



# Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of The Arts Educational Schools

October 2017

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the Arts Educational Schools. The review took place from 17 to 19 October 2017 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Richard Harrison
- Dr Nicola Jackson
- Mr Will Judge (student reviewer).

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

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

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code).

<sup>2</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk).

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

## Key findings

### Judgements

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

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

### Good practice

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

- The strategic development and provision of accessible and holistic services to support students' mental health and well-being (Expectation B4).
- The strong integration of industry expertise and practice in the curriculum and delivery to support the development of students as professional practitioners (Expectation B4).

### Recommendations

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

By March 2018:

- review and amend information available to prospective students with disabilities to ensure that they do not perceive unnecessary barriers to admission (Expectation B2).

By September 2018:

- provide Students' Union representatives with appropriate training and support in relation to pastoral and welfare issues (Expectation B4)
- prioritise development in the School's use of information technology to improve the effectiveness with which it supports student learning (Expectation B4)
- progress the development of formal policies to further promote effective assessment and feedback (Expectation B6).

## About the provider

The Arts Educational Schools (ArtsEd) is a small specialist drama school with a mission to provide outstanding conservatoire training in Musical Theatre and Acting to prepare students for successful careers in the performance industry. The School's higher education provision comprises a BA in Musical Theatre, BA in Acting and MA in Acting. Alongside this the School offers a part-time Post Diploma BA in Performance Studies (PDBA) to enable holders of diplomas in Acting and Musical Theatre from ArtsEd and other drama schools to top up their awards to a full honours degree. Non-award bearing foundation courses are also offered to help students prepare for training at undergraduate level.

ArtsEd is based in Chiswick in West London. The majority of its higher education provision is delivered at the main site at Cone Ripman House. The MA Acting programme is based at a local community centre in Chiswick.

The School's higher education provision is validated by City, University of London. Approximately one-third of students are registered for a level 6 diploma awarded by Trinity College London, enabling them to receive Dance and Drama Awards from the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

There have been no major changes to the School's higher education provision since the last QAA Review for Specific Course Designation in 2014. Student numbers have remained stable with a total of 266 higher education students in 2016-17.

Since the last review a number of key higher education policies have been created, reviewed and updated, including the Staff Development Policy, Learning and Teaching Policy, and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The Strategic Plan, developed in 2015, is updated annually and identifies key targets under seven core aims.

ArtsEd is putting considerable time and effort into responding to the needs of the increasing numbers of students presenting with mental health problems. A Health and Wellbeing Officer has been appointed to coordinate the School's approach to supporting students' well-being, including the establishment of a Wellbeing Forum and Life Gym sessions. Mindfulness and yoga have been introduced to the curriculum.

The funding landscape for students at alternative providers in the higher education sector is a key challenge for ArtsEd. The School is committed to maintaining the high level of contact hours required for conservatoire training and is working to find ways to meet the high cost of training without putting all the burden on fee-payers. A Director of Development has been appointed to lead fundraising activities, including funds for scholarships and bursaries.

A further significant challenge is pressure on the School's space. The Board of Trustees has approved a budget of £8.5 million for a major building project to provide state of the art studios and increase teaching space.

The 2014 QAA review made two recommendations. The School has continued with the centralisation of staff development activities to better inform strategic planning and the QAA monitoring visit in 2016 reported that staff development activities now provide a commendable level of support for student learning. While progress has been made with the second recommendation to continue to implement the information technology plan to meet the needs of students and staff, the review team considers that it has not been sufficiently addressed and remains a key area for action.

## Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

1.1 Responsibility for securing threshold academic standards for degrees lies with the awarding body City, University of London (City), including alignment with the requirements of the FHEQ. All programmes delivered by ArtsEd are subject to City's validation approval and review processes. Alongside this, Trinity College London (Trinity) validates ArtsEd to provide level 6 professional diploma qualifications linked to Dance and Drama Award (DaDA) funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency. All students on full-time, three-year and one-year vocational programmes are registered for degrees validated by City. Only those students in receipt of DaDA funding (approximately 30 per cent of the three-year cohort) are registered for the Trinity diploma. The respective responsibilities of ArtsEd and the two awarding bodies are laid out in the City institutional validation agreement and Trinity course provider agreement. Revalidation processes are governed by awarding body requirements and laid out in a Validation and Institutional Partnerships Handbook.

1.2 The Subject Benchmark Statement for Dance, Drama and Performance was reviewed and updated in 2015. Course leaders make use of the current Statement when

reviewing and making changes to the curriculum. Equity, the actors' union, together with other relevant stakeholders, has announced its intention to create a universal standard for drama training, and has set out the criteria by which this standard will be judged; ArtsEd programmes are mapped to meet these requirements.

1.3 ArtsEd has developed an organisational structure with responsibility for higher education articulated through a committee structure, and governed by policies and procedures concerning academic standards. These include a Strategic Plan 2015-20, Admissions Policy, Learning and Teaching Policy, and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

1.4 ArtsEd's regulatory framework and associated policies, and its clearly defined responsibilities for standards under the terms of its agreement with City, would enable this Expectation to be met.

1.5 The review team considered a range of documentation relating to the setting and maintenance of threshold standards from both the awarding bodies and ArtsEd. The team also met with staff and students, and with representatives from City to discuss how academic standards are managed in practice.

1.6 Governance of higher education provision is managed on a day-to-day basis by the Schools of Musical Theatre and Acting executive teams. Programme reviews, annual reports and proposals for course changes are discussed and approved by student representatives at the Board of Studies.

1.7 Programme handbooks outline the qualifications and credit that are awarded to students in line with nationally recognised external reference points, including the FHEQ, and the intended learning outcomes. Programme handbooks include programme specifications and module descriptors that describe each module's alignment with the programme aims, classifications for the award, pass marks for each level and stage of study, and requirements for progression.

1.8 Programme approval and periodic review processes test alignment with the relevant external reference points and give consideration to the appropriateness of learning outcomes and associated methods of assessment. External examiners' reports document regular and ongoing contact with ArtsEd, and confirm that national threshold standards are set and maintained and are being met. Examiners' reports confirm that aims and learning outcomes are appropriate and aligned to the professional environment, and that programmes align with relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ.

1.9 Responsibility for securing threshold academic standards for degrees lies with the awarding body, City, University of London, including alignment with the requirements of the FHEQ. Alongside this, Trinity College London validates ArtsEd to provide level 6 professional diploma qualifications. Qualifications offered by ArtsEd are mapped against relevant national benchmarks by the awarding bodies. ArtsEd is aware of its responsibilities for securing and maintaining threshold standards, and works with the awarding bodies to assure this in delivery. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.**

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

**Findings**

1.10 Degree programmes at ArtsEd operate under the City, University of London Quality Assurance Framework to secure their academic standards; this is publicly available and offers a comprehensive academic framework and regulations to govern how academic credit and qualifications are awarded. Delivery of academic programmes to meet this framework is a shared responsibility achieved through ArtsEd's management and committee structure giving oversight of academic standards and providing a deliberative interface with its awarding bodies. Alongside this, Trinity College London validates ArtsEd to provide level 6 professional diploma qualifications, and parallel arrangements apply. Policies governing academic standards are reviewed on a regular basis. The Board of Studies and the Course Board operate under appropriate terms of reference, ensuring commensurability with City's and national requirements and compliance with the validation agreement.

