and group learning contexts which are given considerable emphasis in the programmes.

### **Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff**

Ravensbourne employs highly qualified and professionally experienced staff to deliver the innovative, practice-based and industry-focussed curriculum. The wide range and number of different connections that staff have with academics and practitioners in the field provide many opportunities for partnerships and collaborative ventures which enable students to gain valuable work experience and develop vocational and personal skills. The benefit to students is evidenced in the high employability rates for Ravensbourne's graduates.

Individually, staff are well-engaged with subject associations and professional bodies which inform teaching and learning, and collectively they aspire and strive to push the boundaries of pedagogical development of creative and digital higher education. A synthesis of various reviews and projects, together with the development of the new Research Strategy has the potential for Ravensbourne to create a distinctive and radical progressive curriculum in the coming years. The college has put in place an effective research development infrastructure which has given greater clarity to the college's intentions for research and scholarship for staff and more systematic approach to providing funding, tracking bids and recording the range of such activities undertaken by staff. Ravensbourne is preparing to enter the Research Excellence Framework in 2020.

Students gain tremendous benefit from the level of expertise, experience and connections to industry brought by sessional teaching staff. The high proportion of such staff (59 per cent) is unusual in higher education institutions and the balance of permanent and sessional staff is being kept under review. Although sessional staff are included in the activities of the college for some, teaching a small number of hours, there are fewer opportunities for them to participate in peer observation, have a formal review of their teaching performance or become part of the college's community of practice.

There is scope for more detailed reporting on the spending on and uptake of training and staff development to provide evidence for future planning.

### **The environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes**

Ravensbourne has a well-developed and progressive Student Services department. It is sensitive to the needs of the diverse student body and plans ahead to provide for changes to the student profile. The services are delivered by a team of dedicated staff who keep abreast

of local support networks and developments in student provision in the wider HE environment.

The college has been proactive in updating, streamlining and enhancing its processes for admissions, data collection and providing information for external and internal reporting requirements. Staff are aware of opportunities for further improvements. Management information systems are being developed further to ensure accuracy and timeliness of student data. The connections between Registry, Quality office and Policy, Strategic Planning and Data Analysis unit have the potential to provide robust organisation and analysis of management information once the responsibilities of the Policy, Strategic Planning and Data Analysis unit have bedded in fully.

Ravensbourne undertakes a number of outreach and widening participation activities which result in a high number of students from non-traditional backgrounds enrolling in HE courses. The college follows the progress of these students and undertakes analysis of completion and achievement rates.

The college has an institutional commitment to continuous professional development for all staff which is well integrated. There is detailed and effective planning for the skills needs of the organisation and the personal and professional aspirations of staff. The Annual Performance Review and Development process and subsequent support for staff development meets the needs of academic staff and non-academic staff, although it was noted that the completion rate for the process has scope for improvement.

Students benefit greatly from the high quality, industry-standard equipment and technology. Together with many opportunities to engage with real live projects, meet and work with professional practitioners and support provided to find jobs, these employability experiences make Ravensbourne students 'work ready', as evidenced by high employment rates after graduation. Library and learning resources are kept up-to-date.

Ravensbourne has a very attractive, fit-for-purpose website. There are sufficient controls to manage the quality of the information though some attention needs to be given to areas of the website to ensure it is entirely up-to-date and complete. The intranet is comprehensive and provides wide-ranging, easily accessible information for staff and students.

The mechanisms for monitoring learning and teaching appear to be strong but the poor National Student Survey (NSS) 2016 outcomes clearly were not expected. All sections were down on the previous year. Areas of particular concern related to low scores for 'intellectual stimulation' and timeliness of assessment feedback. The college very quickly analysed the data and produced an outline action plan in early August. However subsequently it was not clear to the scrutiny team that the action items were completed in detail or that specific actions would have immediate effect to improve matters for current students in 2016-17. A number of other actions were put in place which may improve students' perceptions of teaching and learning and this will be evidenced in the return of the NSS 2017 scores.

The college has identified the need for greater disaggregation of diversity data and more in depth analysis on an on-going basis in order to provide appropriate and timely support for students in more specific diversity categories. Course handbooks and other information to students and for new staff need to express more explicitly where and how equality and inclusion is embedded in the curriculum. There needs to be better and more opportunities for staff to discuss in depth equality and inclusion data in college committees.

## **Privy Council's decision**

The Privy Council's decision is to grant Ravensbourne taught degree awarding powers from 14 August 2017.

## 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 Ravensbourne).

The application was considered by QAA's Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP) in September 2015, when the Committee agreed to proceed to the detailed scrutiny of the application. The team appointed to conduct the detailed scrutiny comprised Professor Peter Bush, Professor Anne Curry and Mrs Patricia Millner (scrutiny team members) and Ms Jenny Lyon (secretary). The detailed scrutiny was managed on behalf of QAA by Dr Penny McCracken, Assistant Director. Following Dr McCracken's retirement, Mr Matthew Cott, Quality Assurance Manager, coordinated the remainder of the detailed scrutiny.

The detailed scrutiny began in November 2015, culminating in a report to ACDAP in May 2017. 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 Ravensbourne

Founded in 1962 with the amalgamation of a number of small art schools, Ravensbourne is a Higher Education Corporation incorporated under the 1988 Education Reform Act. It is an exempt charity under the terms of the Charities Act 2011. It receives grant funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and meets the mandatory requirements for funding, good governance and financial stewardship as set out in the Memorandum of Assurance and Accountability between HEFCE and Institutions.

Ravensbourne delivers higher education courses validated by the University of the Arts London and is situated next to the O2 Arena on a single purpose-built, state of the art campus on the Greenwich Peninsula, having relocated in 2010. Ravensbourne is closely engaged with relevant sector bodies, including the Council for Higher Education in Art & Design (CHEAD), the United Kingdom Arts and Design Institutions Association (UKADIA). It is also a member of GuildHE and of Cumulus, the international association of universities and colleges of art, design and media.

Ravensbourne's Strategy 2015-18 sets out the institutional mission, values and aims. The Vision is 'to shape the creative leaders of the future, promoting in them an instinct for innovation that is cultivated from collaborative creativity.' Ravensbourne's mission is to:

- 'Transform the lives of our diverse student population, through a unique specialist educational experience which combines an imaginative blend of tools, practices and techniques
- Harness creative talent by delivering the skills that enable people to flourish as innovative, self-sustaining Practitioners
- Bridge gaps and move with agility between industry and education
- Link research with real-world application as a world-leader in the creative exploitation of emerging technologies in order to deliver sustainable, positive social and economic change.'

Ravensbourne's higher education provision consists of two schools for undergraduate courses and a number of postgraduate programmes managed by a Director of Postgraduate Studies.

In 2015-16, there were 2,153 higher education students registered at Ravensbourne, of whom 2,095 were pursuing first degree courses, 48 were on postgraduate (PG) courses and 10 on other undergraduate (UG) courses. There were 361 further education (FE) students on courses validated by the University of the Arts Awarding Body. 92 per cent of students were from the UK. These come from across the UK but the majority are from London (35 per cent) and the South East (36 per cent). Just over four per cent are from the EU. Additionally, almost four per cent are classed as international students. The student body is diverse with nearly 37 per cent being of Black, Asian or Minority ethnicity. Approximately 53% of students are male and 47 per cent are female. More than 95 per cent of the Home/EU UG students attended state schools and nearly 40 per cent were from classes 4, 5, 6 and 7 in the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification.

There were 28 full time permanent academic staff, 61 part-time permanent academic staff and over 129 part-time hourly paid staff, of whom 13 are significant and regular contributors to curriculum delivery. Ravensbourne also employs 76 professional services staff in student-facing positions.

# 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 focussed, three-year Strategic Plan was developed following the appointment of the current Director in January 2015 and approved in June 2015 in light of the Board of Governors' approval to seek taught degree awarding powers (TDAP).

2 The Finance Committee largely discharges the Board's responsibilities for financial matters, though the latter receives and discusses in some detail the financial strategy, proposed budget and management accounts. The Audit Committee's membership is independent of the Finance Committee. The Board of Governors approves submissions to HEFCE and has consistently been categorised by HEFCE at "not at high risk".

3 The college has a coherent annual budget setting and monitoring process, emphasising the explicit relationship between subject/course planning and college spending. The college's quality assurance arrangements feed into the college's resource planning system. The resource allocation process has been streamlined from the spring of 2016. There is a very clear understanding of the budget process by all key departments.

4 Careful consideration is given to Executive proposals at both the Finance Committee and the Board of Governors with detailed questioning of the Director and the Director of Finance on all strategic and financial matters. Additionally, the Audit Committee gives further, full scrutiny to the financial monitoring and forecasts.

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

5 The Board of Governors and its sub-committees are well informed about relevant legislation and developments in higher education. The Executive and Academic Board monitor developments in the higher education sector, participate in sector-wide consultations, note legislative changes, and take seriously sector-wide briefings. Information is disseminated through the committee, school and staff structure.

6 The college's policies, procedures and guidelines take full account of relevant legislation and the UK Quality Code. The 2012 institutional review confirmed that the college met the expectations of the UK Quality Code. Staff are well informed on these arrangements. The college works within its Equality Framework and is currently undertaking a Strategic Review of Equality and Inclusion.



**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**

7 The scrutiny team met groups of students and staff who were clearly aware of the main elements of the current Strategic Plan and that existing and new activities would be judged against its priorities. Early progress has been made on the development of a post-2018 plan and the wider college community will be involved in development of the plan from 2017.

8 The college is engaged in a fundamental review of its course provision through the Portfolio Review Group (PRG), and there is evidence of significant involvement from across the college community and contributions from industry representation and external academics. The changes to the curriculum through formal validation processes are planned to take place during 2017-18 for implementation from 2018-19. The Director indicated that she would be undertaking a major review of college structures in the light of the outcomes of the Portfolio Review, a parallel review of the college's IT provision, and the development of the Research Strategy. Such a review is in keeping with the commitment to ensuring that the college structures continue to reflect the requirements of its strategic direction.

9 Students are represented on all of the key committees at college and school level. The scrutiny team noted the positive roles paid by students at these forums and the collaborative approaches adopted by various committee chairs to welcome and encourage student contributions, consistent with the college's long-held commitment to the inclusion of students in its academic and business operations and developmental work.

10 Staff whom the scrutiny team met were cognisant of the college's values and mission and the broad dimensions of the strategic plan. Associate deans and course leaders in particular were fully aware and involved in the various quality assurance arrangements required by both by the college and the University of the Arts London (university) and made frequent reference to the quality assurance documents on the staff intranet.

**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**

11 There are three inter-linked organisational systems in the college: the Board of Governors and its sub-committees; the Director and her Executive team; and the Academic Board and its sub-committees. External consultants undertook separate effectiveness reviews of the Board of Governors and Academic Board in early 2015. The college has subsequently adopted most of the recommendations from these reports. Terms of reference are clear, comprehensive and easily accessible via the staff intranet.

12 The Board of Governors comprises 13 independent members, the Director, Deputy Director, three staff and one student member, and may co-opt up to a further nine independent members on the basis of specialist expertise. The Board has undergone significant changes of membership since 2014, with the appointment of the current Chair that year preceding the appointment of a new Director and six new governors. The number of members with recent senior experience working in higher education institutions, including some with experience of the TDAP process, has increased.

13 Executive is chaired by and advisory to the Director and operates at both strategic and operational levels, and functions in chief officer, rather than committee, mode. Discussions observed by the scrutiny team were comprehensive and detailed and members, together with attendees for specific items, contributed significantly to areas for which they did not have lead responsibility, particularly risk, resources and quality issues, and especially in

strategic thinking. The Executive was clearly aware of the levels of delegation it received from the Board, and took careful note of Academic Board decisions. It was informed by recommendations from the Portfolio Development Group in terms of resource requirements and possible priorities resulting from its consideration of new programme proposals, and considered in detail issues brought to its attention by heads of department. Particularly noteworthy was the regular interrogation of the detailed rolling action plans resulting from previous meetings.

14 The management structure has undergone some re-organisation during the scrutiny period following the appointment of the Director in 2015, the establishment of a two, rather than a six, school structure in the spring of 2016 and the creation of the role of Director of External Relations. The Senior Management Team (SMT) reports to Executive and has been subject to review. It was agreed that SMT and the monthly meetings of associate deans would be discontinued with a 'new' SMT - SMTmonthly - (SMTM) established from December 2016. It was expected that SMTM which would in future be largely an information and updating forum, focussing in particular on the student experience. The recent changes, when embedded, should deliver greater clarity of the rationale and operation of the various senior staff groupings.

15 Academic Board is the senior academic committee and has established a number of sub-committees. The school boards of study for Design and Media were established following the implementation of the new school structure in April 2016. In turn, course committees and their related student liaison committees, provide forums for the discussion and the effective delivery and monitoring of the programme report to one of the two school boards. The purpose, reporting lines, terms of reference and composition of all the committees are clear and easily accessible.

