



## Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Royal Academy of Dance, June 2019

### 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 since the [June 2018 monitoring visit](#).

### Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 The Academy currently has 177 students registered on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, which are validated by the University of Bath (the University). Compared with the figure recorded at the last monitoring visit (158), this is an increase of 19 students. The Academy delivers courses, which can be studied on both a full and part-time basis, and also has students who are registered to study by distance learning. Students on the undergraduate distance learning programme are able to swap between modes of study, should their circumstances require this. There are currently 34 full and part-time members of staff.

3 Since the last monitoring visit, the Academy registered with the Office for Students in January 2019 and received an Ofsted inspection judgement of outstanding in 2018.

4 In addition, the Academy has undergone three successful degree scheme reviews with its validating university, which resulted in the programmes under consideration being approved for continuation, with no major changes required.

### Findings from the monitoring visit

5 The Academy is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision. The good practices, identified in the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) (HER (AP)) of 2017, and considered at the annual monitoring visit in 2018, relating to the individualised study support provided to students, the range of placement opportunities, and the commitment to supporting staff research and scholarly activity, have been further developed (see paragraphs 7, 8 and 9). In relation to the two affirmations identified, the Academy has continued to develop its actions to support students' understanding of the mechanisms through which they can give feedback, and to support students' assessment literacy (see paragraphs 10 and 11). The two recommendations not completed by the time of the 2018 monitoring review (AMR) have now been incorporated in the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Strategy. This has only recently been approved and not yet implemented (see paragraph 9).

6 In response to the good practice identified relating to student support the Academy mapped the outcomes of the self-assessment of its practice against the DfE Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Higher Education as a Route to Excellence document. One of the outcomes of this work is that for some assessments students can now choose between submitting written assignments and presentations.

7 In relation to the good practice relating to placement opportunities and employability some of the BA (Hons) Ballet Education career symposia were filmed and uploaded to the virtual learning environment (VLE). The Academy has further developed its After Graduation pages that all final-year students are given access to. Students stated that this information was very useful.

8 All full-time academic staff continue to have 0.5 days per week research activity allocated to work profiles. Staff use the time for a wide variety of purposes, including attendance at conferences and research for higher degrees. During the current academic year, lunchtime research sharing sessions enable staff and students to learn more about the research activities of tutors.

9 The recommendations to make explicit, and regularly evaluate, clearly defined targets for the learning and teaching strategy and to ensure that the strategy underpinning enhancement initiatives is more clearly defined and supported by specific and measurable targets, have both been included in the recent development of the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Strategy. The revised strategy includes thirteen objectives to be completed within four years. These include the completion of periodic reviews of six programmes, to implement, monitor and evaluate enhancements to three other programmes and to undertake a review of formative assessment processes. The strategy has a detailed action plan, which will be monitored by the Learning and Teaching Committee and revised as actions are completed. The new Learning Teaching and Enhancement Strategy will be implemented from the start of September 2019. It is too early for the Academy to determine whether or not the strategy will be effective.

10 The affirmation relating to student feedback has been addressed and the Student Issues and Concerns Flowchart is now included in Programme Handbooks, and discussed as part of student inductions and Student Representative Training. 'You Said, We Did' banners feature on the VLE and printed poster versions have been placed in the Student Common Room. Analysis of NSS data across 2017 and 2018 shows a 19 per cent increase in satisfaction with the question 'it is clear how students feedback on the course has been acted on'.

11 Staff monitor student feedback given by email and ensure issues raised are responded to in a timely manner. Students are using this e-mail address for both positive feedback as well as areas for improvement and minor concerns. Students confirmed the effectiveness of this facility.

12 The Academy has not made any major changes to its admissions procedures since the 2017 HER (AP) and the 2018 monitoring visit. The Academy prospectus outlines the stages of the admissions process in a clear student application timeline and also contains the admission requirements for each programme.

13 The Academy Admissions Policy is available to prospective students on the Academy website. In addition to the general requirements of the Admissions Policy, each validated programme of study has selection criteria against which applications are assessed. The admissions process is underpinned by the Academy's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

14 Applicants evidence that they meet the entry requirements by providing certification, for example A-level or degree certificates, dance qualification certificates, English language test certificates, and QTS skills test results. Where English is not a first language, applicants are required to achieve an overall score of 6.5 for undergraduate programmes on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), with at least 6.0 in each element of the test, or equivalent, and 7.0 for postgraduate programmes with at least 6.5 in each test element, or equivalent.