1.11 ArtsEd operates policies for governing academic credit and qualifications that would enable this Expectation to be met.

1.12 The review team considered a range of documentation relating to the governance of threshold standards and their regulatory underpinning. It also met with staff and students, and with representatives from City.

1.13 Staff at ArtsEd and City confirmed that awarding body processes are adhered to, as laid out in City's Validation and Institutional Partnerships Handbook. Validations and amendments are overseen by regular Course Board meetings with the approval of City's Validation and Institutional Partnerships Committee (VIPC). Communication and collaboration between VIPC and ArtsEd takes place through cross-membership of the Course Board. City suggests this could be made more formal by reporting relevant VIPC minutes back to ArtsEd, and the review team would support this further strengthening of academic governance. Parallel arrangements and communication structures are in place with Trinity to assure the standards of the level 6 professional diploma are maintained.

1.14 Validation agreements set out the qualifications that are awarded and the level and volume of credit for each, as well as assessment and progression requirements. Programme-specific requirements are reviewed as part of the periodic review process with a process in place to secure course amendments. Programme specifications are embedded within student handbooks, and clearly set out the requirements for progression on each programme and the level and volume of credit required for each award.

1.15 Assessment of students' work operates under a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which is designed to ensure that students are able to demonstrate learning outcomes as specified in programme and module descriptors. Student handbooks set out assessment modes and criteria for each module, and map the latter onto the relevant learning outcomes.

1.16 External examiners comment on the overall loading of assessment in relation to the number of credits awarded, and confirm that assessment enables students to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes and comment that standards are in line with those of

equivalent UK institutions.

1.17 The review team concludes that ArtsEd operates a comprehensive academic framework for awarding academic credit and qualifications that is supported by effective delivery and oversight arrangements, and is meeting the requirements of the awarding bodies. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

1.18 Mechanisms are in place to ensure decisions on academic standards and quality are maintained by City, the degree-awarding body. Arrangements for the Trinity validated level 6 professional diplomas are coordinated separately. A definitive record of each programme or qualification and its intended learning outcomes are published in student handbooks and maintained by City via ratification at the Course Board and subsequent approval processes. Student handbooks are updated to reflect course changes.

1.19 City's policy for the creation and amendment of definitive programme records is outlined in the Validation and Institutional Partnerships Handbook and ArtsEd follows this. Programme specifications are required as part of City's programme approval process, which also requires that module specifications are in place for all modules. The design of these processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.20 The review team examined documentation provided outlining the process of programme approval, modification, and the relationship with subsequent changes to programme and qualification documentation. In discussion with staff and students the review team considered how programme specifications are made available, and reference points for delivery and assessment, to evaluate whether the design of these processes allows the Expectation to be met.

1.21 Clear policies are in place for approving amendments to programmes, with amendments classed as editorial, minor or major changes. City maintains a record of all amendments made to programmes, and the Course Board and VIPC monitor the impact of cumulative change.

1.22 The formal process of monitoring, reviewing and approving changes to programmes and modules begins at the Board of Studies where it is first documented and contextualised. Prior to this there is local-level discussion, consideration and development. These constitute effective processes that staff are aware of, inclusive of informal and formal elements and involving students in development.

1.23 Student handbooks collate programme documentation and act as a reference point for programme delivery and assessment. Handbooks are used as the sole common tool, embedded as a mechanism for reflection, implementation and modification. Staff evidence use of programme specifications in handbooks to prompt regular local-level discussion and conversation with regard to learning outcomes.

1.24 ArtsEd actively collates and updates definitive programme information in student handbooks and, along with policies and processes in place with the degree-awarding body, ensures that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

1.25 ArtsEd's programmes are subject to City, University of London's programme approval processes. New programmes are taken through a two-stage approval process. The first stage involves a proposal in principle. This requires a range of information about the proposed programme including programme title and award, and an outline of programme content and structure, together with indicative aims and learning outcomes. Proposals are not required to state explicitly the intended FHEQ level of the proposed programme. Decisions on proposals in principle are taken by City's Validation and Institutional Partnerships Committee.

1.26 If approval to move to the second stage is granted, a full proposal is developed, which is scrutinised by a Validatory Panel including an external subject specialist. A completed programme specification is required as part of this process, which clearly links programmes to the relevant FHEQ level. This stage of the process involves a review visit, and in order to be recommended for approval a programme must meet criteria that include meeting threshold standards set out in the FHEQ and the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. This process also applies to programme revalidation.

1.27 The documentation provided demonstrates that design of approval processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.28 The review team considered documentation from a number of re-approval processes, in order to test whether implementation meant that the Expectation is being met.

1.29 As no new programmes have been approved in the period since the last QAA review, the review team focused on the revalidation of ArtsEd's existing four degree programmes. Revalidation submissions for all four clearly indicate the FHEQ level to which each year of each programme is aligned. The review team also considered the report of this revalidation process, which demonstrates that a thorough review was undertaken by a Validatory Panel that included representatives from City, and external subject specialists. The report includes specific reference to the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. Although there is no explicit reference to the FHEQ or the academic standards achieved by students, it is clear from the text of this report that academic standards were thoroughly considered and judged to be appropriate. The outcome was unconditional revalidation for five years, with a small number of recommendations which have subsequently been addressed.

1.30 As the policies and processes would allow this Expectation to be met, and there is evidence that these policies are being implemented effectively, overall the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.31 Comprehensive assessment regulations are in place from City, and the programmes offered by ArtsEd must conform to these regulations. These regulations set clear requirements that must be met for programmes and modules to be passed. Programme-specific regulations for the programmes offered by ArtsEd are also in place, and are published in programme handbooks. For all programmes, these state that City's pass mark for modules (40 per cent in undergraduate programmes and 50 per cent for master's programmes) must be met. Handbooks also include assessment criteria and grade descriptors that make clear that in order to achieve the relevant pass mark or greater, the relevant learning outcomes must be met, and that no compensation is allowed between modules.

1.32 All programmes offered by ArtsEd are subject to oversight and review by external examiners appointed by City. External examiners are required to report annually to ArtsEd and City, using City's standard external examiner report form. This form requires external examiners to confirm that academic standards meet those in the FHEQ and are comparable with similar programmes in the UK, and to evaluate the processes for assessment and determination of awards.

1.33 The design of these processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.34 The review team tested this implementation through consideration of programme specifications, module specifications, reports of external examiners and minutes of meetings of Assessment Boards. Relevant issues were also discussed in meetings with staff.

1.35 The minutes of Assessment Board meetings and discussions with staff clearly demonstrated that these meetings are being conducted effectively, with appropriate consideration of and reference to programme learning outcomes and therefore the academic standards of the provision. Examples of external examiners' reports relating to all four degree programmes offered by ArtsEd include clear endorsements that the academic standards achieved by students meet national threshold standards; are consistent with those of similar programmes delivered by other higher education providers; and meet City's requirements.