16 The management and academic routes are carefully linked. Heads of school have clear management reporting lines. Following the effectiveness review of the Academic Board, and the appreciation by the Board of Governors of its increasing responsibilities for the overall assurance of academic quality, the college includes within its calendar an annual joint meeting of Board of Governors and Academic Board. At the same time, the Board of Governors is continuing its practice of appointing an independent governor as an observer at Academic Board meetings. The Board of Governors receives and discusses in detail an annual report from Academic Board of its activities during the previous academic year. In considering the 2015-16 report, the Board of Governors subsequently required that future reports provide more detail and in particular give assurance to the Board on the 'quality of the academic provision, including research.' A report on these lines was presented to the Board of Governors in November 2016.

17 The scrutiny team observed a number of meetings of the Board of Governors, the Finance Committee, and the Human Resources and Remuneration Committee. Meetings were professionally chaired, with the Chair having a comprehensive grasp of the agenda and background to the items discussed. Papers were carefully structured, almost always circulated to members in good time. The meetings were professionally clerked and minutes were accurate and comprehensive. Meeting agendas reflected the terms of references of these committees, and the minutes comprehensively recorded agreements on actions, which were closely monitored at subsequent meetings. The general atmosphere of the meetings was professional and collegial, and decisions were reached through consensus. Independent members and students contributed significantly to discussions, with the Chairs particularly encouraging contributions from students and elected staff members and ensuring that all committee members had opportunities to contribute.

18 The Director and Executive colleagues, particularly the Director of Finance, introduced appropriate papers and were challenged by the Board on both strategy and

detail. Committees regularly questioned executive summaries and often sought more information on performance measures and targets, taking seriously the various reports and observations made by the college's auditors. Board of Governors both held the executive to account and clearly appreciated the distinction between governance and management, while Executive members were aware of their roles in reporting to and advising Board of Governors and its subcommittees. The Clerk acted scrupulously and timeously in advising the Board on its membership and that of its committees, and on upcoming vacancies. The scrutiny team observed collaborative and valuable interactions between the Board of Governors and the Executive and particularly the complementary and supportive partnership that had clearly been formed between the Chair and the Director.

19 The scrutiny team noted similarly effective chairing, participation and administrative rigor at academic committees. More broadly, staff and students whom the scrutiny team met were generally aware of the overall college's governance structures and systems, in so far as they impacted on their activities, and felt these seemed to work well. Full-time teaching staff assisted the many sessional staff with what they needed to know about college structures and procedures, and were well represented at School Board of Studies level. Staff were also familiar with the various roles of professional support departments in the IT, quality, student support and human resources functions and knew where to seek guidance as necessary from these sources.

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

20 The college has a complement of 218 higher education academic staff, including the Director and Deputy Director. Academic staff within the Executive team are the Director; the Deputy Director, with key responsibilities for the oversight of the academic activities of the college, and the two Deans of School responsible for the academic activities within their School and for the line management of the school associate deans. These staff, all of whom have Masters qualifications and three have Doctorates, are well qualified, have considerable experience of senior positions in the HE sector, and have strong external profiles in their specialist fields.

21 The Deputy Director leads the academic 'cluster' of Executive activities, joined by the Deans, and works with other Executive colleagues on the resourcing and support of academic activities. Considerable professional and academic expertise informs detailed and well-informed discussions, and the Executive engages fully with key areas of debate within the higher education sector, advising Academic Board and the Board of Governors and their subcommittees on such matters.

22 The creation of the two dean (and Director of External Relations) posts resulted from the Director's review of the college's senior staffing and management structure in late 2015 following a six-month period following her appointment. The Director wished to strengthen and deepen academic leadership as the college embarked on its portfolio review, to position the college for what she saw as the major challenges and opportunities facing the college. Linked with this was the decision to establish two strong schools, 'Design' and 'Media', incorporating the former six small schools as departments within the new structure. The Director's review led also to the creation of the roles of Head of Policy, Strategic Planning and Data Analysis, and Head of Research.

23 The associate deans, who had led the former schools, retained the associate dean title and became the heads of these new departments as well as retaining a number of cross-institutional responsibilities. Apart from providing academic leadership within the schools, supporting both the new deans and course leaders, the heads of the new departments work closely with lecturing colleagues in enhancing the student experience and

contributing to enhanced communication arrangements within the college. The new departmental heads, who are widely known and respected across the college, work closely with course leaders, as a group of twenty-one staff in the development and monitoring of courses, assisting them in particular in the support of the large number of sessional staff. Course leaders and the associate deans have gained increased and valuable experience of the course review/revalidation processes that will form the backbone of the college's TDAP arrangements in these activities through involvement with the thorough and intense period of course revalidation required by the university in 2016. There is a Postgraduate Course Director, who is a senior fellow of the HEA, with oversight of the college's taught postgraduate portfolio.

24 There has been a significant enhancement in the strength of academic leadership since the preparation of the application for taught degree awarding powers, and, combined with the changes to the organisational structure has increased the depth and impact of that leadership within the college.

**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**

25 The college regulations, policies and guidelines for academic and non-academic processes are available on the intranet. A wide consultative and inclusive approach is adopted to the development and implementation of college policies. Academic policies are determined by the Academic Board, operating within the current agreement with the university.

26 Staff and students, through membership of committees are closely involved in the development of policies and systems. In receiving the minutes of the two school boards of study, Academic Board staff and student representatives are able to gain an appreciation of quality, enhancement and developmental issues across all the college's courses. Course leaders, reporting directly to the relevant dean of school, are responsible for ensuring that their courses reflect college strategy, approaches to learning, teaching, assessment and innovation and for ensuring that part-time and sessional staff are appropriately briefed regarding both their teaching roles and relevant college procedures.

27 The main route through which staff as a whole may access the college's academic policies and systems is through the comprehensive and readily accessible college intranet. Briefings from deans of school and course leaders provide support in the application of policies. The Joint School meetings and the postgraduate staff meetings offer fora for all teaching staff to engage in discussions on cross-college policy and development issues and to explore learning, teaching and student support matters of common interest. Staff whom the scrutiny team met appeared well aware of the college's academic policies and systems and felt able to consult with colleagues in the Quality Office if more information was required. Staff reported the valuable role of the course leaders in communication and explaining college policies and systems and noted that informal communication among the relatively small staff complement itself contributed to the effective dissemination of these. Staff also welcomed the conferences for all staff and the regular staff Newsletters.

28 Involvement of students in policy and procedural matters is largely through student membership of key Academic Board sub-committees, and especially at course committees, School Boards of Study and through the Student Liaison Committees, which include within their membership normally two students from each level of each course. Students contribute significantly to the monitoring of programmes and refer to their student colleagues' matters of information arising at the committees.

29 The college has close links with relevant professional practice and industries, a number of whose representatives are employed on sessional contracts. Employers whom the scrutiny team met, some of whom had also been involved in the professional accreditation of programmes, confirmed their close involvement with the programme team and students and their understanding and appreciation of the college's mission and objectives through the programmes with which they were involved.

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

30 Academic Board is the senior academic body of the institution and determines arrangements for the oversight of academic standards and quality, with authority in some matters delegated to the Board's sub-committees. The college reviews academic policies, systems and activities as part of its broad approach to enhancement. A date for the review of each policy is identified and logged at the time of approval, although minor modifications may take place at any time. For example, the college took immediate action to rectify some ineffective recording of student grades during the transition period covering the transfer of degree awarding responsibilities from City University to UAL in the summer of 2014. The college subsequently strengthened the organisation and management of assessment processes which have thereafter operated effectively.

31 The college commissioned in the spring of 2015 an external review of the effectiveness of the Academic Board and its subcommittees, particularly in the light of the TDAP application. The report indicated that the arrangements worked fairly well, but recommended in particular clarification of the relative roles for assurance and enhancement, a reduction in the incidence of overlapping membership among the sub-committees, an increase in the contribution of non-senior academic members of staff, and a number of procedural enhancements. The Board has adopted all but one of the recommendations.

32 The college's processes for the approval, monitoring and review of programmes are discussed in Section B.

**Academic risk and change management strategies are effective**

33 The college maintains a detailed risk register which relates directly to the key components of the 2015-18 strategic plan. The risk register is considered and monitored regularly and reviewed annually by the Executive, and discussed at each of the Audit, Finance and Board of Governors meetings. The scrutiny team observed detailed discussions of the risk register and noted records of full discussions at the Audit Committee. Discussions at SMT and Audit Committee demonstrated a very clear understanding of the methodology adopted, and detailed consideration of the actions planned and taken. Indeed, the Executive agreed to a more frequent review of the risk register on the advice of the audit committee in June 2016. The Board of Governors was advised at its September 2016 meeting that, following the establishment of the new planning unit, the Director of Finance would be leading a review of the register to ensure that all the college's key risks had been identified and that, following the recent structural changes in the college management, risk ownership was appropriately assigned and monitored.

34 Academic Board oversees an Academic Risk Register. The risks have been developed against the Expectations of the UK Quality Code, Ofsted requirements and TDAP guidance and criteria.

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

35 The college's arrangements to ensure that academic standards are not placed at risk are based on systems for the design, approval, monitoring and review of courses, within broad guidelines required by the university which the college has adapted under delegation, to meet its own needs. The college's courses operate within an appropriate academic and regulatory framework. The university appoints external examiners, on the advice of the college's Academic Board, chairs final assessment boards and receives reports from the external examiners. External examiner reports have consistently concluded that the college's courses meet appropriate academic standards.

36 The college's validation partnership with the university has been in place since 2013-14. The partnership was governed by a legal agreement for an initial three-year period which has been formally extended for a further three years following the successful review of the college's courses in 2016. The college submits an annual report to the university which affirms compliance with the university's processes. The comprehensive 2014-15 annual report consisted of detailed sections on matters relevant to academic standards. Almost all the college's courses had been re-validated, under the university's auspices, to meet the university's requirements. Similar comprehensive reports, though in varying formats have been delivered annually. The partnership arrangement with the university builds on the quality assurance arrangements judged appropriate, with a number of areas of good practice, in the college's 2007 institutional audit and the institutional review of 2012.

37 The college operates comprehensive arrangements for the nomination and deployment of external examiners, and for responding to and acting upon external examiners' reports. Most full-time staff whom the scrutiny team met were aware of the college's quality assurance arrangements, and cited the additional support readily available from the professionally staffed Quality Office, which has operational oversight of the arrangements and their implementation by course teams, school boards of study and the college.

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

38 The college's initial TDAP action plan of March 2014 has been monitored, revised and implemented through the oversight of the TDAP Steering Group, and regular reports have been submitted to the Executive, Academic Board and the Board of Governors. At its meeting in September 2016, the Steering Group noted the progress of the scrutiny process and particularly the development of Ravensbourne Assessment Regulations led by a working group under the Registrar. The post-TDAP regulations were approved in principle by Academic Board in September 2016 and confirmed by Academic Board approval in December 2016. The September 2016 Academic Board also considered options for the transitional arrangements in the event of the TDAP process being successful.

39 There are sufficient staffing resources to assume the additional post-TDAP responsibilities. New senior professional services appointments have been made with experienced staff since the commencement of the TDAP process in the Quality Office and the Registry, and the staff complements had been increased. Arrangements had been made with the university for Chairs of the college's internal assessment boards to shadow the university chairs of final boards, and the university had already expressed its satisfaction with which the college now handles the assembling, processing and distribution of data supporting both the internal and external assessment boards.

40 The scrutiny team was convinced that the college has in place the actual and potential academic regulatory and procedural frameworks, appropriately staffed, to support

the functions of a taught degree awarding institution. The Board of Governors has taken seriously its need for greater awareness of academic matters, and engages in confident discussions with the Executive on these matters. The validating body has confidence in the college's quality assurance arrangements. The university has supported the TDAP application from the outset in July 2015, and has advised the scrutiny team that it had observed considerable improvement in the college's operations, particularly in relation to assessment boards, and that its leadership had been enhanced.

41 The recent strengthening of the Executive with the creation of two dean posts to oversee the work of the two large schools has created greater clarity in executive roles and relationships, although it will take a little time for these benefits to be felt more fully. Similarly, the outcomes of the effectiveness reviews of the Board of Governors and the Academic Board have clarified and strengthened the deliberative and decision making roles of the Board of Governors, and clarified the relative roles of the Quality Development and Learning, Curriculum and Student Experience Committees of the Academic Board.

## **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**

42 The regulatory framework is fully informed by the UK Quality Code. The institutional review of 2012 confirmed that Ravensbourne makes effective use of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), external examiners and the Quality Code. Since that review, the institution has revised its framework to meet changes in the UK Quality Code. All relevant elements of the framework are clearly documented through policy statements and have a five year renewal system in place. Any minor annual modifications and the monitoring of implementation of the framework are the responsibility of the Quality Development Committee (QDC), a sub-committee of Academic Board.

43 The university has indicated its satisfaction that the college implements the regulatory framework in accordance with its requirements as validating body. Meetings with staff indicated that knowledge of the framework was firmly established. Observations of relevant committees and examination boards also indicated that the regulatory framework was applied consistently.

**A regulatory framework appropriate for the granting of the organisation's own higher education awards is in prospect**

44 In applying for and preparing to take on the responsibilities for taught degree awarding powers, Ravensbourne has developed its regulatory framework. As noted, the process has been overseen by a TDAP steering group, chaired by one of the governors. A mapping exercise was begun in 2014. The policies in place have been written with the intention of implementing processes which can be used in the event of a successful application for TDAP.

