



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Royal Academy of Dance, June 2018

1 Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that the Royal Academy of Dance (the Academy) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision from the June 2017 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review

2 The Academy continues to offer higher education programmes validated by the University of Bath. It currently has 158 full and part-time students enrolled on higher education programmes, of which 65 are studying by distance learning. This represents a 13 per cent decrease from the previous year when 183 students were registered on its higher education courses. There are 22 full and part-time teaching staff. Two full-time staff have left and the vacancies filled; two part-time staff have left and the vacancies replaced. One full-time academic post, which was vacant at the previous review, has been filled. The Academy gained Independent Higher Education (IHE) membership in January 2018.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The Academy has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the 2017 review. The three areas of good practice identified in the previous review have been further developed. The Academy completed a self-assessment of its current study support practice (paragraph 4). Students continue to benefit from a wide range of placement opportunities (paragraph 5). The Academy's commitment to supporting staff research and scholarly activity to inform programme development and delivery continues (paragraph 6). The two affirmations from the previous review have been progressed. The Academy has further developed its actions to support students' understanding of the mechanisms through which they can raise issues and receive responses (paragraph 7). It has continued its work to support students' understanding of different types of assessment feedback and further develop assessment literacy. (paragraph 8) The three recommendations from the previous review have been addressed but two have yet to be completed. The Academy is completing a new Learning and Teaching Strategy for introduction in 2019, and will revise its Learning and Teaching Action Plan to include specific measurable targets relevant to the new strategy (paragraph 9). The Academy has developed a range of comprehensive mechanisms that enable oversight of higher education provision (paragraph 10). It has begun, but not completed work to ensure that the strategy underpinning enhancement initiatives is more clearly defined and supported by specific and measurable targets (paragraph 11).

4 To build on good practice, the Academy conducted a self-assessment of its current study support arrangements against the benchmarks detailed in the 'Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Higher Education as a Route to Excellence' Department for Education (DfE) publication. The self-assessment confirmed that the Academy provides appropriate learning opportunities and suggested areas for improvement and development, which will be implemented in late 2018. The assessment also informed the review of relevant policy documents and led to the development of a suite of documents to support students in

understanding, and making application for, reasonable adjustments. These have now been approved for use in the next academic year. The peer review process has been further developed and improvements to staff induction have been made, which include an extended period of staff shadowing and mentoring.

5 Students continue to benefit from the wide range of placement opportunities which enhance their employability, such as sessions focusing on employability in dance teaching, mock interviews, planning and delivering lessons for mock interviews and two careers symposia. Online, interactive activities are under development for distance learning students to add to the materials already available. Students were enthusiastic about the wide-ranging opportunities available to them and the preparation that they received from the Academy.

6 The Academy's commitment to supporting staff research and scholarly activity to inform programme development and delivery continues. Staff publish and present outcomes of their research in the UK and overseas. They share and disseminate good practice at regular training days. They also attend planning days, which include dissemination of subjects relevant to higher education as well as opportunities for them to contribute to Academy strategy documents. Staff were enthusiastic about the support they received to engage in research and scholarly activity and provided examples of how this has informed programme delivery.

7 The Academy has further developed its actions to support students' understanding of the mechanisms through which they can raise issues and receive responses. It has introduced a Student Issues and Concerns flowchart, which is published in student handbooks, presented during induction and included in student representative training sessions. The Academy has also introduced a generic email for student feedback. The Student and Staff Liaison Committee is promoted as a key student engagement platform. Student involvement with this committee has improved significantly this academic year. A 'You Said, We Did' section on the virtual learning environment provides a mechanism for students to receive responses to any issues raised. Students were complimentary about the range of formal and informal feedback mechanisms available to them.

8 Work to support students' understanding of different types of assessment feedback and assessment literacy has been further developed. The Academy holds regular assessment literacy group tutorials either face to face or, for distance-learning students, via live participation or access to recordings. It has further embedded assessment literacy information into module delivery to support student writing skills. The approach is supported by range of publications and related activities, including the Essential Study Skills module and the Assessment and Examinations Booklet. Engagement with these materials has been positive and has resulted in a marked improvement in scores and satisfaction rates in feedback on assessment related questions. Further materials have been developed for use in the next academic year.

9 The Academy has developed a Learning and Teaching Action Plan and is currently finalising a new Learning and Teaching Strategy for introduction in 2019. The Strategy describes the principal themes, but does not include specific, measurable targets against which its success can be measured. The Academy confirmed that it will revise its Learning and Teaching Action Plan to include targets relevant to the new strategy.