1.36 The design and implementation of policies and processes are appropriate and effective, ensuring that credit and qualifications are only awarded where achievement of the learning outcomes and the appropriate academic standards have been demonstrated. This Expectation is therefore met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.**

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

**Findings**

1.37 ArtsEd follows City's Annual Programme Evaluation (APE) Policy. This requires the submission of an annual report that covers a range of quality and standards issues. These include statistical data on student progression and achievement, and feedback from external examiners. APE reports must be accompanied by the reports from external examiners, and a response to any issues raised by external examiners.

1.38 As noted above, annual external examiners' reports include a requirement that they comment on whether threshold standards defined in the FHEQ have been met and whether academic standards are consistent with comparable programmes. The programmes are also subject to periodic review by City, and inspection by Ofsted in respect of the award of Trinity diplomas, which include review of the achievement of academic standards.

1.39 These processes would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.40 The review team considered sample APE reports and external examiners' reports to ascertain whether this Expectation is met in practice. It also discussed the operation of APE in meetings with staff, and reviewed materials relating to recent reviews of ArtsEd's provision.

1.41 The most recent external examiners' reports for all four programmes under review demonstrate that the standard report form including questions on alignment with the FHEQ and comparability of academic standards is being used, and all four external examiners responded positively to these questions. The 2015-16 APEs for all four programmes also demonstrate that statistical data relating to student achievement (and thereby academic standards) is being appropriately considered. Discussion with staff demonstrated their understanding of the role and importance of the APE process and external examining, and the effective engagement of staff with these processes. It was also clear that APE and external examiners' reports are being appropriately considered by the Course Board. There is clear evidence that periodic review by City, and external review by Ofsted, have also reviewed and confirmed that academic standards are appropriate.

1.42 The design of the policies and processes relating to this Expectation is appropriate, and there is clear evidence that these processes are being implemented effectively at ArtsEd. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.43 ArtsEd ensures the use of external expertise to effectively set and maintain academic standards through its adherence to the requirements of its awarding body, as laid out in the relevant institutional agreements and in the quality management processes of both ArtsEd and City.

1.44 These requirements include the appointment of external examiners for each programme, and the involvement of appropriate externality at programme validation and periodic review. Assessment procedures include appropriate and rigorous use of external expertise, with a clear policy of using external assessors alongside ArtsEd staff.

1.45 These processes governing the use of externality in securing and maintaining threshold standards would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.46 The review team considered a range of documentation relating to the involvement of externality in the setting and maintaining of standards, including external examiners' reports, Assessment Board minutes and revalidation reports. The review team held meetings with a range of staff and students to explore how effectively external and independent expertise is applied in practice.

1.47 External examiners are appointed by City for all programmes offered at ArtsEd leading to a City award to provide assurance of academic standards. Executive and programme teams consider external examiners' annual reports and respond to any recommendations. APEs reflect external examiners' feedback, and are signed off at Boards of Study with a detailed articulation of key issues and strengths presented to the Course Board.

1.48 In line with City's quality assurance requirements, independent external panel members are included as part of all validations and periodic programme reviews.

1.49 ArtsEd regularly uses specialist visiting lecturers with advanced industry currency, and these staff feed into development through ongoing course delivery and content.

1.50 Externality is highly integrated in ArtsEd quality assurance activities and in those of the awarding body, and appropriate consideration is given to external advice in the setting and maintenance of academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

1.51 In reaching its judgement about academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex two of the published handbook. All seven of the Expectations in this area are met and the associated level of risk is low in each case. No recommendations, good practice or affirmations are identified.

1.52 ArtsEd works effectively with its partner university and awarding organisation in the maintenance of academic standards. The university and awarding organisation quality assurance frameworks are used and adhered to. ArtsEd has mechanisms to ensure that standards are maintained and appropriate use is made of external expertise.

1.53 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies at ArtsEd **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

**Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.**

### **Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval**

#### **Findings**

2.1 Programme approval is a two-stage process, starting with the development and submission of a proposal in principle which requires core information relating to the academic aspects of the proposed programme (for example programme title, award, indicative aims, learning outcomes and content). Included would be elements of the broader business case incorporating consideration of qualitative and quantitative data such as proposed student numbers, market research and recruitment. The proposal must also include confirmation that appropriate resources have been allocated in the proposing institution to support development of the programme.

2.2 If the proposal in principle is approved by City's VIPC, a full proposal is developed by ArtsEd. Responsibility for development and design of this submission rests with ArtsEd. A full proposal requires completion of a programme specification and module specifications. The full proposal is considered by a Validatory Panel consisting of City members of the Course Board and an external subject specialist who conduct a visit to ArtsEd. Following this visit, which includes meetings with members of staff, the Panel considers the proposed programme against a range of criteria addressing a full and relevant range of academic issues (including availability of proposed learning resources). This leads to a written report including a recommendation to City's VIPC on whether to approve the proposed programme, and listing any identified areas of good practice, conditions and recommendations.

2.3 Revalidation of existing programmes takes place in the final year of an existing validation agreement, using a process broadly similar to the second stage of the programme approval process (see Expectation B8).

2.4 Policies and procedures for the ongoing development and approval of modifications to modules and programmes are specified by City in its Validation and Institutional Partnerships Handbook, with reference to City's formal Programme Amendment Policy.

2.5 This approach would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.6 The review team considered documentation from the most recent revalidations of all four programmes offered by ArtsEd (no new programmes having been approved in the period under consideration in this review), and discussed the operation of approval processes in meetings with staff from ArtsEd and City.

2.7 The most recent revalidations for the four programmes offered by ArtsEd demonstrate that full and appropriate information is contained in these submissions. These were considered by a Validatory Panel established by City, and the report of this Panel's visit demonstrates appropriate consideration of relevant issues including programme aims and learning outcomes, programme content and delivery, assessment and feedback, and support for students. This report contains a number of recommendations, and the review team saw evidence that these recommendations have been addressed effectively.

2.8 The review team discussed with staff the way in which the ongoing development of programmes is taken forward from design, and on to formal approval. It was clear that the curriculum is developed in response to feedback from students and initiatives from staff in response to developments in the field, with ArtsEd's engagement with developments in industry playing an important and valuable role. Staff also referred to the role of Subject Benchmark Statements. There was awareness of when formal approval needs to be sought for such changes and how these should be taken forward, including formal student involvement through the consideration of proposals by the Board of Studies. The review team also saw examples of these approval processes being followed appropriately. The team particularly noted the presence of external subject specialists on the Course Board, and staff the review team met highlighted the value of this in ensuring thorough scrutiny of proposals.

2.9 The policies and processes in place for programme design, development and approval allow the Expectation to be met, and the evidence considered by the review team demonstrates that these policies and processes are being implemented effectively. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B2): Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education**

**Findings**

2.10 Under its validation agreement with City, ArtsEd is responsible for the recruitment and admission of students to the higher education programmes it delivers. Recruitment and selection is by audition or interview. ArtsEd focuses on ascertaining potential, and places are offered to the most talented applicants. The Admissions Policy, audition information and entry criteria offer clear information with regards to the process. ArtsEd makes it clear to prospective students how the recruitment, selection and admission process will be conducted and what is required of prospective students. An appeals procedure is in place for audition decisions and it is outlined in letters to unsuccessful candidates.

