



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of The London School of Architecture

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 London School of Architecture. The review took place from 16 to 18 October 2017 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Timothy Woods
- Ms Francine Norris

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)¹ 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](#)² and explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).³ For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.

² QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.

³ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): 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 level of engagement with the profession in the design of a sustainable and innovative programme that supports employability (Expectation B1, B3, B4 and B10).
- The 'dispersed campus' model that encourages student independence and engagement in their learning (Expectation B3 and B4).
- The engagement of the Practice Network as a vehicle for the enhancement of students' learning and professional opportunities (Expectation B4 and Enhancement).

Recommendations

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

By February 2018:

- formalise the process for resolving any disagreements arising from panel marking of assessments (Expectation B6)
- further develop module assessment criteria to ensure transparency for all those involved in the assessment process (Expectation B6 and B7).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students:

- the steps being taken to ensure the alignment of progression points between LSA and the awarding body (Expectation A3.2, B6).
- the consolidation of admissions and recruitment information including the addition of a Complaints and Appeals policy (Expectation B2, B9 and Information).
- the steps being taken to improve the quality and timeliness of written assessment feedback given to students (Expectation B6).
- the steps being taken to ensure that academic staff and external examiners are fully aware of the nature and purpose of the role of external examiners (Expectation B7).

About the provider

The London School of Architecture (the School) is a small independent provider of higher education, established in 2015. Its vision is 'to be the institution at the forefront of realising the full potential of architecture in today's changing world', with a mission to widen access to the profession of architecture.

The School is currently based at Somerset House in central London and offers a single course, which is validated by the London Metropolitan University. The Professional Diploma in Designing Architecture is a two-year course offered on a full-time basis only having one entry point (October) each year. The course is aligned to the professional standards required for prescription by the Architect's Registration Board (ARB) and has been designed to provide for Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Part 2 exemption.

The School is now in its third year of operation and has over 60 students studying the Professional Diploma. The course is designed operating a 'dispersed campus model', whereby students access facilities at various public spaces within the City of London and through the School's Practice Network. This alternative model of education in architecture is premised on the government commissioned report, 'Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment' published in 2014. Using this model, the School embeds academic and professional development within the course, offering an innovative approach to students.

The School has a small number of permanent staff, with a larger pool of staff employed on a part-time or fractional basis, drawing largely on its practice network. The practice network offers learning opportunities to students and provides key support to students as part of the delivery model in both years of the course.

While the School's governance structure is evolving, there is a high level of engagement from staff at all levels, from the trustees to teaching and professional service staff. This is further strengthened by a sense of shared ambition and purpose.

The School regards the delivery of its vision and mission to present one of the key challenges. In particular making architectural education more affordable and accessible to students. This mission to widen access to the profession of architecture has informed the development of a cost-neutral programme through an approach where tuition fees are balanced with students receiving a salary for a part-time work placement that they complete in the first year of the course. This review is the School's first engagement with QAA.

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 The London School of Architecture provides a single Professional Diploma in Designing Architecture that is validated by London Metropolitan University (LMU). LMU, as the awarding body, has responsibility for setting and maintaining academic standards and ensures that the School has the appropriate resources and facilities in place to support all students. The overall responsibility for the programmes resides with LMU. The Institutional Memorandum of Agreement and the Course Level Agreement between LMU and the School provide the definitive records of the agreement between both parties; and the main duties and responsibilities of each Institution are set out in the Responsibilities Checklist and in the Institutional and Course Handbooks.

1.2 Students at the School progress from the First Year to the Second Year and Graduation, and there is guidance on how students can progress in their programme. The First Year (the Inter-Practice Year) consists of three days per week in part-time work placements, and two days per week on the School projects using the 'dispersed campus' model, which typically has seminars taking place in the offices of London practice partners

and other city venues. Students then complete the Second Year (the Proto-Practice Year) which consists of full-time study at the School location at Somerset House; and then, subject to successfully completing the final assessment process, progress to graduation.

1.3 LMU sets out the academic framework for the Diploma in its Partnership Operations Manual, and the School has responsibility for maintaining these standards and the awarding body degree regulations through its own Institutional and Course Handbooks. The programmes are benchmarked against the Quality Code. Throughout the Institutional Handbook, there are references to the Quality Code and how it has been used as a reference point in designing the programme.

1.4 The School is overseen by a Board of Trustees, and membership, Terms of Reference and Vision/Mission are laid out in the Trustees' Handbook 2016-17. The Board's governance protocols and minutes demonstrate that it oversees the School's vision and strategy as set out in the Strategic Plan and meets its legal and regulatory responsibilities. As the School has matured as a provider, this Vision is currently under review by the Executive Committee.