45 In general the proposed post TDAP regulatory framework closely mirrors the current University of the Arts London arrangements. Within the current agreement with the university, academic policies are determined by the Academic Board and the college is required to register students as Ravensbourne students, monitor and report to the university on student and course performance. In full consultation with staff, students and external advisors, the college has made appropriate modifications and expansions appropriate to the nature of its provision and its strategic aims. The scrutiny team observed careful and measured development of the proposed regulatory framework through working parties, under the scrutiny of Academic Board. It was notable that some of the proposals, such as that concerning degree classification, had undergone several reiterations involving the various stakeholders, and an assessment regulations working group. This new assessment framework, where the greatest change from the university's framework is in evidence, has been designed to reflect the distinctiveness of the institution in terms of its assessment activity. The assessment regulations were approved at the Academic Board of December 2016 but then revisited to consider late submission penalties. The final approval was due in March 2017.

46 The institution is clearly aware of what needs to be done in preparing to award its own degrees and has a clear timeline, against which progress can be charted. It was understood by the scrutiny team that a full draft regulatory framework will be approved before the final report is submitted to ACDAP. The September 2016 Academic Board considered options for the transitional arrangements in the event of the TDAP process being successful, with a range of dates depending on the formal notification of the outcome.

47 The view of the university is that the college shows a high level of maturity and over the years its documentation and processes have improved considerably, learning from experiences: the institution is therefore deemed well on its way, and has been assisted by recent reorganisations and appointments.

#### **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 Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)**

48 Full attention to the FHEQ is noted in the preparation of new programmes and in the validation of existing programmes, and evidenced in approval and review documentation. Learning outcomes of all programmes are mapped against the FHEQ and the level is clearly stated on programme specifications. Curricula are organised to make clear the learning outcomes of each level, and also to show how there is progression between levels. The scrutiny team noted confirmation of the use of the FHEQ by external members of validation panels and external examiners, and by the current validating body.

#### **Management of higher education provision takes appropriate account of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, national guidance on programme specifications, and the requirements of any relevant professional and statutory bodies**

49 Management of the higher education provision lies formally with Academic Board, delegated to the Quality Development Committee. The scrutiny team's observations confirmed that account was taken of the Quality Code. Validations by the university also



provide this confirmation. Preparation for TDAP has included a mapping against the UK Quality Code.

50 All programmes have a templated programme specification which adheres to national guidelines and forms part of the course handbook to inform staff and students, and there is a formal procedure to approve minor and major modifications.

51 Subject Benchmark statements have informed programme development, and where new benchmark statements have been issued, these are taken account of, such as the Landscape Architecture SBS, which was used to inform the validation of the BA in Urban Landscape Architecture.

52 Strategic Reviews include in their purpose the assurance that activity is of appropriate quality and meet the expectations of external reference points including the UK Quality Code. The scrutiny team observed a Strategic Review during the scrutiny period: Contextual Studies, and can confirm that this assurance of quality forms a key part of the procedure.

53 The programme in Architecture meets the requirements of the Architects Registration Board but this is to date the only programme subject to validation by a professional body. The preparation of new assessment regulations has taken account of the requirements of the professional body.

**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**

54 All programme approval, monitoring and review involves externals from peer institutions appointed for their relevant expertise and experience. Good practice is seen in the use of an external chair for Strategic Reviews. External examiners also provide general and specific input. The college goes beyond the requirements of the university in its use of external examiners since it engages them in scrutiny of first and second year work as well as the third year work contributing to the degree result. The scrutiny team noted that externals were drawn from a relatively wide range of peer institutions.

55 The scrutiny team also noted very extensive involvement with professionals in the areas of activity in which the college offers programmes. Industrial liaison was distinctive and a major means of feeding in employers' expectations. Alumni were also an important element in external input, especially in professional practice.

56 Given the importance of ensuring up to date technology in the programmes, to keep them aligned with industry needs, there is considerable use of external experts in this area. A Visual Communications Advisory Board, for instance, was set up in 2015 with external experts to provide guidance: members also contributed to the portfolio review of programmes in this area. There is also a Broadcast Advisory Board. Also notable was the conscious seeking of advice and input from consultants in teaching and learning, such as the use of a policy advisor from Guild HE.

**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**

57 Academic Board has the coordinating role in ensuring programme approval, monitoring and review, receiving as it does a summary annual report on institutional quality and standards, prepared by the Director of Academic Services, and a summary of external

examiner reports, as well as minutes of its sub-committees. This enables a college-wide view to be established whilst attention is paid to the specific detailed issues in each programme area.

58 Processes for Course Approval and Validation are implemented in the initial stages within the college but currently the final validation lies with the university as the validating and degree awarding body. All programmes are subject to various stages of approval: development approval, internal validation and revalidation, and external validation and revalidation.

59 The scrutiny team observed an example of development approval, undertaken to assess preparedness to proceed to the Validation and Standards Committee, and can confirm that, in accordance with the processes required in the policy on course approval and validation, detailed attention was given to academic expertise and to the resources needed to deliver the programme at the right level. A validation panel for the BA Urban Landscape Architecture was also observed.

60 The ongoing Portfolio Review following the appointment of two Deans, has created a tight focus, defining key requirements in strategic, business and marketing cases and based on quantitative and qualitative data and academic input, to ensure that all Ravensbourne courses are 'innovative and pioneering, deliverable and sustainable, industry-focussed, research driven and relevant'.

61 There is no periodic review of programmes but there is annual course monitoring and a three-yearly revalidation, which has always gone smoothly in the view of the university. Annual monitoring, as evidenced by a substantial annual report from each programme area, including student evaluation, statistical evidence, external examiner reports, and internal reflection, is consistent across the institution, and has been noted by the university as good practice.

62 In addition, the college operates a Strategic Review process within a three-year cycle. The topic of the review is proposed by the Quality Development Committee on an annual basis. The purpose of SR is 'to review holistically aspects of Ravensbourne's provision of areas of activity and the means by which they are supported'. Reviews over the last few years have included: Admissions; Technology; and during the period of TDAP observation, Contextual Studies; Postgraduate Provision, and Equality and Inclusion.

63 After each Strategic Review a detailed action plan goes to the Quality Development Committee, and action against the plan is reported regularly. The scrutiny team noted the comprehensive nature of the action plans and the close monitoring.

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

64 Academic planning and decisions on resource allocation are discussed in paragraph 3 and were found to operate effectively.

**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**

65 The scrutiny team was informed that Ravensbourne's strategy for learning and assessment was shaped by its aim to be a leading provider of innovative courses in media and design, broadly interpreted, informed by and aligned with industry practice and supported by technology at the cutting edge. Therefore learning and assessment were situated in real world situations, towards the development of professional expertise and the enhancement of employability. Assessment was also designed with these same aims in mind, using a project brief basis, although with intellectual development facilitated by written assessments within a compulsory Contextual Studies module, which includes a third year dissertation.

66 The scrutiny team was assured by meetings with external examiners that learning and assessment is appropriate to ensure the fulfilment of academic objectives and intended learning outcomes. Students were able to show practical skills as well as soft skills in time management, group working, project planning and entrepreneurship, and to demonstrate knowledge and understanding through extended written work, but due attention was paid to diversity through the option to undertake a visual dissertation, which tied in better to certain programmes, such as Digital Film Production.

67 Teaching and learning is centred on the assessment brief for the unit. The scrutiny team noted clear briefs issued to students linked to the modules they were taking which linked the learning and assessment to learning outcomes: feedback was in student opinion linked to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

68 Students commented positively on the attention which the college paid to the linking of provision to professional contexts, and considered it a huge advantage that most of their teachers were also working in the relevant industries and able to bring their real world experience to bear to inform teaching and learning. Also valuable here was the availability of internships through the external links of staff, which enhanced employability. Students considered that their confidence and skills were built up through the teaching and assessment styles at the college.

69 Validations of new programmes also evidenced detailed discussions on the appropriateness of curriculum and learning outcomes, and of the link to suitable assessment strategies.

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

70 Documentation produced by the college on programme design, monitoring and review is well written and fit for purpose and is available on the college's website. The college operates a templated approach to its documentation, with standard forms of agendas, minutes and supporting information, which facilitates communication and understanding of processes and actions. All policy documents are carefully numbered, with clear annotation of dates of revisions.

71 The Quality Office, and the Director of Academic Services, are fully engaged with academic staff. At all its observations, the scrutiny team noted a close and positive working relationship, which ensured not only that information was full and well communicated but that also academics were supported throughout processes. Boards of study are a key element in communication and of control of procedures. Their minutes are received in full by Academic Board, thereby ensuring a good flow of information upwards.

72 The college employs a large number of part-time staff. There is evidence that course leaders take new staff through the documentation but it is a challenge to ensure that all staff are aware of procedures. Associate deans ensure communication and consistency across the institution and within departments, by virtue of their dual role as heads of department and holders of institution-wide responsibilities. The associate deans work closely on all matters relating to quality, curriculum and the student experience.

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

73 Amendments to programme proposals fall within the policy on Course Approval and Validation. The relevant documentation notes that 'proposals for new courses or substantial revisions to existing programmes may originate from a number of sources. In order to ensure suitable proposals, staff are required to discuss ideas with senior staff before any proposals go to the Portfolio Development Group: this also informs the constitution of the team designated to take the proposal forward. Proposals must be made on a Development Approval Form, or in the case of proposed changes to existing programmes, a Course Review form. A course leader designate is appointed to take forward the proposal, but is required to consult a defined range of stakeholders to ensure improvement: these include students, external advisers, and heads of services at Ravensbourne. A decision on whether to proceed to formal validation lies with the Portfolio Development Group.

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

74 The provision at Ravensbourne consists of single award pathways and there are no combined programmes. All undergraduates, however (save for those in Architecture where there is a need to meet the requirements of the professional body), take a common strand (Contextual Studies) across all three years of their programme and are taught together in this strand. The scrutiny team was informed by external examiners that this compulsory common strand was not unusual in media and design degree level studies, and that provision at Ravensbourne was comparable to that elsewhere.

75 In order to ensure coherence and consistency of student experience, there is coordination by a Contextual Studies department, which liaises with each subject board of study. There are also two external examiners appointed to cover all dissertations to ensure consistency in marking and standards. Contextual Studies had proved unpopular with students, who considered that it was not always well tied into the programme they were studying but a Strategic Review led to proposals to create greater integration.

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

76 Proposals for new programmes and revisions to existing programmes, and the subsequent validation and revalidation processes are required to take account of resources including learning support. With its focus on creative practice and skill development, the college places much emphasis on independent and group learning: in this context learning support, both in terms of library and equipment, and of guidance and assistance to students, are acknowledged as key elements in the Ravensbourne mission.

77 The scrutiny team was informed that purchase of library materials and equipment were fully responsive to course requirements. Evidence from the approval and validation processes, and from the Portfolio Development Group, indicated that templated questions on resources were taken seriously.

78 The building was carefully designed to allow for flexible use of space suitable for the range of programmes provided. In general this flexibility is appreciated by staff and students but the general view is that space is in short supply because of the increase in student numbers since the construction of the building, a comment also made by external examiners. Access to space was a particular problem for Master's students who shared the incubator space. The Strategic Review of Postgraduate Provision included in its action plan an undertaking to carry out a review of postgraduate access to workspace and resources.

79 External examiners have also noted that Ravensbourne had all of the appropriate equipment but urged the college to ensure that there was good maintenance and technical support.

80 Ravensbourne has a relatively high proportion of students with special learning needs. There is evidence that such students are appropriately supported.

**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**

81 No student is following a full distance programme but there are a number of external work based placements where blended learning is used. The college has appointed an Accredited Work Based Learning Coordinator to organise and survey this provision.

82 The college also has a paperless policy, and therefore aims to provide all materials through an online platform. Much of its documentation is in the public domain but there is also an intranet/VLE which is central to all teaching and learning, and assessment, activities over all programmes.

83 Students expressed general satisfaction with the VLE, noting that it had improved in recent years. They found particularly useful the provision of feedback through the VLE on their written work both individually and by group.

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

84 The annual course monitoring process is a key element in defining, monitoring, reviewing and maintaining academic standards. Annual course monitoring reports are received at the boards of study alongside the external examiner reports and SLC minutes. Full support is given by the Head of Quality and team, with templated reports. The documentation is comprehensive and readable and allows for ease in tracking issues and actions.

85 External examiners play a key role in the annual monitoring processes by providing a general comment on standards as well as being involved in the specific marking processes. Reports indicate satisfaction of comparability here.

86 In programme approval rigorous investigation was apparent from the work of validation panels. The use of management information is much evidenced.

**Assessment criteria and practices are communicated clearly to students and staff**

87 The scrutiny team was provided with evidence at both a global and individual level of assessment criteria and practices. Full documentation on criteria and practices are communicated to students, both for the programme, through course handbooks which explain the different assessment types and rules and for each project brief. Students expressed their satisfaction with this information and demonstrated a good understanding of what was

expected of them. In this they noted the helpful feedback provided to them by staff on their written work.

88 Staff induction includes assessment criteria and practices, with subject groups ensuring continuing discussion and support. A good example was found in Contextual Studies. Here a large number of part time staff is used but efforts were made to ensure both full understanding of processes and consistency in marking by means of dedicated staff training sessions and moderation.