10 A range of comprehensive mechanisms that enable oversight of higher education provision has been developed. Senior management attend annual programme reviews, which use a system of numerical benchmarks to identify any areas of concern. The programme reports include a consideration of external examiner feedback, details of graduate outcomes, student engagement, enhancement activities and information relating to

progress in equality, diversity and inclusion activities. The Annual Review Report of University-validated programmes brings together information from the individual programme reports. Actions arising inform the Learning and Teaching Action Plan, which is regularly reviewed to ensure effective oversight.

11 The Academy has begun but not completed work to ensure that the strategy underpinning enhancement initiatives is more clearly defined and supported by specific and measurable targets. The Teaching and Learning Action Plan includes details of specific enhancement activities. The terms of reference for the Education Subcommittee have been amended to include a requirement for an update on enhancement at each meeting. A requirement to include details of enhancement activity will be part of future annual review reports. Work on action plan alignment has begun, but the strategic approach to enhancement is sometimes unclear because related targets are not always specific, measurable and easily identifiable.

12 There have been no changes in the Academy's admissions policies and procedures since the previous review. The admissions process is underpinned by the Admissions Policy. Publically accessible selection criteria is published for each programme of study, which is regularly reviewed. All selection criteria and entry requirements, including English language requirements, are checked by the Admissions Officer and the relevant programme managers. The Registrar reviews the whole application and finalises any requirements for support, for example with English Language. When support is identified, it is monitored for delivery by the Admissions Officer. The admissions process also, where appropriate, accredits prior learning. Suitability and genuine intention to study are assessed in the audition or interview, except for the BA (Hons) Dance Education, which uses a reference and personal statement only. Students confirmed that the admissions process was rigorous, as described and fair.

13 All programmes follow the University of Bath's programme monitoring and review procedures for both Annual Monitoring of Units and Programmes and for Degree Scheme Reviews. The Academy uses qualitative and quantitative information from its annual monitoring reports (AMRs) in a variety of ways, including to monitor progress of part-time students against that of full-time students, to identify emerging trends, to form future action plans based on feedback from stakeholders, such as external examiners' reports, and to highlight good practice for wider dissemination. The Academy summarises and evaluates trends emerging from its AMRs in its Annual Review Report of University-validated Programmes. The trends identified inform the Learning and Teaching Action Plan and Corporate Strategy Action Plan for enhancement purposes. The first programme to successfully undergo the University of Bath's Degree Scheme Review was the Postgraduate Certificate in Education: Dance Teaching (with Qualified Teacher Status) in January 2017.

14 Retention rates and pass rates appear low for some programmes because of low numbers, such as 50 per cent for the two year part-time Master's of Arts in Education (Dance Teaching) which recruited two students in September of 2015, but retained one. Where low numbers do not severely exaggerate the statistical record, the retention rates vary from 73 per cent on an initial enrolment of 11 students for the part-time Master's of Arts in Education (Dance Teaching), September 2015 cohort to 97 per cent on an initial enrolment of 29 students for the full-time BA (Hons) Ballet Education September 2015 cohort. Where low numbers do not severely exaggerate the statistical record, the pass rates vary from 86 per cent on an initial enrolment of 22 students for the full-time Postgraduate Certificate in Education: Dance Teaching (with Qualified Teacher Status) September 2015 cohort to 100 per cent on an initial enrolment of 23 students for the full-time BA (Hons) Ballet Education September 2014 cohort.

15 The Academy engages its students in quality assurance and enhancement in a number of ways, including through its student charter, its policy for student engagement and partnership, and its student representative system. It systematically analyses and actions feedback from student surveys and its Student Staff Liaison Committee produces an annual report. The Academy's analysis of the 2017 NSS scores resulted in numerous programme-level actions across the BA (Hons) Ballet Education and BA (Hons) Dance Education programmes. Students were satisfied that their voice was heard and that their concerns were addressed.

4 Progress in working with the external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

16 The Academy continues to use external reference points as detailed in the previous review, including those of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, The *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, Subject Benchmark Statements, and the Office for Standards in Education, including, specifically, the Initial teacher training criteria and inspection handbook. The Academy also conducted dedicated sessions at some of its In-Service Education and Training days to prepare its submission to the Office for Students in May 2018.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

14 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

15 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mrs Catherine Symonds, Reviewer, and Professor Edward J Esche, Coordinator, on 26 June 2018.

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