2.11 ArtsEd's recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.12 The operation of these policies and procedures was tested through discussion with ArtsEd staff and students, and members of staff from City. The review team considered published documentation, student and staff experiences, and ArtsEd's website in identifying and evaluating transparency of information, fairness of admissions procedures, and any potential unforeseen barriers to prospective students.

2.13 Recruitment, selection and admission processes are conducted in a professional manner. Students highlighted the level of outreach and described admissions processes as being supportive and transparent with clear signposting to information throughout.

2.14 Entry and audition criteria, and the qualities ArtsEd wishes each applicant to demonstrate, are outlined in advance through audition information and admission policies. The audition process is a rigorous and extended experience during the school day, whereby the course is explained in more detail and candidates can make informed decisions about suitability and higher education.

2.15 Admissions decisions are made and moderated at the local level using reports from all members of the audition panel and in consultation with senior staff. Although the details behind each decision are not formally documented, the review team is assured that parity and consistency are achieved, with checks being made against the audition report and criteria for selection following each audition day and/or individual interview. There is strong standardisation of auditions, and all interviews are conducted by senior staff including in some cases the Principal or Deputy Principal. ArtsEd informs candidates of the outcome of their audition, but does not give feedback on audition performance to unsuccessful candidates.

2.16 Staff have an awareness of diversity issues in relation to the student cohort, and as part of the outreach programme auditions are also now held in Swansea and Manchester. Recent work with external forums is helping ArtsEd benchmark and further improve its response to diversity and disability challenges.

2.17 Among the admissions documentation considered, the review team identified some potentially misleading wording regarding disabled students and reasonable adjustments to access in an FAQ published on the website. While the review team is satisfied that there are effective mechanisms in place to support students in their learning, it remains concerned that this wording could constitute a barrier to potential applicants. The review team therefore **recommends** that ArtsEd review and amend information available to prospective students with disabilities to ensure that they do not perceive unnecessary barriers to admission.

2.18 The policies, procedures and processes of application, audition and interview allow the Expectation to be met. Evidence considered by the review team demonstrates that notwithstanding the need for some minor amendments to published information leading to a recommendation, overall the processes are being implemented effectively. The Expectation is therefore met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching***

**Findings**

2.19 ArtsEd delivers programmes in accordance with its Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy and Learning and Teaching Policy. Strategic objectives are focused on providing learning opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and professional values relevant to all stages of a student's career, and to produce graduates who can enter employment and make a significant contribution to the profession. A key target is to recruit, develop and retain outstanding academic and professional staff.

2.20 The Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy emphasises the employment of practitioners with professional expertise and leading teachers in the field to ensure reciprocity between high-quality practice and high-quality teaching. Policies are in place to ensure students are provided with equal opportunities to achieve learning outcomes. The Student Charter lays out the responsibilities of students and staff in supporting students in their achievements and the Attendance Policy is designed to ensure that students understand the necessity for good attendance and punctuality, both to progress in their course and to develop good habits in line with industry practice.

2.21 The policies, procedures and strategic approach for the development and enhancement of learning opportunities and teaching practice would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.22 The review team scrutinised the various frameworks, strategies and policies to support learning and teaching, as well as feedback from staff and students. The team held meetings with a range of staff and students to discuss their experiences, including those studying part-time.

2.23 External examiners' reports confirm that the calibre of academic staff is high, that the quality of teaching is high, and that teaching and assessment strategies are clear and appropriate. The most recent Ofsted inspection in 2015 rated the Trinity diploma provision as grade one - outstanding; it commented 'Leaders skilfully blend the expertise of full-time teachers with that of professional practitioners, who make an invaluable contribution.' ArtsEd plans to develop its priorities in teaching learning and assessment for 2015–20 (see Enhancement).

2.24 A module evaluation process and student survey questionnaires are used to gain feedback from students. Students give positive results in evaluations relating to teaching quality and the expertise and professional experience of tutors, as well as regarding preparation for employment. National Student Survey (NSS) scores for teaching show very high student satisfaction, well above the average for the sector. Student views are recorded and action planned through Annual Programme Evaluations (APEs) to support quality improvement processes. Students are regularly asked to evaluate staff teaching performance, especially that of newly-appointed staff and visiting lecturers.

2.25 Students feel that their teaching is professional, industry-related and targeted to individual development, and are very positive about their experience. They stress that tutors

are always ready to 'go the extra mile' in supporting their learning, and quote examples where this had been effective in supporting their specialist development. They see development of their own critique as an important skill, and they acknowledge and appreciate emphasis on a toolbox of skills and wide array of teaching techniques. The Learning and Teaching Policy stresses the aspirational approach to student's achievements, and students articulate this drive for excellence.

2.26 The staff profile shows that staff at ArtsEd hold a range of vocational and academic teaching qualifications. Although ArtsEd does not currently require staff to hold a formal teaching qualification, new staff are supported to acquire formal teaching qualifications where they do not hold these and expert vocational staff are keen to do so. ArtsEd is planning to review and develop its strategy on formal teaching qualifications, including access to Higher Education Academy opportunities, to enable all staff to further enhance their advanced teaching skills in the specialist vocational areas of Musical Theatre and Acting.

2.27 Staff are highly qualified and experienced in their specialist areas, and are encouraged to develop their own practice by attending masterclasses and workshops to enhance their vocational teaching, and by engaging in professional work during times of the year which do not impact on student learning. In addition, a range of visiting lecturers with current commercial experience are involved in delivery, embedding a culture of industry-informed reflective practice.

2.28 An Induction Policy and Staff Code of Conduct are in place to ensure that new staff receive the practical information needed to fulfil their roles. Staff continuous professional development is encouraged and supported, and regular opportunities for in-house training are provided. This engagement is captured in APEs, targeted through annual appraisal and overseen by the Human Resources Manager. Staff development activities are now centralised. Recent sessions have covered student support, disability and safeguarding, and welfare.

2.29 A programme of regular teaching observations is in place which staff find developmental and supportive. Each tutor is observed by their Head of Department, and staff also conduct observations of their peers in order to share good practice. Observation action plans feed into the annual appraisal process, and are used to identify individual staff members' training needs. The review team believes the programme could be further developed by the inclusion of all visiting lecturers.

2.30 Student achievement is closely monitored through APEs, which show high levels of achievement. Employment statistics and the progression of students to high-profile destinations are testament to the quality of learning and teaching.

2.31 ArtsEd has a culture which emphasises the ongoing enhancement of learning opportunities and teaching practices, using lecturers with strong industry currency and experience. Students are actively engaged in quality assurance processes for teaching and their feedback is used effectively as a means of identifying and promoting improvements. Students report a positive experience at ArtsEd. Staff are supported in maintaining their professional, pedagogic and research practice and hold a range of vocational and academic teaching qualifications. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B4): Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement**

**Findings**

2.32 The Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy and Learning and Teaching Policy lay out a strategic approach to enabling student development and achievement. They provide a series of objectives relating to the development and enhancement of learning opportunities and resources, and support for students. Delivery operates under a set of related policies and procedures including an Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy, Attendance Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy, Fitness to Study Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Casting Policy, Disability Statement, Dyslexia Policy, and a Student Charter. Student handbooks inform students of the range of support available, and the small student numbers mean that staff know each student individually and can quickly identify those in need of additional support.