89 Students expressed praise for the induction processes, especially at the beginning of their studies and the information and support provided. The criteria were always fully expressed in project briefs and linked clearly to the activity. Grades were given for individual criteria and also an overall grade for the unit. In general they considered assessment criteria, based currently on the university system clear. Although they noted some difficulty in finding this information and also some confusion over the weighting for each criterion based on the information. On the whole, however, students were aware of how their degree would be classified.

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

90 There is evidence of close attention to ensuring that assessment is appropriately aligned with learning objectives, outcomes and modes of delivery, thanks to an institution-wide assessment strategy. Given the emphasis on creative, practical and professional knowledge and skills, timed examinations are not used: project briefs, problem solving and group activity form the core of assessment. Several exercises feed into the assessment, and the number of oral presentations increases over the years.

91 The feedback forms make clear the students' level of achievement of the learning outcomes by linking assessment comments to the learning objectives. Students expressed satisfaction on the format of this feedback, noting that it aligned helpfully to the task they had been set.

92 A conceptual awareness and intellectual challenge which ensures the degree level (as opposed to a wholly practical approach) is provided by the Contextual Studies modules at levels 4, 5 and 6, which were taken by all students irrespective of their degree programme (the only exception being students in Architecture). These modules provide contextualisation of media and design, through lectures and seminars, as well as opportunity and support to research and produce an independent piece of extended writing in the dissertation, submitted as part of the final assessment.

93 External examiners expressed satisfaction for the range of assessments within the programmes for which they were responsible. On occasion, they observed that the Contextual Studies modules had proved challenging for students, and noted low marks on some dissertations.

94 External examiners have praised the college on its climate of openness, and the range of ways by which staff could provide feedback to students. They also praised the interaction between the different programmes and the opportunities for student engagement in professional practice and real life work.

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

95 The college follows the expectations of the UK Quality Code in the choice, appointment and length of office of external examiners. The formal appointment (for three years with a possibility of a further one year extension) is with the validating body but Ravensbourne is responsible for making the initial approaches, scrutinising the qualifications of those proposed for selection as well as avoiding conflicts of interest, and making the nominations.

96 Newly appointed externals are provided with access to on line materials and the VLE although there is no formal induction pack or requirement to attend an induction, and some examiners commented on some confusion on the relative responsibilities of Ravensbourne and the university.

97 The scrutiny team was informed by external examiners that they were able to meet with students, and to attend the degree shows. They do not attend the interim boards. They also have access to all student work, and to the feedback which staff had given, which provides a close interaction with internal examiners. The internal and external examiners are able to work effectively together thanks to the strict use of criteria-related marking, using criteria which all examiners and students are fully aware of.

98 All external examiners attend the final assessment boards. The scrutiny team observed the full role they played there in the classification of individual students as well as in providing an oral report on all aspects of the programme for which they were responsible, including standards. Following the meeting, they provide a written report which forms part of the annual course monitoring procedure.

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

99 The main method of monitoring assessment procedures is by the external examiners' involvement in the process, and in particular by the reports which the external examiners provide. After a short oral comment at the examination board, a written report is submitted and forms part of the annual course monitoring and review of programmes. These reports are scrutinised by boards of study, and an overview report is presented to Academic Board. Any general institution wide issues are thereby identified. A formal response to the report is required, which therefore shapes future activity.

100 Attention is also paid to statistical analysis of assessment outcomes through the annual course monitoring as also through specific studies. The appointment of a Head of Planning has led to substantial activity in this area, most notably in a study of withdrawals and degree achievement levels linked to ethnicity, enabling the college to compare itself against the sector.

**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**

101 The college has a procedure in place for the termination of a programme which includes full consideration of the interests of students. Academic Board has oversight of this process. No programme terminations occurred during the period of the scrutiny team's scrutiny. The scrutiny team was provided with evidence that two earlier closures had been carried out following these procedures, with remaining cohorts being able to complete all the expected units whilst recruitment was suspended for new intakes. Provision was also made to provide suitable units in the case of failure of a year 3 module on the original programme.

The closure of an individual programme element is part of the minor modifications process as laid down within the university's procedures.

#### **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**

102 Critical self-assessment was noted by the scrutiny team at all levels, including the Board of Governors. At all observed meetings, there was facilitated open discussion. Chairing was firm but facilitative. Papers were well prepared and containing all of the relevant information on which critical self-assessment could be made. Actions could be tracked through the various committee stages: action plans in templated form gave clear indication of responsibilities and timelines. External examiners have emphasised the climate of openness across the college, and the interaction between programmes.

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

103 The review process, whether strategic review or annual monitoring, uses a templated action plan format. This notes the matter, the proposed action and delivery method, timescale, responsibility, evaluation method, and progress update.

104 The action plan on Contextual Studies presented in November 2016 to the LCSEC provided the scrutiny team with a good example of the mechanisms for assigning and discharging action via a Steering Programme and regular updates to LCSEC. The plan made clear how the recommendations of the report were communicated to staff.

#### **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**

105 The college can be shown to draw extensively on ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation. In developing new programmes the course development team must seek advice from an external source. Validation panels must include an external academic and an external drawn from industry.

106 The Strategic Review process has as one of its objectives the taking of advice from external peers, internal peers and students as to how to enhance and develop areas of activities and aspects of provision. The chair must be an external.

107 There is also input sought from the current validating body: university representatives attend the boards of study. There is a link liaison committee chaired by the university but with equal representation from university and Ravensbourne staff.

108 In early 2016 the college appointed a Head of Strategic Planning and Data Analysis. The scrutiny team noted the immediate positive impact of this appointment through the high quality management information provided to inform teaching and learning strategies and policies. Particularly notable was the work on retention and success rates over the last



two years, which provided insights into diversity issues, which then informed the development of an institution-wide strategy for retention and student success.

109 A Learning and Teaching Strategy Road map has been constructed to take forward the college's Learning and Teaching strategy, and to ensure the delivery of a distinctive student experience which provides a foundation for employment. This has involved input from the Students Union and an external consultant, and is monitored by the Learning and Teaching Steering Group which reports to the Learning, Curriculum and Student Experience Committee.

110 External input is also noted in developing Ravensbourne's own approach such as a learner analytics project based at Nottingham Trent University to provide in-depth information about the student profile and how students are engaging in learning. Attention is also paid to the student voice. There is full training for representatives and students sit on all of the major committees and panels. Each course has a staff student liaison committee, which also feeds into boards of study, and there is an institution-wide Student Parliament, which is chaired by a student.

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

111 The scrutiny team noted approaches to continuous improvement which were highly structured and monitored. A Learning and Teaching Strategy Roadmap has been developed as well as a Graduate Attributes mapping. Considerable attention is given to staff induction and training, including mentoring for HEA fellowships, indicating an ethos that staff play a key role in continuous improvement.

112 A number of key procedures have at their heart the ethos of continuous improvement. These include use of student evaluation and reviews of services. A peer observation policy is in place.

113 All students have a designated academic tutor. Students are provided with two or three progress reviews (PPR) each year and encouraged to keep an ongoing reflective blog. A new software platform has been developed to facilitate the PPR. Students also meet regularly with their unit tutors, which they find helpful. The scrutiny team noted both formal and informal support to assist students in continuous improvement. For instance, support for the dissertation unit included drop-in sessions throughout the year, bookable research finding sessions in collaboration with the Learning Zone and group sessions.

## **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.

### **Academic and/or professional expertise**

114 Ravensbourne's recruitment procedures for academic staff reflect the aims and ambitions of the college's strategic plan and learning and teaching strategy. Internal portfolio development and pre-validation processes and the external validation by the university ensure that there are sufficient and appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver the curriculum. External examiners often comment on the professional knowledge of staff.

115 The Staffing profile shows a total of 218 academic staff including the Director and Deputy Director. Of these staff 28 (13 per cent) are full-time permanent (22 academic leaders and 6 other academic staff), 61 (28 per cent) are permanent part-time/fractional (11 academic leaders and 50 other academic staff) and 129 (59 per cent) are sessional staff (visiting lecturers) who may only be engaged a small number of hours per week or for a particular unit. Hourly paid staff are not academic leaders and do not have any course management responsibilities. Historically this has been a deliberate decision to have a high proportion of sessional staff who undoubtedly bring professional and up-to-date industry expertise to learning and teaching from which both students and staff benefit.

116 Ravensbourne's London location means that it has access to a wealth of expertise it can draw upon. Often these are high profile and influential professionals in the creative and digital sectors. The curricula vitae evidence the extensive and relevant experience of all teaching staff. On occasion sessional staff have become permanent members of the academic staff. Ravensbourne is keeping the balance of permanent to sessional staff under review in the light of the Portfolio Review, the Research Excellence Framework and the advent of the new deans. Many existing full-time and permanent fractional staff also have current experience of freelance working and consultancy in creative and digital businesses and bring a wealth of industry skills and expertise to the student experience.

117 The primary consideration for the college when recruiting academic staff is learning and teaching. Teaching staff have appropriate levels of academic qualification or equivalent professional award or experience for the bachelor's or Master's degrees they deliver. For sessional staff applications, CVs are scrutinised and usually a first degree at least is required. However industry experience is a very important requisite in order to deliver the cutting-edge, practice-based and often niche curriculum to which the college aspires. In these circumstances staff without a degree may be engaged and the profile shows just eight staff who have no degree.

118 A teaching certificate is preferable and appointed staff without a teaching qualification are expected to achieve one within 18 months of taking up a permanent academic post or gain HEA recognition. The Director makes a decision in the case of a suitable appointee without a teaching qualification. There are only nine staff who do not have a degree, professional or teaching qualification. Ravensbourne is enabling staff to gain teaching qualification by the delivery of its own tailor-made Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning for Creative Courses which began in January 2017. It is planned that this course will gain HEA accreditation. The college also provides a great deal of encouragement and support through workshops and mentoring for staff wishing to gain HEA fellowships. 12 academic leaders and 13 other academic staff have HEA recognition.

119 The selection process is designed to ensure that academic staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Associate deans sit on interview panels and are involved in short-listing of candidates. Applications for new or replacement posts are considered by the Executive Team. The use of sessional staff enables the college to remain fluid and flexible and respond to changing curriculum demands. Annual Planning looks at the target number of students and staffing requirements identified from this. Staff skill requirements to deliver up-to-date curricula with any associated need for training in new technologies and equipment is considered annually. Academic job descriptions are based on the college's Skills Development Framework and staff maintain currency of their knowledge and skills through the APRD process (see paragraph 193). Staff are supported to continue their academic and professional development and the college actively encourages staff to undertake postgraduate and doctoral qualifications (see also paragraphs 137 and 194).

120 Ravensbourne is able to ensure that appropriate lecturers can be found for niche areas of the curriculum or where staff absence occurs. There is an extensive network of

creative and technology practitioners through staff connections and Ravensbourne's employer links, advisory boards and Rave Agency that the college can approach to support the provision. The knowledge of the range of skills within and across courses can often enable a substitute lecturer to be found from the academic staff. Technicians also play an essential role in student learning and achievement. They are important in formal and informal situations to the teaching of specific skills to students. Students have a high regard for their teaching staff too. Students particularly enjoyed collaborative learning and the industry focus provided which they felt was relevant and cutting-edge. They were aware of the high calibre and professional experience that staff brought to the learning and teaching situations.

**Engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline (through, for example, membership of subject associations, learned societies and professional bodies)**

121 A high proportion of academic staff belong to a wide range of subject associations, learned societies and professional bodies. The high number of fractional and sessional staff who are freelance, run their own businesses or are involved in consultancy (as do some full-time staff) are active members of professional associations. The college encourages this engagement as it is aware of the benefits it brings in terms of the development of the content of curricula, teaching and learning practices and opportunities for students. The staff CVs provide evidence of an impressive range of engagement with organisations which influence pedagogic development of the disciplines in the college's provision.

122 Ravensbourne's Strategic Plan 2015-2018 states that the college wishes 'to deliver academic excellence in the learning, teaching, research and knowledge exchange of design, media, communication and technology through the development of new educational models for HE and industry'. The Learning and Teaching roadmap indicates the direction that Ravensbourne wishes for its pedagogical approach in the future. It is concerned to develop a distinctive, creative and inclusive curriculum which enables employability and entrepreneurship delivered by excellent teaching which is encouraged and facilitated by comprehensive HR and staff development processes. It also considers that utilisation of the open plan building and design of spaces should be linked to pedagogical development.

123 The college has ambitious proposals for Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) methods which put Ravensbourne at the forefront of teaching and learning practices in the sector. To this end the college has undertaken a Strategic Review of TEL and in rolling out the new curriculum after the Portfolio Review delivery will include more on-line, and technology-driven approaches such as mixed reality and augmented reality. Ravensbourne is well placed to achieve this as it hosts a Learning Technology Research Centre (LTRC) which researches how people use technology to learn and has attracted considerable funding for projects from the UK and EU. Staff described how the cutting-edge research outcomes from the LTRC transfers skills and knowledge to teaching staff which in turn benefit student learning and employability. They also said it not only supported development of technology skills, the LTRC contributes to the creativity and innovation fostered within the college.