1.5 The Diploma meets academic standards through alignment with *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), and the QAA degree characteristics, through LMU's validation, approval and enhancement processes. The School is responsible for course design and this is tested at validation and through external examiners and the annual monitoring process. The programme design specifically refers to the Subject Benchmark Statement for Architecture, level descriptors for Level 6 and 7 on the FHEQ and the professional body requirements of the ARB and RIBA. The arrangements in place for the maintenance of threshold academic standards of awards thereby allow the Expectation to be met.

1.6 The review team examined documentary evidence relating to the School's collaborative agreement with LMU, its Institutional Memorandum of Agreement and Risk Register, its governance arrangements and procedures for programme approval, training for students and examination protocols. The team also met with senior managers and academic and professional staff from the School as well as LMU's Academic Liaison Tutor who acts as the representative of the awarding body on the School's committees.

1.7 While there is a contingency plan with the awarding body under the terms of the Institutional Memorandum of Agreement to meet unexpected exigencies within the degree provision, the Board of Trustees also maintains an institutional Risk Register. The Board of Trustees has a range of sub-committees within School to manage the provision, and the review team found that the reporting mechanisms of the committee structure worked effectively and coherently.

1.8 LMU, the awarding body has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the Diploma meets relevant external reference points. LMU's policies and procedures are applied within the School to maintain threshold academic standards and to ensure that the programmes are aligned appropriately; and the review team identified a strong governance function through the committee structures to further support the maintenance of threshold academic standards. Accordingly, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

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

1.9 The School's Professional Diploma as stated above is validated by LMU, the awarding body. The overall responsibility for the programme resides with the awarding body's Dean of the Sir John CASS School of Art, Architecture and Design, and the Quality Enhancement Unit (QEU). The Institutional Memorandum of Agreement between the institutions outline their collaboration for delivery of the programme. The main duties and responsibilities of each institution are clearly set out in the Responsibilities Checklist.

1.10 LMU's Operations Manual sets out the academic framework for the programme, and the School applies this framework to maintain the academic standards of the provision.

1.11 Throughout the Institutional Handbook, there are references to Quality Code and how it is used as a reference point in designing the programme. LMU makes its criteria for the award available online, and the academic standards are aligned through its validation, approval and enhancement processes, to the FHEQ, and the QAA expected characteristics of qualifications.

1.12 In implementing and adhering to LMU's regulations and quality assurance procedures, the School is overseen by the Academic Court, the Board of Trustees, the Senate, the Executive Committee, the Director and a range of supporting committees for the Board of Trustees, including principally the Audit, Finance and Resources, Remuneration, People, and Bursaries. The LMU Academic Liaison Tutor sits on the appropriate School's academic committees. These arrangements in place for the maintenance of academic standards of awards allow the Expectation to be met.

1.13 The review team examined documentary evidence relating to the School's collaborative agreement with the awarding body, its Institutional Memorandum of Agreement, its governance arrangements and procedures for programme approval, training for students and examination protocols. The team also met with senior managers and academic and professional staff from the School as well as LMU's Academic Link Tutor and the Head of Partnerships for the CASS School. In evaluating the School's approach to this Expectation, the review team also examined the Institutional and Course Handbooks and the committees' terms of reference, academic regulations, organisational and committee structures, and committee minutes and reports of examinations.

1.14 The review team found that the Executive Committee meets regularly, sets the strategic direction for the School and its meetings are fully minuted. The University Quality and Monitoring Group (QMG) is responsible for mapping QAA requirements onto the delivery of schemes at the School ; and the School's Senate and Executive Committee oversee the operational management of the programme, issues of student progression and monitoring, and enhancement and student representation. Various other committees have delegated responsibility for registration, ethics, examinations, admissions, the website and the student voice. The membership and Terms of Reference for these committees are clearly laid out.

1.15 LMU's academic and assessment regulations are set out in the Course Handbook for students. Key points in the student's progression are effectively overseen by School staff at the end of the First Year Exam Board, and the Awards Committee at the completion of the Second Year. These committees report to the LMU Subject Standards Board which has overall responsibility for monitoring and overseeing the annual progression for each candidate and the final award.

1.16 The School's Institutional and Course Handbooks, the established Academic Link Tutor system and systems to monitor student progression collectively work to support students in achieving the awarding body's academic standards. The School follows the University's academic framework and regulations and has suitable governance arrangements for oversight of its internal processes. The review team thus concludes that 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

1.17 The Institutional and Course Handbooks and the School's Programme Specification provide definitive information on intended learning outcomes and how the programmes will be delivered and assessed. There is a record of the programme that has been approved, which includes details of any changes which have been made to the programme. These records demonstrate alignment of the programme with the FHEQ and there is clear guidance on how students can progress through the stages of their Diploma including on the shared Google Drive.