2.33 ArtsEd aims to promote student diversity and inclusion within its higher education provision. Actions include monitoring the number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students, where statistics show that over the past five years this has increased from 11 per cent in 2012-13 to over 20 per cent in 2016-17, comparing favourably with other conservatoire schools in the sector. ArtsEd has appointed an Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Officer to oversee this area of work and to provide a point of contact for BAME students who may be in need of support.

2.34 The strategic and focused approach to enabling student development and achievement would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.35 The review team scrutinised the various frameworks, policies and procedures relating to students' academic, personal and professional support. The review team held meetings with a range of staff responsible for programme delivery and support, students on a number of programmes of study, including part-time learners, and student representatives.

2.36 A range of learning support is available. Any student who presents with patterns of learning that might indicate a need for learning support is referred for an assessment and appropriate strategies are put in place. A Learning Strategies Tutor gives weekly one-to-one support to dyslexic and dyspraxic students or any student identifying as in need of further learning strategies support. Students are encouraged to disclose additional learning needs at the start of their courses. A referral system is in place for students with injuries. ArtsEd provides workshops on a range of health and safety issues; this approach is embedded in teaching throughout the curriculum.

2.37 There has been a strategic drive over the last year to improve students' wellbeing and support students with mental health problems. This work is led by a new Health and Wellbeing Officer, appointed in 2016, and is underpinned by the results of a survey of higher education students which show a significant proportion of students reporting some level of mental health issue. A Wellbeing Forum has been set up, a document 'Supporting Wellbeing at ArtsEd' was created along with the associated policies referenced above, and a range of wellbeing activities introduced. Students access a range of well-being services such as the Life Gym, used to build resilience on the School's intensive programmes, counselling and specialist physical support such as dance medicine expertise. Mindfulness and yoga have been introduced to the curriculum, providing students with scheduled time to reflect on their learning across the curriculum, which they value. The review team considers that the

strategic development and provision of accessible and holistic services to support students' mental health and well-being is **good practice**.

2.38 The industry interface at ArtsEd is evident at all levels of the organisation. As noted under Expectation B3, both staff and visiting lecturers have strong and current industry experience which informs curriculum and delivery, and this is greatly appreciated by students. Students' opportunities to work on external shows is supported in their third year and accommodated with flexibility of timetabling to enable their continued study. A planned approach is taken, with students in earlier years given the opportunity to develop their skills before exposure on the commercial stage. Additional tutor support is available for students to develop audition material for shows and showcase CV material to upload via industry-recognised systems to support progression. Library resources are proactively managed to ensure a comprehensive set of scores and texts is systematically updated in response to curriculum and student need; regular visits to theatrical companies support this commissioning in light of industry requirements. Curriculum delivery is reviewed and frequently updated to reflect changes in the fast-moving industry (also see Expectation B1). ArtsEd alumni have a record of high-profile employment and achievement. Overall, the strong integration of industry expertise and practice in the curriculum and delivery to support the development of students as professional practitioners is **good practice**.

2.39 With respect to welfare and pastoral support, there is holistic awareness of students' needs, with academic and support staff and services closely integrated. Students meet weekly in tutorial or company meetings, and tutors monitor students' physical and mental health and wellbeing through a weekly report system. Staff signpost relevant and extensive support services. A buddy system is in place to enable established students to mentor those with less experience. Students involved in a voluntary Students' Union are also providing support to students with personal or welfare issues. The review team is concerned that this practice is without formal training and induction for student officers to provide particular knowledge and support in safeguarding, conduct, signposting to appropriate expertise and operational practices. The review team sees a clear need for this to be implemented for the safety of all parties and therefore **recommends** that the School provides Students' Union representatives with appropriate training and support in relation to pastoral and welfare issues.

2.40 The QAA Review in 2014 noted that the School had identified shortcomings in its IT facilities and recommended continuing implementation of the IT plan to meet the needs of students and staff. A QAA monitoring visit in 2016 reported some progress and an intention to introduce an intranet in the near future. Currently, NSS student survey scores show that satisfaction with IT facilities in supporting study is still substantially below the sector average, and ArtsEd's 2017 student survey mirrored this with comments about lack of timely maintenance, and problems with printers and electronic access. Staff and students report the continued use of alternative electronic platforms including social media, and that some new computers are available, but not networked at all sites. The library has put much material online, and with greater offsite access this is reducing the need for students to come in to access such material. The intranet is now in use, and staff are positive about its potential to support delivery once fully utilised and all sites are connected to the network.

2.41 The Facilities Manager has responsibility for IT and is implementing an ongoing five-year IT plan, reviewed annually. ArtsEd is using external consultants to review its IT provision and inform a new strategy being put together in light of the detailed student survey conducted in June 2017. Although some progress has been made, the review team considers that IT resourcing remains a key area to consolidate and **recommends** ArtsEd prioritises development in its use of information technology to improve the effectiveness with which it supports student learning.

2.42 ArtsEd has a strategic framework for enabling student development and achievement that is wide-ranging and rigorous. Holistic support for students' physical and mental health and wellbeing, and the way in which the needs of the industry inform student support and curriculum at every level, are clear indicators of good practice. The review team made two recommendations within this Expectation. One relates to concerns that students involved informally in others' welfare do not currently receive training to ensure the safety of all concerned. The other underlines that progress with developing IT systems and resources is still inconsistent and needs addressing to further support student study. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met, and since the recommendations relate to problems confined to a small part of the provision, the associated level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**

**Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement**

**Findings**

2.43 A series of expectations relating to student feedback and representation is set out in City's Validation and Institutional Partnerships Handbook, and ArtsEd is committed to putting the student view at the forefront of its processes. Student representation operates through membership of the Board of Studies, with up to two student representatives for each year of every programme being elected to serve each year. Student representatives to the Board of Studies are full members with voting rights, and involved in discussions and decisions on a range of key learning and teaching issues. The Course Board meets annually with students, and reports to ArtsEd on the students' feedback.

2.44 Students take part in weekly company meetings with their year group and Head of Year. ArtsEd uses surveys and feedback to gauge student satisfaction and gather information to assist with monitoring and enhancement of students' educational experiences.

2.45 ArtsEd has developed a guide to support student representatives in carrying out their role, and offers training to new representatives at the start of each academic year.

2.46 The framework of policies and processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.47 Through extensive discussion with students and staff the review team considered the systems in place to engage all students in the quality assurance and enhancement of their education experience. Processes, practice, and procedures were tested through analysis of feedback mechanisms, minutes of Board of Studies meetings, and relevant student representation documentation and experiences.

2.48 The approachability of staff, open-door policy and ongoing informal discussion allow students to feed back and express their voice collectively and individually with academic staff. ArtsEd has a strong culture of responding to local-level student feedback and concerns about facilities and provision. Meetings with the review team demonstrated clear evidence that the student representation system is working effectively through informal routes. It was also clear from Board of Studies minutes and meetings with students that the formal mechanisms are effective, albeit operating with City's approval in a slightly different way to those set out in the Validation and Institutional Partnerships Handbook.