124 A large number of staff attended the in-house two-day Learning, Teaching and Research conference in June 2016. The Director gave the opening keynote presentation, 'From Interface to Chalkface' and discussed a number of ideas from her own research which particularly focussed on pedagogy in creative educational institutions and the relationship between research and teaching. There were over 35 presentations of which a proportion related to the innovative pedagogic approaches taken by some areas which were shared across the college. For example, the Ravensbourne Connect, an HEA funded, Vice Chancellors Strategic Initiative Fund project illustrates the college's aim for creative

collaborative learning where students from different disciplines identify each other and work together on project briefs which often involve a creative or digital company.

125 The college is fully committed to on-going development of teaching and learning capability to maintain its ambition to be at the forefront of education delivery. There are a number of initiatives working alongside each other to create a vibrant, creative and collaborative learning environment. A project to develop 'Learner Analytics' in several areas of the college will provide more in-depth information about the student profile and how students are engaging in learning. The college is mapping Graduate Attributes to the curriculum for each course. The Portfolio review has identified Five Principles for excellent teaching and learning at Ravensbourne. They will inform job descriptions, interview procedures and peer observation.

**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**

126 Many teaching staff are both practitioners and academics and as such integrate their professional knowledge and experience of product creation and development into the curriculum. The college's research agenda has gained momentum over recent years and a clear definition and understanding of what constitutes research is emerging which will enable staff to articulate their innovative projects to be included as measurable outputs for recording purposes and demonstrate their impacts on teaching and learning. Post holders are expected to undertake research and scholarship in addition to responsibilities and to present outputs at staff conferences.

127 Ravensbourne's Applied Research Strategy was signed off in 2012. However a paper to Academic Board in September 2014 stated that it had not been possible to take it forward in detail due to lack of dedicated research funding. It was evident at that time that there were staff who were active in developing research bids usually with other universities. Research projects were being undertaken and showcased at a Learning Teaching and Research conference in the summer of 2014. A new Head of Research post was created in September 2015 and the current incumbent started in 2015 with a remit to develop the research environment, research partnerships, gain funding and to support staff in making funding bids. During the period of the scrutiny period, the college's approach and research activity has developed rapidly.

128 The Research office manages internal funding opportunities. Up to £7,000 can be provided as initial funding to develop larger bids. A panel consisting of a Visiting Professor and the Research Fellow (RF) makes decisions on the award of these funds. The process is rigorous. Smaller awards of up to £1K can be decided on more quickly and responsively, for example to provide funding for travel to a conference where a staff member is giving a presentation or for smaller projects. In the period November 2014 to June 2016 there were three proposals' calls from which 27 research projects costing £77,000 were funded by the college. Just over £5,000 was spent on six smaller projects. Sessional staff had received funding as well as permanent staff. At the Research Committee meetings reports on external funding bids in preparation or submitted are made. The college now has a more systematised way to capture internal and external bids for research funding. There are many examples of an active staff making innovative bids to a range of different sources and in making partnership bids with other universities and with institutes abroad in the USA. However the college recognises that there needs to be further development of mechanisms to audit the full extent of the research and scholarly activities of staff. The staff at a Research Committee felt that the college needs to find out how staff are managing to do 'research' even when not supported. It is felt that there is potentially a significant amount of such

research. This is particularly pertinent as Ravensbourne intends to submit in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2020.

129 Progress is being made on Ravensbourne's plan to enter the REF 2020, possibly with a joint proposal with Trinity Laban. A mock REF will be carried out in 2017 and terms of reference and timetable for this are under development advised by visiting professors. Through discussions staff are becoming clearer about definitions of research and research active in the context of the Ravensbourne environment. This will enable the college to identify the work it wishes to put forward to the REF and its own research distinctiveness. In summer 2016 workshops on the REF and how to develop research bids were delivered by the Visiting Professor who is also advising on development of the research culture at Ravensbourne. The Research Strategy including REF preparation is being updated and was due to be discussed at an Executive Team meeting in mid-February 2017.

130 Ravensbourne has taken steps to incentivise staff to be research active. The small grants have made a difference as has the mentoring and advice provided by the Research Fellow and Visiting Professor. However the sharing of research experience needs to be expanded and so a research section on the VLE is to be redeveloped. Staff have also indicated the need for an in-house staff research journal. Student research has been captured on an engaging DVD, 'Corrupted Files'. Other initiatives to support staff include sabbatical leave and workload planning.

131 The draft of the Research Informed Teaching (RIT) report was presented to the LCSEC in November 2016. A thorough investigation of the extent to which teaching and learning in the schools was influenced by research was carried through interviews with staff. It concluded that research informed teaching was demonstrated in practice as defined by the particular framework developed by Staffordshire University which is in line with HEFCE categorisation. The definition describes a learning environment informed by research which provides learners with an understanding of knowledge creation and its application. The report stated that the staff's research engagements, scholarly activity and industry training has influenced teaching and curriculum development. However recommendations called for enhancement of research in some departments and greater recognition of scholarly activity for archiving and sharing.

132 There is ample evidence of an active staff engaged in various research and scholarly activity endeavours which have direct influence on the practice based curriculum and the student experience. The links with professional practitioners in local, national and international businesses provide many opportunities for staff to remain up-to-date with developments in their disciplines.

### **Staff development and appraisal opportunities aimed at enabling them to develop and enhance their professional competence and scholarship**

133 Ravensbourne's strategic aims for its staff are supported by comprehensive policies for staff development and annual appraisal which apply to all employees. Academic staff undertake an Annual Performance and Review and Development meeting with their line manager which allows them to reflect on their teaching and achievements and set goals for the next year. Using the college's Skills Development Framework and the Strategic Skills Development Plan, the line manager and lecturer agree training and development targets for the coming year, taking into account the personal and professional aspirations of the appraisee. For academic staff targets typically include curriculum development, industry links and research activity. Staff training needs are collated from the completed APRD forms and the programme for in-house activity (the Annual Training Programme (ATP)) and funding for external events and further study requests are planned in line with Ravensbourne's priorities

for the coming year. The college provides resources for the ATP and individual development objectives. This may be in the form of funding, time or access to equipment and resources.

134 The Strategic Skills Development Framework brings together all the skills that staff may need to do their jobs, into six main areas. The associated Skill Sheets are useful tools which allow staff to reflect on their own skills relevant to their role. Of most importance to teaching staff is the skill sheet for Academic and Technical Skills: Knowledge and Know-How. Staff can use this tool to identify their own needs and training options. It can be used by academic managers to identify team skill needs and as a focus for discussion at APRDs. The HR department delivers a range of staff training via e-learning. This includes a number of mandatory and optional courses.

135 Enhancement weeks in terms one and two are designed as opportunities for staff and students to take part in other activities outside the main curriculum. For example staff have time to undertake subject updating, research and teaching and assessment related activities. An in-house programme of 'Skillsfest' events throughout the year, managed by the Associate Dean for Learning Innovation, provides a wide range of development opportunities for teaching staff to support the development of pedagogy and research. During 2014-15, activities included 'Developing Research Capability', the VLE and 'Flipped Classroom Working'. In 2016 a well-attended session on 'Constructing and Writing Evaluative Feedback to Improve Student Engagement' also included staff discussion and sharing of practice around inclusivity in assessment practices. Internal events are evaluated by attendees to inform HR of the quality of the events and usefulness to staff. The reported uptake of events and budget allocations are general. There is scope for more detailed reporting of quantitative data which disaggregates the spending for more defined activities and the attendance at more specific areas of training in order provide evidence for future planning and appraisal purposes.

136 A high number of academic staff attended a two-day Research, Learning and Teaching conference at the college organised by the Head of Research and the Associate Dean for Learning Innovation. Academic staff benefitted from the external speakers' presentations which provided some additional perspectives on research and teaching and learning. They also presented activities occurring around London in relation to creative digital technologies developments.

137 Ravensbourne staff feel they have good support for and access to training and appraisal to enable them to develop their professional competence and scholarship. New lecturers have a useful induction and probationary period of nine months during which they can receive mentoring and have number of observations and feedback opportunities which support the development of their teaching and learning methods. Sessional staff are included in peer observation and have formal appraisal if they have been employed for longer than four years. They engage in some co-teaching and dialogue with other course team members. Informally they have discussions with the course leader about their development as teachers and academics. Part-time and sessional staff can be paid to attend particular sessions, such as training on assessment. During 2015-16 Ravensbourne funded a mixture of new and continuing studies: nine academic staff (the same number as in 2014-15) received support to start or continue a Masters or other professional degree. In the same period two academic staff received support to start a PhD. Ravensbourne staff also take part in staff development offered by the awarding university.

### **Experience of curriculum development and assessment design**

138 Ravensbourne has been engaged in the development, delivery and assessment of higher education programmes for over 50 years. Its demonstrable record as a provider of cutting-edge teaching and assessment of HE courses in digital media and design lead it to

consider that it has the required confidence and expertise to be an autonomous HEI, determining its own programmes and assuring their standards and quality. The employment rates of its graduates are amongst the highest in the sector and this has been a consistent feature over the past four years (over 90 per cent).

139 Course leaders have responsibility for the management of individual HE programmes. They are supported by associate deans who have oversight of a cluster of courses. Course leaders provide academic leadership to the permanent and sessional teaching staff and manage the teaching, learning and assessment standards. Associate deans and course leaders are recruited on the basis of their specialist discipline expertise and HE experience. They are responsible for curriculum development and design based on current industry practices and links with working professionals in creative and digital companies. Ravensbourne entered into partnership with its current awarding body in 2013 when courses previously validated by City University London were redesigned in line with University of the Arts London regulations. Course leaders were involved in the modifications to the curriculum during transition. This involved a change to a 30-credit structure, necessitating development of new curriculum and assessment designs and work-based learning units in particular. The process was successful and the relationship with the university has continued to develop through the Link Liaison Committee meetings where Ravensbourne staff engage in pedagogical and procedural discussions with university staff. A full revalidation by the university of all courses was carried out in 2016. Assessment briefs are verified by associate deans prior to being issued to students.

140 University of the Arts staff are particularly impressed with the entrepreneurial spirit of the college's staff, their high level of industry knowledge and skills in technology, and how these are developed and applied in an aesthetic dimension and feed directly into the curriculum which prepares students well for the job market. External examiners often comment on the innovative courses and assessment briefs which are highly relevant and make good use of industrial links. At observed validation events course leaders demonstrated academic and professional competence, and experience to the satisfaction of well-informed external and internal panel members. They also showed awareness of the relevance of research to underpin the proposal and a good understanding of curriculum design. Strategic Review, Portfolio Review and Portfolio Development meetings have also indicated the high degree of understanding of course design and innovation in developing new coherent, curricula for new technologies for students of the future.

**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)**

141 Ravensbourne fully supports staff to engage with peer networks and providers of higher education in other institutions. The college keeps records of current CVs to enable it to maintain lists of those who have external examining or other external roles.

142 Ravensbourne encourages staff to become external examiners and this is typically in art and design based institutions or departments within more general universities, for example, the University of Middlesex and Oxford Brookes. 25 staff are currently external examiners of whom 15 are academic leaders. The CVs show that other staff have had previous external examining experience. There is a high proportion of fractional and sessional staff, many of whom are professional practitioners but, as can be seen from curricula vitae, also teach or have taught and assessed at other higher education institutions.

143 There are 25 staff who have been involved with external validation panels; of these 16 are academic leaders. A much larger number of staff have been involved in internal validation events at Ravensbourne or at HEIs where they worked previously. Three staff are

recorded as having participated in external events such as Lifelong Learning Networks or Regional Development Forums. However staff also have links with local networks such as the South East London Society of Architects (SELSA) and with the University of Greenwich through collaborative research funding bids such as the Greenwich Silicon Health Valley.

144 One member of staff is recorded as a QAA reviewers. A large number (40) of staff are listed as undertaking external activity with other organisations, for example, the Director is Chair of the Council for Higher Education in Art and Design (CHEAD). There are numerous examples of staff belonging to professional, statutory or regulatory bodies. Staff are able to network with peers at conferences and industry events.

145 Ravensbourne benefits greatly in terms of gaining a broader view of HE and learning of new developments through the networking and positive relationships it forges with other institutions in the higher education sector through national projects with which it collaborates. The 'Measuring Learning Gain from Practice and Work Based Learning programmes' project was a partnership with six other HEIs from across England. The Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP) is hosted within the National Union of Students. Its work is supported by a sector-wide steering group of representatives from sector bodies, institutions and students' unions.

## **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**

146 Ravensbourne monitors the effectiveness of learning and teaching activities in relation to intended learning outcomes using a range of different information inputs. External examiner reports are key in this process along with student feedback via the Student Liaison Committees (SLC) and annual course monitoring (ACM) reports which provide retention and achievement statistics and allow course leaders to make an evaluation of the learning and teaching. ACM reports are considered individually at plenary days. Boards of study monitor the action plans arising from the annual course monitoring reports and external examiner reports. A comprehensive summary of external examiners comments is presented for oversight by Academic Board which also considers the analysis of the achievement data for final year students.

147 To ensure intended learning outcomes are being covered the associate deans use a verification procedure to check project briefs before they are given out. The learning outcomes and accompanying assessment criteria are discussed with students when assessment briefs are issued. The assessment feedback is designed so that comments on achievement have to be made against each learning outcome within the project. There is a system of second marking to moderate the assessment process. Subsequently external examiners verify the outcomes and approve the grading against the assessment criteria. Overall external examiners are positive about the accuracy of marking, clear links to learning outcomes and the high standard of work achieved by the students. They also comment on the high quality of teaching and learning in some courses. Ravensbourne feels it will be better placed to ensure clear, straightforward marking criteria aligned to learning outcomes



when it is able to publish its own assessment rules, should taught degree awarding powers be granted.