15 As part of the selection process auditions are conducted for the BA (Hons) Ballet Education and Postgraduate Certificate in Education: Dance Teaching (with QTS). Auditions consist of assessment of applicants' potential practical and teaching skills, followed by interviews which assess the applicant's suitability and commitment to study. Students said that the application process was rigorous but fair.

16 For the MA in Education (Dance Teaching), applicants are required to undergo an interview, which assesses the applicant's suitability for study at postgraduate level. For the BA (Hons) Dance Education, applicants are required to submit a personal statement and reference, both of which are assessed for potential for successful achievement. If there are questions about an applicant's suitability, the BA (Hons) Dance Education Programme Manager will request more evidence or arrange for further discussion with the applicant.

17 Applicants who wish the Academy to consider previous learning or experience are required to apply for Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) before enrolment. The APL Policy and Procedure alongside the APL application form and other supporting documentation are available on the Academy's website. No students the review team met had used the APL process.

18 The Academy's Code of Practice on the Assessment of Students' Work within Taught Programmes underpins assessment processes and is reviewed as part of the annual review of all regulations, policies and procedures. The Learning and Teaching Handbook contains an assessment section which gives detailed guidance on assessment practice.

19 The Academy operates first marking and internal moderation of assessed work and double marking of dissertation and research project modules of 45 credits or over. Internal moderators, not involved in the delivery of a module, moderate a selected sample of work and write a report on the process and individual pieces of work. External examiners scrutinise a sample of written work and, whenever possible, observe practical assessments live.

20 Feedback received from external examiners in 2017-18 confirmed that assessment practices remain robust. Students stated that feedback was usually given within a week and was helpful in improving their future grades.

21 The Academy takes a firm stance on all aspects of academic integrity. Student Progress and Assessment Boards and Boards of Examiners receive reports on all suspected instances of academic misconduct and any penalties that were applied. New students attend sessions on academic integrity. Continuing students are given recap sessions during group tutorials and are made aware of different types of academic misconduct as part of their academic studies and training.

22 Students attend sessions on plagiarism-detection software and submit summative assignments through the VLE, which uses the software. Guidance on it is available on the VLE. This is in addition to a filmed tutorial on academic integrity, also located on the VLE.

23 In its annual return the Academy states figures for retention for 2016-17 of 96 per cent and for 2017-18 of 94 per cent. The figures are based on the in-year calculation method used, which does not take into account previous years' withdrawals. The actual retention rates for those years if calculated by cohort, give figures of 78 and 94 per cent.

24 Figures for retention in 2015-16 and 2016-17 on the BA (Hons) Dance Education programme were 57 per cent (eight students) and 67 per cent (10 students) respectively. The 2017-18 BA (Hons) Dance Education cohort has improved retention of 100 per cent (12 students). Staff identified that students studying via distance learning needed additional support, which has been successfully provided.

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

25 The Academy embeds the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) into its practices. Academy staff are made aware of UKQC expectations through planning and training days. Programmes are benchmarked against FHEQ. Both undergraduate programmes are aligned with the Subject Benchmark Statements for Dance, Drama and Performance (2015) and Education Studies (2015). The Master of Arts in Education programme meets both the expectations of the FHEQ and the characteristics described in the QAA Master's Degree Characteristics.

26 The recent degree scheme reviews of the BA (Hons) Ballet Education, BA (Hons) Dance Education and MA in Education (Dance Teaching) undertaken by the awarding body confirmed that all three programmes continue to be aligned with the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

27 The Academy is a member of Independent HE. Through this membership, the Academy has engaged with a range of services in relation to governance, educational legislation, quality assurance and professional development. Staff are encouraged to engage with Advance HE as members or fellows, but none have yet done so.

## **Background to the monitoring visit**

28 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.

29 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Peter Hymans, Reviewer, and Mrs Nadine Baker, QAA Officer, on 11 June 2019.

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