2.49 Student and staff discussions at weekly company meetings support effective academic and professional development, and enhancement of the student experience. Although meetings are not formally documented, the approach taken is responsive to student needs and is effective and efficient given the nature of the provider.

2.50 The review team heard that ArtsEd is considering opportunities to increase student representation at board and senior organisational level, to begin to engage students as partners in strategic planning, management and governance. There are plans to explore ways in which students can be represented on the Board of Trustees and students will be consulted as partners in the development of the new 2020-25 strategy.

2.51 In addition to the training and ongoing support arrangements identified in the guide for student representatives, a partnership dialogue is supported through recently introduced student representative breakfast meetings, where roles are explained and information is

shared and discussed with each other and staff. Students' Union officers hold voluntary positions of representation and organise student-initiated activities independently. The review team encourages ArtsEd to provide appropriate training and support to these students (see Expectation B4).

2.52 The review team found an extensive culture of valued local-level student engagement. There is clear evidence of, and the discussion with students and staff supported, the Expectation being met and implemented effectively. The Expectation is therefore met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.53 Programme specifications and module outlines set out how achievement of the specified learning outcomes will be assessed, with both specifications and outlines having been subject to thorough approval processes that include consideration of the alignment of assessment with learning outcomes. Assessment criteria are in place for the programmes, differentiated by assessment type and made available to students through programme handbooks. Information on academic misconduct is also made available to students through programme handbooks.

2.54 Staff do not assess the performance modules or the components of the end-of-year assessment on which they teach, and all written work is fully double-marked. End of year summative assessments are marked by a panel of internal and external assessors.

2.55 Clear expectations on the feedback on assessed work to be provided to students are set out in City's Validation and Institutional Partnerships Handbook. Commitments to the provision of feedback are contained throughout the programme handbooks, with feedback provided on all assessed work. This occurs through both written feedback, and meetings between staff and students.

2.56 Consideration of student performance and the award of academic credit and awards is the responsibility of Assessment Boards. These are formally subcommittees of City's Senate, and clear and appropriate requirements for the operation of these boards are set out.

2.57 This approach would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.58 The review team tested the implementation of the approach to this Expectation through the consideration of programme handbooks, student survey results, Assessment Board minutes and external examiner reports, reports from Trinity and Ofsted, and through meetings with students and staff.

2.59 Students understood the important role played by assessment criteria in the assessment process, were aware of where to find these and stated that staff referred to these in aspects of their teaching and when providing feedback. This use of the assessment criteria was also evident from the review team's meetings with staff. The review team noted that in ArtsEd's 2017 NSS results student feedback on the clarity of assessment criteria, and the question of marking being fair, is noticeably lower than for other aspects of assessment and feedback. Staff told the review team that steps are being taken to address this through additional discussion of the criteria with students, and that consideration is being given to developing further assessment policy that will also address this and other issues.

2.60 The programmes offered by ArtsEd involve extensive contact hours to develop the professional skills and practice of students, and the nature of the learning and teaching means that students receive regular and detailed feedback from staff on an ongoing basis. This is a key feature of the programmes, and students recognise and value the feedback

they receive, and the positive contribution this feedback makes to their development. Students also receive extensive feedback from their end-of-year summative assessments, which again is recognised and valued by students.

2.61 All programmes also include formal written assessment, to differing extents. Feedback is provided on these assignments, but there is no formal policy on the turnaround time between a student submitting a written assignment and receiving feedback. The review team heard that the further development of assessment policy referred to above would be considering the establishment of a stated turnaround time in such cases, as well as providing students with a clearer overall schedule of their assessments. The review team **recommends** that ArtsEd progress this development of its formal policies to further promote effective assessment and feedback.

2.62 New academic staff receive training and support in assessment from existing academic staff, and have regular meetings with their line managers, in order to assure the quality of assessment. Significant use is made of external assessors in the end-of-year assessment of students. These external assessors receive written briefings including the relevant assessment criteria, with moderation taking place of the marks of all assessors. ArtsEd also evaluates each year this aspect of the assessment process, and would take action if issues were identified with the work of a particular external assessor (although the review team was informed that issues requiring such action had not arisen).

2.63 Assessment Boards are chaired by a senior member of academic staff from City, and have appropriate engagement from external examiners. Minutes of the meetings of these boards indicate that they are being conducted effectively, and discussions with staff of particular aspects of the operation of these boards demonstrated the careful consideration of students' academic achievements in relation to the learning outcomes defined. External examiners' reports confirm that marking is fair and appropriate, and that Assessment Boards are well managed and fairly conducted.

2.64 The overall effectiveness of the assessment strategies adopted by ArtsEd is demonstrated by the high levels of student achievement. In the academic years 2013-14 to 2015-16 progression rates for the BA Acting and BA Musical Theatre were all in the range of 88 to 100 per cent, and similarly high levels of completion are evident for the MA Acting and PDBA programmes. The high levels of student achievement and the effectiveness of assessment are also confirmed in the most recent revalidation reports from Trinity, and the 2015 Ofsted inspection report.

2.65 Effective assessment strategies and approaches have been put in place by ArtsEd, and while there are some aspects of assessment policy where further development is needed it is clear that, overall, the chosen strategies and approaches are being implemented effectively. Consequently, the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining**

**Findings**

2.66 The institutional agreement between ArtsEd and City delineates the respective responsibilities of the two institutions for the nomination, approval, appointment and induction of external examiners and the processes governing their operation. City approves and appoints external examiners, and induction activities are shared between the University and the School. ArtsEd considers the effective use of high quality and experienced external examiners to be an essential feature of maintaining standards and enabling educational development. Outcomes from external examiners' reports inform both annual and longer term action planning.

2.67 The processes for nominating and inducting external examiners, for supporting them in the discharge of their responsibilities, and for considering their reports would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.68 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined policies and procedures for external examining, guidance and support material for external examiners, external examiners' reports and relevant committee minutes evidencing the consideration of their reports. The review team also discussed the operation of the external examining system with staff and students.

2.69 External examiners are appointed for each programme by City, following nomination by the relevant University school, and normally serve for a period of four years, with a possible extension of one further year. Processes for external examination are governed by City's quality assurance guidelines. External examiners visit ArtsEd regularly through the year and are present at various performances by students as well as maintaining a professional dialogue with specialist staff.

2.70 External examiners review performances, assessments and written assignments and observe teaching and learning. They are required to attend Assessment Boards and are invited to comment on the academic standards of the programmes. External examiners' reports provide annual assurance of academic standards and reflection on teaching and learning, as well as on the effectiveness and suitability of assessment strategies. They comment that standards of student performance are comparable with those of similar level programmes in other UK institutions.

2.71 External examiners' reports are circulated to the executive teams of the School of Musical Theatre and School of Acting for consideration and response. Programme teams, Assessment Boards and the Course Board also consider external examiners' reports and responses to any recommendations. It is a feature of City processes that the University's Student and Academic Services team scrutinises all external examiners' reports and highlights issues in need of response and areas of good practice. The strengths and recommendations highlighted in external examiners' reports are used to inform action plans in APes. Consideration of reports does not include an annual report summarising key issues across all external examiners' reports for ArtsEd provision, and this makes it difficult to identify common themes and issues across the four programmes. More systematic oversight of these actions by the School's deliberative committee structure could enable more effective sharing of good practice and better support for strategic planning.