148 Feedback from students comes mainly from Student Liaison committee meetings where students can raise issues of poor teaching (see paragraph 157). The open plan layout of the building means that teaching is easily observed by line managers and peers. If poor teaching is reported or observed then there is a mentoring system and one-to-one meetings with the Associate Dean. The more systematic collection of unit feedback through unit evaluation (commencing in September 2017) from students will provide additional information about the quality of teaching and enable early interventions if needed.

149 The mechanisms for monitoring learning and teaching appear to be robust but the poor National Student Survey (NSS) 2016 outcomes clearly were not expected. In response to disappointing NSS 2016 scores for teaching (70 per cent, down from 77 per cent in 2015), a new Peer Observation working group was being set up in January 2017 to review and revise the current Peer Observation Policy and process. The NSS 2016 Institutional Action Plan also indicates that 'intellectual stimulation' (which received a score of 67 per cent) will be reviewed through the new Unit Evaluation process which will be rolled out in September 2017. A number of other actions have been put in place which may improve students' perceptions of teaching and learning and this will be evidenced on the return of the NSS 2017 scores.

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

150 Although Ravensbourne's comprehensive Assessment and Feedback is made available to staff and students on the VLE, the scrutiny team found a lack of clarity in students' and staff's understanding of the expectations of the operation of the Assessment and Feedback Policy; most thought that the return time was three weeks for all with no differentiation between academic levels as the policy states.

151 A Strategic Review of Assessment was carried out in 2015 with one of the aims being to evaluate whether the assessment process across the provision at Ravensbourne was delivered in accordance with its policy. The resulting action plan made no reference to concern or remedial activity about lack of promptness of assessment feedback. However the Quality unit carried out an audit to identify the time between hand in and the return of feedback which was reported at the Student Experience and Engagement Working Group (SEEWG) meeting in October 2015. It showed that almost 40 per cent of grades were not returned on time. It was not made explicit at this meeting what actions would be taken to address this issue.

152 The NSS 2015 outcomes had shown an improvement for this question, from 68 per cent in 2014 to 70 per cent in 2015. The NSS result in 2016 was disappointing at 62 per cent and was broadly similar to the result of 67 per cent returned by a Level 5 survey which was run during the summer term 2016. The NSS 2016 action plan lists a number of appropriate actions to address this problem. However the Annual Report on Institutional Quality and Standards in December 2016 stated that for the majority of work 'feedback had been made available within the turnaround time specified in the Assessment and Feedback Policy' and that negative comments about the timing of feedback related to one course and this had been addressed. In contrast to this statement, the NSS 2016 results showed that of the 16 UG courses listed, ten scored less than 70 per cent. The action plan for the NSS 2016 was supplied for discussion at the Student Experience Working Group (SWG, the group designated as responsible for regular oversight of student satisfaction) meeting in November 2016. It was incomplete in that the proposed actions section did not yet have deadlines or information about who was responsible for monitoring the action.

153 The Governors and Academic Board at the joint meeting in September 2016 had expressed that some urgency was needed in ensuring actions were completed quickly as the NSS 2017 would be starting in four months from then. However at the SEEWG meeting in October there was a general discussion about some aspects of the NSS but the action plan was not scrutinised in detail. Within the plan an action for an audit of feedback promptness was due for completion by September 2016 but this was not reported on. Staff development sessions have been put in place to remind staff of the policy regarding feedback times and new and sessional staff have had specific training events on assessment. Unit evaluations which will be fully implemented from September 2017 have the potential to alert staff to any delays in providing students with assessment feedback and allow earlier remedial actions to be taken.

### **Constructive and developmental feedback is given to students on their performance**

154 There is a University of the Arts assessment feedback form on the VLE which must be used for written feedback and should include any verbal feedback given. The form ensures that comments are related to the learning outcomes and marking criteria. Academic staff receive an assessment briefing as part of their induction process and there are on-going in-house staff development events to ensure staff refresh their understanding and practice regarding assessment feedback in line with Ravensbourne's required approaches to assessment and feedback. As a result of poor scores in the NSS 2016 for fairness of assessment (70 per cent) and feedback providing clarity on areas where there was lack of understanding (67 per cent), there have been additional staff development and briefings for staff and students to address issues of students' perceived lack fairness and transparency of marking, especially for group work and where more than one tutor has given feedback.

155 The Strategic Review (SR) of Assessment in 2015 commented on some excellent examples of feedback which were comprehensive in helping a student to understand why they have achieved the level indicated by the grade (feedback) and what they needed to do to continue to improve (feedforward), all within the context of the intended learning outcomes of the project. Academic Board in December 2016 considered that the actions from the SR of Assessment had been successful. External examiner reports consistently remark on the quality and appropriateness of assessment feedback.

156 Students reported that they felt that project briefs were well written and the assessment criteria and learning outcomes were clear. Where work was to be presented from a group they knew how their individual grade would be arrived at using the reflective writing and the skills they demonstrated in their own particular section/role within the assignment project. They understood that presentations are viewed by a panel of three staff and each writes feedback. Students said they receive helpful formative assessment feedback throughout the duration of the project. Summative feedback is consistent with advice given at formative feedback and is given on the VLE. Feedback helps them to know what they did well and what they need to do to improve their standard of work and skills they need to develop. They said that feedback was linked to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Students mentioned that the quality of feedback does vary depending on the tutor and sometimes tutors had differing opinions but students valued hearing the different viewpoints. Students were satisfied with assessment feedback timeliness, detail and helpfulness. Students appreciated the recorded verbal and visual feedback provided via the VLE. This innovative practice is disseminated through staff development events.

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

157 The Student Engagement Policy expresses the college's commitment to the inclusion of students in its operations and clearly sets out the groups, responsibilities, systems and activities the college has adopted to gather and respond to student feedback.

158 The Student Union (SU) manages the process of identifying and training representatives from each year of every course. Student representatives report the comments made by their peers at course Student Liaison Committees (SLC), and are responsible for relaying back information to their groups. SLC concerns are reported to the termly board of study for each academic department and are used in annual course monitoring. Student representatives are entitled to attend the Student Parliament which is organised by the Student Union and involves members of the Senior Management Team every term. This framework has the potential for effective gathering and action on student issues. Reports from students, SLCs, boards of study and the Student Parliament demonstrate the genuine interest and concern that staff have to listen and act on issues that students raise.

159 However in response to student concerns about a perceived lack of communication about actions taken as a result of the topics they raised, the SU undertook a 'Closing the Loop' project which identified the need for a post to set up and manage a mechanism for communicating with all students, possibly involving social media. The Quality unit now takes the lead in working with student groups and appointed a Student Engagement Officer (SEO) in September 2016. The focus is to establish ways to disseminate to students how their feedback is being used to improve and enhance the student experience. The SEO has worked with the SU to improve its website, train student representatives in feeding back to their cohort and use social media to communicate with students. The Student Experience and Engagement Working Group (SEEWG) is a sub-group of the Learning, Curriculum and Student Experience Committee (LCSEC). This group includes two members of the Board of Governors. It is an effective subgroup in promoting the engagement of students in feedback activities. Students are represented at all levels of the committee structure and contribute actively to meetings.

160 Ravensbourne uses other feedback mechanisms to gain understanding of the student experience. In addition to the NSS, a level 5 survey and level 4 focus groups provide information which feeds into the SEEWG meetings and which course teams use for annual course monitoring. The college takes student feedback seriously and responded swiftly to disappointing scores in the NSS 2016. The resulting action plan is monitored by the SEEWG though the scrutiny team observed the monitoring to be general rather than in depth and detail. A number of actions were recorded as completed by 3 December 2016 but the template does not make clear the exact nature of the actions carried out. Postgraduate students complete the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) organised by the HEA to provide nationally comparative data. The PTES outcomes were felt to be of limited use because of the small number of PG students taking part. Results from PTES are considered as part of annual monitoring.

161 In the past unit evaluation has not been used systematically across the HE provision. However in light of the disappointing NSS 2016 scores, a common set of questions has been devised which will be used by all units in order to provide early information about the quality of teaching. There is a set of questions to be answered after three weeks into the unit with the remainder of the questionnaire to be completed at the end or beginning to the following unit. The evaluation will also enable comparisons where there is more than one delivery of a unit and between units. A pilot will be run in spring 2017 with full

implementation from September 2017. Ravensbourne has been selected to take part in The Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP) which is hosted within the National Union of Students, commissioned by HEFCE. The purpose is to pilot a range of student voice mechanisms and assess their effectiveness and usefulness as part of quality assurance and enhancement arrangements. The project is due for completion in July 2017.

162 Staff feedback is obtained using surveys and staff conferences. The new Director carried out a formal staff survey shortly after her arrival and this was followed by a well-attended staff conference day in November 2015. The survey had been carried out by an external consultant who presented the results and analysis at the start of the conference. A second survey is planned to be carried out by the same consultant in November 2017 to assess progress. Positive key findings from the initial survey included a high level of pride in working at Ravensbourne (84 per cent) and the way staff were able to play a role in contributing to the college's aims and objectives (91 per cent). The main areas of concern were effectiveness of communication, the college's approach to change and workload, pay and reward. Staff had opportunity to discuss the outcomes in groups and complete a question pro forma to make suggestions for how areas of concern could be addressed. The Executive team has addressed each area of concern and a comprehensive report will go to Governors in February 2017. Staff conferences are used to inform staff of strategic and operational developments in the college and gather staff ideas and views. Feedback is given at the subsequent staff conference. Staff feel that these meetings are effective in learning about strategic direction and what is happening in the college. Staff also receive a weekly newsletter.

163 Employer feedback comes through advisory groups, staff who are professional practitioners and are employers themselves and the many links that staff have with companies in the creative and digital sectors. There are two formal Employer Advisory Boards; one for Visual Communications and one for Broadcast media. These meetings are well attended with representation from local, national and sometimes international companies. There is an interesting question and answer format covering specific issues raised by members of course teams. These Boards allow the college to gather a great deal of valuable information about individual companies and wider developments in the sector areas. The information is timely in light of the Portfolio Review of the curriculum currently being undertaken. Staff and students also learn of employment trends and the latest developments in their areas through 'Rave Lates' which is a series of evening events, open to the general public, where influential people in the field speak and can present their work. Employers met by the scrutiny team gave a number of activities that they had been involved with in providing advice into course content and validations, project briefs and opportunities they provided to students to visit their workplaces or work placements.

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

164 Ravensbourne provides good quality, comprehensive services to students in terms of pre-entry advice, induction to the college and courses and support for individual students for study. The external website and the prospectus in hard copy provide full and accurate information on the HE courses and provision in general. The college has an Induction of Students Policy which covers pre-enrolment, induction and re-induction for returning students.

165 The college organises well managed Open Days which students found enjoyable and valuable. The Open Days enable prospective applicants, led by current student ambassadors, to tour the building, meet staff and students and gain greater insight in to the college's provision and student life. The attractive Open Day information leaflet contains an

evaluation form which is used to inform the college of the usefulness of the day so that improvements can be made each year.

166 Students who met the scrutiny team felt that induction provided them with the information they need. They enjoyed the well planned 'Induction Trail' using iPads to tour the building to visit different areas and gain an introduction to services, people and technology. Students met student services staff and felt fully informed of the range of help and support available for academic and personal needs, and the location within the building. There are also course specific inductions and continued reinforcement of induction messages through the VLE in the succeeding weeks. The integration of general and tailored inductions in the term one enhancement week ensures a thorough transition to undergraduate study. Course teams and Student Services work closely in the early identification of particular learning or support needs to assist students. Student services offers counselling, finding accommodation, supporting mental health, mentoring, financial advice and study skills. There are bursaries and other support (laptop bursaries) available to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Ravensbourne places a great deal of importance on providing a valuable informative induction to new students particularly to support students from diverse backgrounds in order to help them settle into college life. The induction process is fully evaluated each year and amended in the light of student feedback to refine and enhance the activity. Student responses to the Induction trail survey for 2016 were very positive.

167 Students felt that there was very good support for dyslexic students. Other students spoke very positively on help with academic writing. There is a 'Mapping Your Profession' unit which enables students to identify their skills needs and to develop and improve skills such as academic writing and referencing. Some courses have an initial assessment. Support for academic skill development is provided on the intranet to help students with skills and drop in sessions are provided by an academic skills tutor in the Student Services department. Students are further informed about academic support at induction and especially for dissertations. There is good liaison between Student Services and course leaders to ensure support for students.

168 Students understood the importance of the one-to-one Personal Progress Review (PPR) sessions which they have with their designated tutor. The PPR Policy entitlement is for one hour of one-to-one per year (delivered as two or three session over the year). Course Leaders monitor the uptake by students of their PPR entitlement. It is not a compulsory session. At the PPR meeting they discuss their 'life goals' and their academic progress through the course. Some students felt these were not helpful and that the on-going tutorials with unit tutors, where they discuss their work in detail (formative feedback), was valued much more highly. Ravensbourne continually seeks ways to improve its progress tutorial system for individual students. Between December 2014 to January 2015, a Strategic Review of PPR was undertaken and subsequently a PPR working group which included students was set up to examine how the process could be made more meaningful and effective for students, to increase uptake of the opportunity and improve consistency of experience and consequently improve achievement rates. The process has been renamed Progress tutorials and staff development and efforts to increase student participation have been put in place. In response to an NSS 2016 score of 70 per cent for Academic Support, Ravensbourne implemented an improved PPR system using the VLE to record and track uptake of sessions.