1.18 The programme is monitored annually through individual Module Logs feeding into a Course Log, which in turn forms the basis of a Collaborative Annual Monitoring Statement (CAMS) provided to the awarding body. The CAMS is considered by the University Annual Quality and Monitoring Group (AQMG), and its deliberations are fed back into the School's Action Plan. The programme is reviewed in accordance with the LMU's validation and review procedures at the end of the Institutional Memorandum of Agreement's approval period.

1.19 These arrangements in place with LMU for the maintenance of a definitive record of awards allow the Expectation to be met.

1.20 When evaluating the School's approach to meeting the Expectation, the review team considered evidence including the Institutional and Course Handbooks, the Programme Specification, the Course Log and Data, Collaborative Annual Monitoring Statement and AQMG minutes. The team met with senior members of staff, support staff and students and received a demonstration of the shared Google Drive while testing the Expectation.

1.21 Within the School, there is a shared drive on Google which enables all staff to access up-to-date documentation. The shared drive is split into different sites for student and staff access. This shared Google Drive hosts copies of all the relevant University and School documentation.

1.22 The Institutional and Course Handbooks and the Programme Specification provide clear details on the structure and delivery of the programme. Students are provided with the Course Handbook which uses a University template and sets out the programme specification. This is approved by the University before being issued to students. Students confirmed that they are aware of these documents and understand how to progress through their programme. The evidence showed that definitive records of the programme and qualification are held, providing an effective reference point and source of information. The team concludes that the Expectation is met with a low level of associated risk.

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

1.23 The awarding body, LMU, is responsible for the design and implementation of the approval process for programmes at the School. The processes for programme validation are set out in a Quality Manual, which is reviewed each year and made available to collaborative partners through the LMU website.

1.24 The School's responsibilities for programme design are set out within the institutional Memorandum of Agreement which requires an individual Course Level Agreement to be prepared for each validated programme. The Professional Diploma in Designing Architecture, was validated for a three-year period in 2015. The design of the programme is particularly innovative and has been developed as a specific response to professional concerns about the nature and cost of architectural education.

1.25 The learning outcomes for the programme are set out in a Programme Specification, which states the level of each module of study in relation to the FHEQ. The Professional Diploma in Designing Architecture comprises modules at both Level 6 and 7 of the FHEQ which is common practice for professional architectural qualifications.

1.26 During the first year of the programme students are required to spend three days a week undertaking a work placement with one of the architectural companies that form the School's Practice Network. The School does not specify the activities to be undertaken by students on placement but has an application process for practices interested in taking part in the scheme that requires them to define their ethos and approach as well as teaching experience, current scope of work and research interests. The School also undertakes a risk assessment of each practice involved.

1.27 In addition to the requirements of the University, the School aligns its programme to the professional standards required for prescription by the ARB. The Programme Specification sets out the criteria and graduate attributes defined by the ARB in relation to programme and module learning outcomes in order to make clear where within the diploma programme these attributes will be assessed. The School has also completed the process of achieving RIBA Part 2 exemption for the programme. A comprehensive documentary submission including an academic position statement as well as programme details and staffing information was submitted in preparation for an initial review visit in June 2017.

1.28 An annually updated Course Handbook is provided to students ahead of enrolment. The handbook is submitted to LMU for approval each year as a condition of the Course Level Agreement.

1.29 These arrangements allow for the Expectation to be met in principle, ensuring that there are appropriate processes for oversight of the approval of programmes.

1.30 The review team reviewed documentary evidence including the LMU Quality Manual, validation documentation including the Programme Specification and the School's Institutional and Course Handbooks. The team met staff involved in programme design,

LMU staff including the Link Tutor and staff from a range of architectural practices that had been involved in the design and approval process.

1.31 The review team learned that the School had worked closely with a range of stakeholders in the design of the programme. These include the University and professional bodies as well as a range of professional practitioners, other associated professionals and students. This has been effective in ensuring that the programme content, level and mode of study are aligned with both the requirements of LMU and the profession.

1.32 The review team heard that an updated strategic plan was in preparation which may lead to the development of further courses at the School. Responsibility for future programme design would sit with the Executive Committee overseen by the Senate.

1.33 The team met with members of the Practice Network responsible for students on placement and with teaching responsibilities for the first year Design Think Tank unit. The team heard that the School offers support and guidance to Practice Mentors and other staff through induction, documentation and regular communications and updates. Practices and students are grouped for the Think Tank Unit to ensure opportunities for sharing a breadth of experiences such that any variation in student placement experiences is balanced.