2.72 External examiners' reports are circulated to student representatives, and put on display for students to read on student noticeboards. The review team was unable to find evidence that they had been discussed with students at Board of Studies meetings, although this is the intention of ArtsEd. The School intends that, in future, external examiners' reports will be made available through the intranet and the review team would support this approach to full communication and deliberative discussion with students.

2.73 ArtsEd staff are encouraged to take up external examiner (and other advisory) roles, and a number of staff are currently employed in such positions at a range of institutions.

2.74 ArtsEd has a robust system of external examining in place, governed by the awarding body's protocols and requirements. It makes effective use of its external examiners in assuring and developing the quality of learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B8): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review**

**Findings**

2.75 For each programme offered by ArtsEd the relevant programme team is responsible for completing an Annual Programme Evaluation (APE) form, in line with City's APE policy. A wide range of relevant qualitative and quantitative data is considered as part of this process, including data relating to admissions, retention, progression, achievement and graduate destinations; feedback from students, for example the representative structures, student evaluations and other sources; and external examiners' reports. Once completed APE reports are considered by the Board of Studies, which has a membership that includes student representatives, and subsequently by the Course Board.

2.76 As well as considering each APE, the Course Board is responsible for overseeing the programmes offered by ArtsEd in order to ensure that the framework for academic quality and standards is being implemented effectively. This provides for regular oversight and monitoring of the programmes during the academic year, as well as through the consideration of APE reports and the reports of external examiners.

2.77 Programme review takes place through City's revalidation process. This process largely follows the one in place for approving new programmes, including the submission of a range of appropriate documentation by ArtsEd followed by a visit by a Revalidation Panel constituted in the same way as Validatory Panels. Revalidation Panels consider the documentation submitted, meet during their visit to ArtsEd with staff and students and conduct a tour of facilities. Again, as with initial programme approval, this leads to a written report including a recommendation on revalidation that is considered by the relevant bodies at City. The BA Acting and BA Musical Theatre are also subject to the validation requirements of Trinity, including the need for periodic review and revalidation.

2.78 The framework of policies and processes in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.79 The extent to which the implementation of this framework means that the Expectation is met in practice was tested through the consideration of APE reports, Course Board papers and documentation relating to recent revalidations by City and Trinity. It was also discussed in meetings with staff.

2.80 The review team considered the most recent APE reports for all four of ArtsEd's degree programmes. These demonstrate that appropriate routine monitoring of the programmes is taking place, covering a full range of relevant data and issues. The APE reports are thorough, with appropriate consideration of a wide range of data leading to the identification of clear actions (although no timescales for completing these actions are evident in the reports, and these might usefully be added to future reports). It was also clear that staff are aware of the importance of annual monitoring as part of the Quality Assurance Cycle for ArtsEd's programmes, and that there was appropriate consideration and scrutiny of these reports at the Board of Studies and Course Board.

2.81 The most recent revalidation submissions for all four of ArtsEd's programmes were extensive and thorough, including a wide range of relevant qualitative and quantitative information (including data on student progression and achievement to date). A Revalidation

Panel constituted by City, with both academic staff from City and appropriate external subject specialists, considered these submissions. This consideration included a one-day review visit to ArtsEd, involving meetings with ArtsEd staff and students. The report of this review addressed a wide range of relevant issues. It resulted in the revalidation of the programmes. The report also included a number of recommendations, and it was clear that appropriate action had been taken to address these recommendations. The BA Acting and BA Musical Theatre are subject to periodic review and revalidation by Trinity, and the most recent Trinity revalidation reports both judged ArtsEd to be an exemplary provider. The Trinity awards are also subject to oversight and review by Ofsted, and in 2015 the most recent Ofsted review of the Trinity awards judged ArtsEd's provision to be outstanding.

2.82 Consequently, the review team found that robust monitoring and review processes are in place for ArtsEd's higher education provision, and that there is clear evidence that these are being implemented effectively. The Expectation is therefore met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints**

**Findings**

2.83 Under validation by City, academic appeals are the responsibility of the University with all academic appeals being made to City under its appeal regulations. Student complaints are a shared responsibility, falling under the policies and processes of ArtsEd unless the complaint relates to services provided by City.

2.84 ArtsEd's Complaints Policy and Procedure draws on definitions from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, and sets out a process that encourages informal resolution of complaints while being clear about the approach and steps to be taken where this is not possible. Where the complaint concerns an issue relating to the quality of higher education provision, the policy makes it clear that students who are dissatisfied with the final outcome of their complaint can request that City reviews this outcome. The policy is published in student handbooks.

2.85 ArtsEd's approach in this area would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.86 In order to test how effectively this design is being implemented, the review team considered policy documents from ArtsEd and City, information contained in student handbooks and drew on discussions with students.

2.87 City's academic appeal regulations are clear and comprehensive. Staff of both the validated partner and the University are involved in appropriate ways, at appropriate stages, throughout the combined stage one validated institution-level appeal and stage two university-level review. These regulations are made available to students through their handbooks. The Validation and Institutional Partnerships Handbook states that an annual report on appeals will be considered by the Course Board, but the number of appeals in recent years has been so low that no annual report has been produced.

2.88 Staff operate a flexible and open approach to addressing students' problems in a fair and timely manner at the local level before more formal escalation of concerns. While there is no formal systematic process by which these initial concerns and complaints are captured and recorded, staff team meetings and ongoing conversations provide an effective means to reflect on and monitor local level issues at this informal stage, and a route to identify any trends to enable enhancement.

2.89 Formal complaints processes and procedures are robust. Complaints can be made by an individual or a group of students. The advice and guidance provided by ArtsEd to students is updated, accurate and accessible. Students are also able to obtain support and representation from the Students' Union.

2.90 Information on complaints and appeals is housed within the student handbook. Complaints policies and procedures are published on the ArtsEd website and results letters signpost students to the grounds for appeal via City.

2.91 As the policies and processes would allow this Expectation to be met, and there is evidence that these policies are embedded and referenced effectively, overall the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.92 ArtsEd does not deliver learning opportunities through other organisations and therefore this Expectation does not apply.

**Expectation: Not applicable**

**Level of risk: Not applicable**

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

**Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees***

**Findings**

2.93 ArtsEd does not offer research degrees and therefore this Expectation does not apply.

**Expectation: Not applicable**

**Level of risk: Not applicable**

## The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.94 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex two of the published handbook. Of the eleven Expectations in this judgement area nine are relevant to ArtsEd. The risks in one Expectation are judged to be moderate and in the other eight are low.

2.95 The two recommendations arising from the Expectation with moderate risk (Expectation B4) relate to problems confined to a small part of the provision. The first is to provide training to Students' Union representatives for their role in providing welfare support and the other is to prioritise development in the use of information technology. The other two recommendations with low risk (Expectations B2 and B6) relate to a need to amend or update details in documentation, where the amendment will not result in major structural, operational or procedural change. These concern removing any perceived barriers to admission in information for prospective students with disabilities, and progressing development of formal assessment and feedback policies.