169 To further ensure an effective, consistent and seamless student experience from the application stage through to early study, Ravensbourne set up a working group in January 2016 'From Recruitment to Early Engagement of Learners' (FREEL) Working Group. In December 2016 the group reported on a range of activities to improve the experiences of prospective and first year students.

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

170 The nature of the creative and digital courses that the college runs inevitably means that there is heavy reliance on high cost equipment and technological resources. When new courses are proposed or at revalidations the Portfolio Development Group considers and ensures that there will be sufficient, appropriate resources to support the achievement of the learning outcomes. Subsequently the quality, adequacy and currency of learning resources are reviewed effectively each year through annual monitoring reports, student feedback and the staff's knowledge of new developments in the creative and digital industries. Requests for refurbishment, renewal and new materials and equipment are considered through the resource allocation process.

171 The college's resources are described and illustrated on the external website and prospectus. For many students the industry-based programmes and opportunity to use high specification, cutting edge equipment and facilities were deciding factors in choosing to study at Ravensbourne. The NSS scores for learning resources is good overall at 83 per cent in 2016 although this was 3 per cent below the sector average of 86 per cent and three per cent lower than in 2015. However students praised the access to technology and equipment as 'second to none'.

172 Ravensbourne is well aware of the pace of change within the industries for which it trains students. It ensures that its specialist machines and facilities are cutting-edge in a number of ways. There is intelligence gathering and knowledge sharing among course teams. Many staff are practitioners in creative and digital fields and the strong links that staff have with industry professionals through personal contacts, involvement with local and national events and the Employer Advisory Boards keep the college informed of the latest developments. Academic and technical staff also attend conferences and trade fairs where companies display and demonstrate the newest products. A design and technology group monitors and evaluates technology use and provides forecasts up to 18 months ahead on what equipment may need to be purchased. This informs decisions made in the resource allocation process.

173 The college invests significant funds every year in new resources. For example, in 2015-16 Ravensbourne partnered with a major 'hi tech' materials company to launch the first materials library in the UK. This initiative will enable students to experience and experiment with new materials when designing products in fashion and architecture. This benefits students in the employment market giving them added knowledge and skills at the forefront of their sectors. Graphic Design students have access to a new top of the range drum printer and a managed print shop which has increased the quality of their work and reduced costs. The Central Loan Resource (CLR) which is managed through the library, allows students to borrow from over 4,000 pieces of the latest equipment to complete their projects, at no cost. The timely sharing of project briefs to staff of the CLR prior to student use so that the required resources can be checked is sound practice. A recent change in the lending policy which meant that students were no longer able to borrow equipment for personal projects or commissions outside of their college work caused some concern to students. However it is evident that staff do all they can to support students' opportunities to extend their experience and skills and encourage entrepreneurial initiative.

174 In the 2016 NSS scores, the question concerning access to general IT resources gained a good score of 86 per cent. The provision of IT equipment and software is reviewed each year and informed by the Technology Steering Group and significant finances are provided to renew and update the resources needed. In future the planned improved communications between associate deans and senior IT staff should enable better decision making for IT provision and improve student access to IT facilities. A wide range of the latest

commercial software is available for students whose curriculum is digital in nature and there is a software learning tool for use by staff and students. The college is aware of a concern of students about the delay in the issue of laptops to late into the autumn term and has taken appropriate steps to alleviate this. The NSS 2016 action plan identifies improved support and maintenance of audio-visual systems and regularly updated and published work plans by facilities and IT departments. The on-going maintenance of physical resources is also supported by an effective on-line reporting system on the VLE by which staff and students can report faulty and damaged equipment.

175 The library and learning materials resources arrangements are well regarded. Students have access to a large quantity of information in-print, on-line and in multimedia format. The online databases are accessible both via the VLE and the intranet where there are links to learning resources and library catalogues. Students are able to access these off campus and at all times. The Study Zone provides study spaces for individual and group working. At induction students are shown how the library works and how to use the online facilities through a task-based activity. Induction sessions are later followed up with more detailed searches and interactions with the e-resources. There are one-to-one sessions and drop-ins available for students to seek help. The library can use the British Library to obtain texts not available within Ravensbourne and there are arrangements for students to borrow from other university libraries. The very detailed statistics of usage of each of the library facilities along with data and graphs showing library occupancy during each day provide useful information towards understanding students' needs and planning for future resourcing of the area. The library and resources areas gain feedback from students by focus groups and reports on actions through 'You Said We Did' digital posters. There is also a request/comment box located in the library area. The college wide surveys also have questions about library and resources and NSS scores are noted and appropriate actions taken if needed. The usage of resources is monitored and course leaders work closely with library staff to ensure the sufficiency and currency of learning materials for students. Library and resources received a score of 82 per cent in the 2016 NSS. Students are appreciative of the library provision and help provided by staff. The newly revised VLE provides a source of learning materials for all courses. Although there is variability in content and usage across the HE provision, which may depend on the nature of the course, there are guidelines for minimum standards for use which are monitored by the Associate Dean Learning Innovation.

176 The open plan arrangement of the building was a deliberate decision to encourage and enable creative collaboration and innovative teaching and learning situations. Reinforced by the inventive 'Ravensbourne Connect' project by the use of differently coloured lanyards allows students to recognise peers on other courses with whom they may wish to develop a project, the concept has been largely successful. However the large open atrium does pose some acoustics problems with sound travelling around the building and disrupting taught classes. All staff are aware of this and senior staff continue to put in place actions to alleviate this issue. Students and staff also raise the issue of lack of space. Improvements in timetabling and location of facilities are proposed to ease these difficulties.

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

177 Ravensbourne has a comprehensive and effective Student Services department. It provides a range of information and support for students in counselling and advisory services such as mental health mentoring, targeted support for disability, careers advice, financial support and advice, accommodation advice and support for work placements, internships and employment. Students are made aware of the range of provision available through induction, the intranet student hub, postcards, their tutors and plasma screens situated around the building. Students use the Information Desk for making enquiries and

appointments. The drop-in times for Well-being and Disability Support, Careers and Industry Liaison Advice and for Finance and Accommodation information are also well publicised.

178 The college is acutely aware of its diverse student body and continuously reviews services in line with changing student profiles. Every student has opportunity to indicate their individual needs and this is feedback from the admissions process and at induction so that appropriate services can be put in place. A Strategic Review of Student Services was undertaken in 2011 after relocation and in January 2014 the constituent parts of the department were restructured under a new Head of Service. In planning for student services an annual report is produced which looks at the previous year's student cohort, services usage and the numbers and nature of students in future years in order to plan an appropriate and sufficient service. The annual reports for 2014 and 2016 are very detailed and cover every area of activity within the service. They demonstrate the high quality of the provision and the commitment to providing a professional service to a diverse student body.

179 The Wellbeing and Disability Support service has a number of links with external agencies to provide comprehensive and professional support for students. Students who with a Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) receive appropriate equipment and support and benefit from agencies such as the University Mentoring Organisation (UMO), British Sign Language and the National Autistic Society. Ravensbourne staff are proactive in developing innovative assistance. Students who are deferred are also supported. Registry supplies a list of such students and any who pose a concern around their fitness to return are contacted by the disability support co-ordinators. As is the pattern in HEIs offering predominantly creative courses, dyslexia and dyspraxia have the highest disclose rate. Ravensbourne offers basic dyslexia screening with referral to an Educational Psychologist if necessary.

180 The Counselling service is provided by appropriately qualified, experienced and supervised staff. Students are also referred to external agencies where appropriate and information is provided about access to out of hours help. Ravensbourne staff have less use of the college's counselling service. Staff welfare is provided by the HR department. HR offers flexible and part-time working. It also offers training sessions. For 2016-17 the development programme has a well-being theme to support staff in aspects of their work or home life which could impact on their mental or physical well-being. Ravensbourne has a Students in Crisis Policy to support staff and students in exceptional circumstances which clearly articulates concerns that are within the scope of the policy and those which are not covered. It provides guidance for staff on actions to take in terms of the help provided by the Student Services department or whether higher level intervention is required.

181 Student Services also offer a mentoring service for students who find themselves in personal difficulties. This is often provided by postgraduate students who undertake a training programme in mentoring skills. Postgraduate students gain additional benefit from this in terms of the practice of management and leadership skills it affords.

182 The Student Services department stays informed of student opinion on a regular basis. Staff in Student Services may attend Student Liaison Committees and boards of study and are members of the Student Parliament meetings. The department also undertakes analysis of internal student surveys, the NSS and action plans from Annual Course Monitoring reports which have relevance to the area are also used. Students who used the learning support services spoke highly, commenting very positively on help with academic writing and there was particular praise for the very helpful counselling services. The NSS results over recent years have not shown any areas of particular concern in student services support.



**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**

183 Ravensbourne has made considerable investment in staff and resources and improvements to systems to support the administration of the HE provision in recent years. There had been problems with accuracy and completeness of papers for examination boards, validation and in procedures in previous years. However the awarding body reported that for 2015 the situation had much improved. Communications between the college and the university had strengthened and Ravensbourne staff had received support and training on developing accurate paperwork and procedures. Actions included; appointment of a new Registrar, staff training (including sessional staff) on university assessment procedures, student briefings on opportunities for retrieval and repeat of units, and involvement of a team of academic administrators in recording and monitoring accurate data. The scrutiny team observed interim and pre-examination boards, and final examination boards and validation events which ran very efficiently and effectively, in line with university regulations and demonstrated the staff's confidence in operating the formal procedures as required.

184 The Registrar leads a team of eight staff who operate a number of functions. The Registry is responsible for the student records system, statutory returns, assessment information for Boards, assessment procedures and other management information about students. Registry manages the admissions process (except for PG student admissions, dealt with by the International department). This starts the database record for each student and is maintained throughout the student lifecycle. It is also responsible for collecting and collating data for external statutory returns and other requests from external bodies. Internally, data for SMT are prepared by Registry. Registry also works with staff within schools to provide student lists and other information. More formally the Registry provides course leaders with data such as retention and achievements for the Annual Course Monitoring Reports. Course leaders also have access to areas of the centrally held student information. Registry produces transcripts (and Diploma Supplements) using data from the management system.

185 Staff in registry reported that they felt the hardware and software available to them adequately fulfilled the current requests made of the systems in terms data storage and retrieval. The Registry uses reporting software which provides real-time data in response to particular queries. However Ravensbourne is proactive in looking to continuously improve its systems and procedures. The registry is involved in a Business Intelligence Project (BIP) with other small specialist colleges nearby to examine and develop co-ordinated, automated approach to information flow; previously a manual process. A contractor has been used who will demonstrate to project members how to manipulate and make information available and enable staff to drill down for more detail on students' information. The intranet is used for class lists and up-to-date information on applications and admissions on which information is current within 24 hours. The BIP will help automate regular reports on applications and for data for course monitoring so that appropriate staff have access to timely data. Registry is continuing to develop its systems and tighten up where information is held. For example, manually updated spreadsheets, for assessment boards, still exist but will be discontinued when the Student Record System is fully operational.

186 The Registry and Quality Unit work closely to provide administrative support to the HE courses. There are currently five members of staff in the Quality team and six academic administrators. The Quality Unit has been strengthened in recent years by a new post, the Validation and Accreditation Officer, which has improved the operation of validation events. Academic Administrators in the Quality Unit do not have a student facing role but are responsible for attendance monitoring, inputting assessment grades, helping to prepare course materials and other administrative duties to support academic staff and departments.

To provide an appropriate, sufficient structure and personnel to further support increased responsibilities if TDAP is granted, and an increase in student numbers and courses, a request for additional (1.9FTE) academic administrators is being considered by the Executive Team.

187 The Registry also works very closely with the Policy, Strategic Planning and Data Analysis Unit. Registry provides a list of declared disabilities to Student Services (SS) so that it can contact students. The Policy, Strategic Planning and Data Analysis unit will collect information for the OFFA requirements and carry out the analysis internal to the college including destination data and triangulation with Widening Participation (WP) categories. Diversity reports which had been produced by Student Services will now be the responsibility of the Planning unit. Documentation and data for the various college committees are well prepared.

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

188 Ravensbourne has appropriate statements, policies and procedures in place for complaints regarding academic and non-academic matters, admissions and academic appeals. The Students Complaint Procedure is a confidential and comprehensive process. Students are helped to understand it by a clear flowchart and explanation in the Students' Contract Handbook which includes relevant pro forma. The procedure was revised and approved in March 2016 to bring Ravensbourne's Student Complaints Procedure into line with guidance published by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and good practice published by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). A further policy designed to address complaints received from members of the public and those that arose as a result of students on placements was approved in April 2016.

189 Within the Admissions Policy there is a statement indicating that a complaint regarding the policy should be addressed to the Admissions Team in Registry in the first instance to seek informal resolution but subsequently there is recourse to the Ravensbourne Student Complaint Procedure for a formal review. For appeals concerning assessment students are directed to the processes of the University of the Arts (UAL). The Link Liaison Committee meetings between Ravensbourne and UAL ensure that the college continues to be up to date with amendments to the UAL Appeals Procedures. Within Ravensbourne's Equality Framework there is a statement that complaints that students have regarding any aspect of their experience at Ravensbourne or to report instances of discrimination are dealt with through the Student Complaints Procedure, while appeals against assessment outcomes will be subject to the Appeals Policy and Procedure of the university. Ravensbourne undertakes that both will be discharged without bias and in accordance with the principles set out in the Equality Framework.

190 Ravensbourne further ensures students are made aware of how to make a complaint by publishing information, in handbooks on the virtual learning environment (VLE), in the Student Union folder and as part of their induction process. A clear, short guide leaflet on the Student Complaints Procedure has been produced which is made available to students from the Information Desk. Students' knowledge and understanding of the formal complaints procedure was variable but they mentioned being able to email their course leader and that replies had been satisfactory. They were also aware that they could use the Student Services for help in making a complaint. Students and staff did indicate that many student concerns are resolved informally due to close working proximity and positive relationships. The Student Liaison Committees are also effective in enabling students to bring concerns to the notice of staff and the boards of study through the student representative system. The Directorate and senior managers are alerted to student issues at the termly Student Parliament meetings.

191 Complaints are managed by the Quality Team. Students can email the completed pro forma directly to the Quality Officer. An annual report on Complaints and Appeals is presented by the Head of Quality to Academic Board. An annual report also goes to the Board of Governors. Information on complaints is broken down by course and level, number of students, brief nature of the complaint and outcome and analysed/profiled against characteristics such as gender, disability or learning need but care is taken that individual students cannot be identified inadvertently where there may be only one record in a category. The report for 2014-15 showed that of six complaints, five related to HE programmes and of these only one complaint from three students was upheld in part. Complaints varied between allegations against a student or member of staff or about the programme (no detail given). The one complaint upheld in part was by three students' allegations against a member of staff. For 2015-16, six complaints from seven students went through the formal process. Of these, four were not upheld, one partially upheld, one upheld and one was undergoing review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

192 Ravensbourne has fair and transparent policies and procedures that are communicated to students and staff and students through a range of media. There is close monitoring of complaints, both academic and non-academic, through the Quality office which reports them to Academic Board and the Board of Governors.

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

193 Ravensbourne has a strategic aim 'To invest in and value our staff and ensure the development of our organisational capability'. To realise this Ravensbourne has a clear Staff Development Policy which describes its commitment to promote knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes' to enable staff to carry out their role with maximum effectiveness. Ravensbourne has adopted a Skills Development Framework to provide the college with a sustainable development tool. It is an overarching structure which incorporates a very detailed Skills Needs Inventory, which is a catalogue of annually reviewed core skills for job roles, and the Strategic Skills Development Plan (SSDP). It sets out the skills development priorities for Ravensbourne as a whole for the coming year. The Skills Inventory is the reference point by which managers and staff can evaluate progress in achievement of the framework and guide staff development activity towards continuous improvement in performance through the Annual Performance Review and Development (APRD) process. Personal professional development activity in line with organisational objectives which are identified in the APRD procedure contribute to the formulation of the SSDP which is determined and approved by the Executive Team. These policies and procedures apply to all staff across the college.

194 Staff in the student support areas, quality unit and marketing are supported to attend conferences and training events to help their professional development. A member of staff in Registry is involved in a Business Intelligence Project (BIP) with other small specialist colleges nearby to examine and develop co-ordinated, automated approach to information flow - previously a manual process. Technical staff gave a number of examples of how the college had supported their professional development. Staff who support HE provision take advantage of development opportunities offered by the Continuous Professional Development of their sector and Ravensbourne subscribes to a number of organisations relevant to support staff in the professional services area.

195 The HR department maintains a clear overview of the development needs for each member of staff, the business plans and the strategic skill development priorities of the college and from these sources develops the detailed and comprehensive Strategic Skills Development Plan for the year. The costed Plan is approved by the Executive team and the financial commitment agreed. The HR department produces and coordinates the Annual

Training Programme which includes in-house training and development opportunities. Activities include Managers' Development programmes, eLearning modules, workshops and group and individual sessions. The HR department makes a full report to the HR and Remuneration subcommittee of the Board of Governors each year.

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

196 The paper entitled 'How does Ravensbourne communicate with students' sets out how the college meets the expectation of the UK Quality Code Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision. It helpfully and concisely describes all the activities it carries out to provide accessible information for students which is fit for purpose. The Marketing and Communications department has responsibility for managing all aspects of information for students including social media communications. Ravensbourne introduced a new website during 2015-16. It is highly attractive, interesting and easy to navigate with video clips as well as narrative sections. It provides detailed information to the general public, prospective and current students, alumni and stakeholders about its provision. The sitemap link leads to an impressive amount of information about the academic offer, governance issues, student support, additional student opportunities and outreach activities available to the public and support for businesses in the creative, media and digital industries. Information is helpful, comprehensive and provides contact details if further help is needed. Prospective students can find details of the degree and postgraduate courses on offer and the name of the awarding body is clearly shown. There are helpful tips about what to expect at interview and suggestions on what to include in a portfolio. Entry requirements, fees, course contents and other learning opportunities are described as well as Key Information Set (KIS) data. The Registry is responsible for accuracy of the Key Information Sets.

197 There is also ample information about the academic environment in which students study, the support offered and Ravensbourne's learning culture and resources available. Corporate information on the website includes; Ravensbourne's strategy, mission and values and academic leadership. There is also information about arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement. The website is maintained by the Marketing department and the college has a comprehensive written procedure indicating the division of responsibilities for signing off information to ensure accuracy. A web editor is responsible for checking. Although very impressive in its presentation and content there were some areas where information was not up-to-date. For example, the most recent NSS results published were those of 2014 and the references to a Diversity Committee and Impact Assessments were erroneous. Students, however, spoke highly of web and published pre-registration materials, and confirmed the accuracy of the programme information. They said that staff had been helpful and positive during contacts with college.

198 Information for prospective students about the courses offered is also provided in a hardcopy prospectus which is colourful and well-illustrated to reflect the creative nature of the programmes. It is a comprehensive booklet which includes information on entry requirements, how to apply, fees and finance and valuable help for international students. The validating university that awards the UG and PG degrees (University of the Arts, UAL) is not prominent and mentioned only at the back of the publication. The University of the Arts is aware of this and finds it totally acceptable and in line with the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) requirements. Although some students were unable to name the institution which awarded their degree Ravensbourne staff stated that at Open Days and interview it is made clear to students that UAL is the awarding body for the qualifications. It is clearly indicated in course handbooks which are all on the VLE that the regulations for the award are those of UAL.

199 Information on their programme of study is issued to all students at start of their programme through the VLE and the course document on the intranet. The Quality team and academic administrators are responsible for the accuracy of the course handbooks. The Course Handbook is a comprehensive document. The template for the handbook is that of the awarding body and the completed document must be presented at the validation for approval by the university. Course handbooks are reviewed annually by the course leader and checked by academic administrators before re-approval by the university. The Associate Dean with responsibility for Learning and Innovation has developed a minimum standards framework for the use and content on the VLE that courses should follow in order to improve course organisation, provide clear orientation for students and enable consistency across all courses. The VLE holds all course specific information including project briefs for units. Project briefs are checked by the associate deans. The Student Hub on the intranet also holds valuable generic information for example, library opening times and student services. The Quality Unit at Ravensbourne is responsible for the content of the Student Contract Handbook. It sets out formally the college's pledge to students and the expected commitment from students to agree to the requirements, regulations and procedures of the organisation. It is available on the VLE but the links to it from the external website were not operable when the scrutiny team sought access in January and February 2017.

### **Equality of opportunity is sought and achieved in the organisation's activities**

200 Ravensbourne's Equality Framework is a statement for students which sets out the college's commitment to ensuring that all staff and students are treated equally, the key principles to which all policies and procedures adhere and where further information can be obtained. It covers all aspects of the student journey. Each undertaking is accompanied by a monitoring procedure and the personnel responsible, and signposts to related policies. The framework operates alongside a more detailed document, 'Equality and Diversity Policies and Procedures' which encompasses a wide range of HR policies and procedures to meet employment law and other individual policies covering all the protected characteristics in the equality legislation.

201 Ravensbourne demonstrates its commitment to disabled people by its membership of the Disability Confident Scheme which has replaced the Positive about Disability Two Ticks award. It commits the college to continuing positive action for disabled people. A quiet space is provided for individuals to use for meditation, reflection or prayer. The Board of Governors take a particular and active interest in equal opportunities and social mobility and receives an annual report.

202 The external website carries information about Ravensbourne's commitment to Equality and Diversity. It contains links to the Annual Equalities reports in compliance with equality objectives laid out by the Equality Act 2010. Alongside the reports are useful benchmarking reports. There is also an erroneous link to a Diversity Committee and Impact Assessments. Ravensbourne makes clear that all staff are responsible for promoting equal opportunities in carrying out their general duties. Staff do demonstrate sensitivity to the needs of different constituencies of students. Along with HR staff, Academic Board is responsible for monitoring, reporting and action planning on an annual basis to the Board of Governors. The Human Resources department provides training on all aspects of equality and diversity which professional and academic staff are required to complete on an on-going basis as part of their contract of employment.

203 The college uses the annual Student Diversity Report and the Annual Staff Equality Report to monitor the effectiveness of the framework. Patterns of student retention and achievement are also monitored annually at course level in Annual Course Monitoring reports. The Student Diversity report is presented to Academic Board by the Director of Academic Services to fulfil the statutory duty to monitor student activity against four

protected characteristics; gender, age, ethnicity and disability. It was indicated that the report did not include sexual orientation, religion and belief or gender identity as this information is not currently collected at institutional or national level. There has been a four per cent increase in students from BME background between 2013-14 and 2014-15. There was an increase in female students from 40 per cent in 2013-14 to 46 per cent in 2014-15. 14 per cent of HE students declared a disability, which is above the national average.

204 It was noted that apart from a brief observation about the data which showed differences across some population groups both in terms of completion and achievement there was little analysis as to the reasons for differences merely that further investigation is needed to understand the patterns. A similar pattern that emerged for the attainment rates for BME students was reported at Academic Board in December 2016 reporting on the 2015-16 data. Only nine per cent of BME students achieved a first compared with 15 per cent of white students while 32 per cent BME student gained an upper second compared with 57 per cent of white students. The action to address this issue was a proposal to research the specific causes relating to these student to see if changes to their student experience need to be made and it was noted that a Strategic Review of Equality and Inclusion would be carried out in the spring term 2017. The large quantity of papers at Academic Boards precludes the possibility of in-depth discussion and agreement on detailed actions to identify and address the issue in a robust and prompt manner. The same issue had arisen at Academic Boards in March 2016 and December 2016. It is appreciated that this issue is one which is mirrored across much of the HE sector and is a difficult problem to resolve.

205 The Human Resources department thoroughly analyses staff data to monitor the diversity of staff Annual Staff Diversity/Equality reports are benchmarked against sector data. Ravensbourne's recruitment of BME and disabled staff compare well with other HEIs. Ravensbourne's Single Equality Action Plan demonstrates the college's commitment to continuing to ensure that policies and procedures do not disadvantage any particular groups of staff, that the institution meets its obligations to staff with disabilities, and that processes are transparent and fair to all. There is good practice in assessment processes. A number of project briefs provide information on where students can obtain support or how alternative assessment arrangements may be made or additional learning support arranged for students with disabilities or medical conditions which may impair their performance in meeting the assessment requirements.

206 At the initial meeting of the Strategic Review of Equality and Inclusion the main areas for improvement identified so far focussed on a need for more in detail analysis of data and need for more explicit information in course handbooks of how equality and inclusion are embedded in the curriculum. For example, it was suggested that BME data should be disaggregated to more specific nationality and religious groups; that rather than simply recording if a student or member of staff has a disability it should note what the disability is. Other proposals were that there should be some intersectional data for example, age and gender and there should be data for other protected characteristics such as sexual orientation. This would allow Ravensbourne to identify baseline statistics from which achievable targets could be set and appropriate actions put in place for a wider constituency of staff and students.

207 Ravensbourne has a history of active work on widening participation, supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds and actively engages with Lifelong Learning projects. The Associate Dean for FE has responsibility for Community Engagement and Ravensbourne initiates and takes part in a wide range of outreach activities. Ravensbourne was part of a funded Self Employment Entrepreneurship and Diversity (SEEDS) project which was shortlisted for a Guardian award. The SEEDS programme was initiated by Ravensbourne in summer 2014 as an experiment to explore how the college could work with students who might need additional support to make the transition from college life into

employment or self-employment in the creative industries. The Programme particularly targets neuro-diverse students (students with dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or autism spectrum disorder). The SEEDS project was very successful and is continuing using college funding.

208 Ravensbourne plays an active part in external activities in relation to equality and diversity. For example it is a member of the Equality Challenge Unit which supports institutions to develop their equality agendas and promote inclusive culture and diversity. During 2015-16 Ravensbourne participated in an Athena Swan assessment panel and assisted a review of papers for a HE sector diversity conference. Ravensbourne is the only HEI represented at the Diversity Sub Working Group of the Creative Industry Council.

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