2.96 There are two features of good practice in Expectation B4 relating to services supporting students' mental health and wellbeing, and industry expertise in the curriculum supporting students' professional development. These practices make a particularly positive contribution to the quality of the learning opportunities the School provides for its students. There are no affirmations in this judgement area.

2.97 Overall, there are sound arrangements for securing the quality of student learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at ArtsEd **meets** UK expectations.

### 3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

**Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.**

#### **Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision**

##### **Findings**

3.1 The primary source of information about ArtsEd's higher education provision for the public and applicants is its website. This includes a range of information about ArtsEd and specifically relating to the degree programmes offered.

3.2 City's Validation and Institutional Partnerships Handbook sets out a clear requirement for the publication of up-to-date and accurate publicity materials, acknowledging that the ultimate responsibility lies with it as the awarding body. The Handbook lays out an appropriate framework to ensure that these requirements are met, including the need for validated institutions to provide copies of key promotional material to the Student and Academic Services team at City on an annual basis. These responsibilities are also articulated in the validation agreement between City and ArtsEd.

3.3 During induction all students are provided with a programme handbook that includes comprehensive information on their programme of study (including the programme specification and module outlines), the student learning experience and key policies and processes. This is consistent with the requirement for such a handbook in City's Validation and Institutional Partnerships Handbook. Information is also provided for current students through ArtsEd's intranet (which also publishes copies of programme handbooks).

3.4 Overall, the approach would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.5 The operation of these policies and procedures was tested through discussion with ArtsEd staff and students, and members of staff from City. The review team considered published documentation, student and staff views, and the ArtsEd website, in identifying and assessing available information as fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.6 ArtsEd is currently making significant changes and improvements to its website information in line with Competitions and Markets Authority regulations, for publication of information on its programmes on the Unistats website, and in response to student reporting course content becoming out-dated. Staff explained to the review team that currently directors of courses are responsible for signing off and auditing information and that ArtsEd is in the process of developing a single sign-off process. While it was less clear how published information is regularly audited in-house and how frequently information is reviewed, the move to single sign-off should offer more systematic monitoring of the accuracy and trustworthiness of information. City's oversight of published information currently involves review of master hard-copy sets of information by the Course Board. City also plans to carry out closer monitoring of online publications.

3.7 The review team heard that students find information is accurate, appropriately signposted and accessible. Students particularly appreciate programme handbooks as useful and helpful sources of information. They are used in first-year tutorial and company meetings to support induction and development, and assist in setting student expectations at the start of their studies. Students are made aware of changes and updates to handbooks when accepting the revised student regulations and charter each year. Students and staff

actively use handbooks as a reference tool and means of sharing information.

3.8 Current procedures and practices allow the Expectation to be met. Evidence considered by the review team demonstrates that while review and updating of website information is underway, the processes are being implemented effectively. The Expectation is therefore met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

3.9 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex two of the published handbook. The Expectation is met and the associated risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or good practice in this judgement area.

3.10 The review team found that information produced by ArtsEd for its intended audiences about the higher education that it offers is fit for purpose, trustworthy and accessible. ArtsEd has effective systems and policies in place for the production, monitoring and oversight of information about learning opportunities.

3.11 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at ArtsEd **meets** UK expectations.

## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

**Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.**

### Findings

4.1 ArtsEd does not have a separate, explicit quality enhancement plan or strategy, but its commitment to enhancing the learning opportunities provided to students is evidenced in the commitment to excellence that forms part of its mission. This also finds expression in ArtsEd's Strategic Plan, which explicitly articulates the commitment to excellence and the enhancement of provision, and its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which sets out a number of specific commitments to enhancing learning opportunities at ArtsEd.

4.2 ArtsEd has articulated an explicit Quality Assurance Cycle that makes clear how it seeks to use its core quality assurance processes to support quality enhancement. It has also taken effective steps to address recommendations made at its 2014 QAA Review to continue the centralisation of staff development activities in order to ensure that staff development supports the development of student learning opportunities.

4.3 This provides a framework for enhancing learning opportunities at ArtsEd, and would allow this Expectation to be met.

4.4 The review team tested the implementation of this framework through consideration of documentation relating to a range of enhancement initiatives, and discussions with staff and students at ArtsEd.

4.5 ArtsEd presented evidence of a number of valuable and valid activities designed to enhance the learning opportunities available to students. These include the initiation of a major building project to enhance the facilities available to students; and a range of initiatives to enhance support for student well-being, in response to an increase in the proportion of students with mental health issues (see Expectation B4). Staff members also pointed to ArtsEd's plans to review and develop its strategy regarding formal teaching qualifications for its staff (see Expectation B3).

4.6 The commitment to taking deliberate, evidence-based steps to enhance ArtsEd's higher education provision was also clear from, for example, APE reports that show that quality assurance processes systematically identify opportunities to enhance provision and that action is taken in respect of such opportunities. It was evident to the review team that staff are aware of the important role of quality assurance processes in providing structured opportunities to reflect on provision and develop systematic approaches to enhancing provision. Staff also articulated to the review team the way in which information relating to enhancement priorities is discussed at meetings of the Senior Strategy Team and annual away days with the Board of Trustees, giving opportunities to review progress against agreed priorities.

4.7 While ArtsEd has effective mechanisms for eliciting and responding to feedback from students on their learning experience (see Expectations B3 and B5), it was less clear to the review team how students contribute to the development of wider strategic priorities, as partners in enhancing the student experience. The Principal informed the review team that from early 2018 ArtsEd would be developing a new academic strategy for the period 2020-25, for approval later the same year. The review team was told by the Principal that development of this new strategy would be inclusive, starting with students and involving all staff prior to its finalisation and consideration for approval. This approach was confirmed by

staff the review team met. The new academic strategy should ensure that a clear strategic approach continues to be taken to enhancing ArtsEd's provision, in a way that raises staff and student engagement in the development and delivery of this approach.

4.8 A framework articulating enhancement priorities is in place, and there is evidence of specific deliberate steps taken by ArtsEd to enhance the learning opportunities within its higher education provision. Consequently, the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.9 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex two of the published handbook. The Expectation is met and the associated risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or good practice in this judgement area.

4.10 ArtsEd has in place a range of policies, structures and processes that together ensure the quality of learning opportunities is improved and enhancement priorities are articulated. ArtsEd is aware of the importance of systematic improvement and has a commitment to taking deliberate, evidence-based steps to enhance its higher education provision.

4.11 The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at ArtsEd **meets** UK expectations.

## Glossary

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

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

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

### Academic standards

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

### Award

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

### Awarding organisation

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

### Blended learning

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

### Credit(s)

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

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

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

### Dual award or double award

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

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

### **Enhancement**

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

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

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

### **Framework**

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

### **Framework for higher education qualifications**

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

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

### **Programme (of study)**

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

### **Programme specifications**

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

### **Quality Code**

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

### **Reference points**

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

### **Self-evaluation document**

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

### **Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

### **Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

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

### **Threshold academic standard**

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

### **Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

### **Widening participation**

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

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