1.34 Overall, the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low. The validation and review processes provided by the validating university, professional bodies and the School's ongoing active engagement with professional contributors are effective.

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

1.35 The School operates within the credit scheme of LMU and the programme comprises a total of 240 credits at Level 6 and 7, spread across two academic years. A total of 160 credits are for design work, which is intended to meet professional body requirements. An exit award of Graduate Diploma is available following successful completion of the first year of the programme.

1.36 Assessment requirements are set out in the Course Handbook and Programme Specification and make clear the relationship between individual assessment tasks and the learning outcomes they measure. Learning outcomes are mapped to the ARB criteria and an overarching set of institutional aims that are used to inform the assessment of the learning outcomes. Additionally, the School references generic assessment criteria provided by the University to determine grading.

1.37 The School uses panel and double marking to assure the maintenance of standards in its internal marking. Design work is marked by two senior members of staff and subject modules are marked by the module leader and one other. There is a final panel assessment at the end of the Summer Term where students present a Comprehensive Design Project and undergo a viva voce examination. This event is attended by a member of the School's Academic Court as well as external examiners and staff from LMU.

1.38 Following internal assessment, a sample of student work across all modules is presented to LMU for moderation before being submitted formally to external examiners to confirm standards.

1.39 Subject Standards Boards, where final marks are presented and confirmed are held at LMU and attended by the Programme Director. It is only after approval by a Subject Standards Board that credit is awarded.

1.40 These procedures would allow the Expectation to be met in principle. Decisions to award credit or qualifications are based on evidence that the learning outcomes or criteria have been achieved. Processes are overseen by external examiners and awards only made with the authority of the validating University.

1.41 The team reviewed documentation including the LMU Quality Manual, validation documentation including the Programme Specification and Institutional and Course Handbooks. The team also considered statistical data on progression and completion rates provided by the School and discussed this with academic staff and support staff including those from the University and an external examiner.

1.42 The team learned that there was a close working relationship between the School and LMU in relation to assessment with University staff attending the final viva voce

examination for the first graduating cohort. The School confirmed that they intended to continue with this arrangement in subsequent years.

1.43 In the assessment for the first graduating cohort, there was disagreement about marking in one module and external examiner reports raised concerns about the clarity of module assessment criteria. These issues, which while not representing a threat to standards indicate further development of the School's internal assessment procedures is required. See Section B6.

1.44 The team learned that due to the length of the year one programme at the School, it had not so far been possible to have marks ratified by the Subject Standards Board prior to students progressing into the second year. Staff the team met from both the School and the University confirmed that they were working together to try to resolve this issue. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to ensure the alignment of progression points between the School and the awarding body.

1.45 There are effective procedures in place to oversee the assessment of student work. These processes ensure that the award of qualifications are based on the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. In the first years of operation the timing of assessment at the School has led to delays in credit being awarded by the University, but action is being taken to address this. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

1.46 Annual monitoring and periodic review processes of the School and the programme are overseen by the validating university, LMU. An institutional approval event took place in 2015 as a precursor to the initial programme validation for the Professional Diploma award. A periodic review of the programme is scheduled for 2018, to consider the initial three-year validation period; following this it is anticipated that a full periodic review will take place every five years.

1.47 The School is required to undertake programme and module level monitoring annually and the Course Leader has responsibility for this. External examiner reports along with the School's responses; student feedback on the programme; staff information; and an annual action plan are collated together to form an overall Course Log.

1.48 Following completion of the first full cycle of the programme, the Course Log, along with achievement data will be considered at a Performance Enhancement Meeting (PEM) attended by the external examiners, internal assessors and representatives of the University. This meeting is intended to identify and confirm necessary actions that might be required including any minor modifications to curriculum or assessment.

1.49 At an institutional level, the University requires the School to prepare a Collaborative Annual Monitoring Statement for approval by the University. This document, which follows a standard University format provides a summary of annual monitoring outcomes alongside a description of any major changes and statistical data about the provision.

1.50 The University chairs a meeting of the Annual Quality Monitoring Group (AQMG) each year, which considers and approves the Chairs Report from the PEM, Course Logs for all validated programmes and the institutional Collaborative Annual Monitoring Statement.

1.51 Additionally, in due course the programme will be subject to reviews by the professional bodies. The School has achieved ARB prescription and is awaiting the outcome of an application to the RIBA for Part 2 exemption for the Professional Diploma. The School will be required to make an annual report to the ARB and will be subject to periodic review by them in 2020. The annual report to the ARB will comprise student progression and completion data, external examiner reports and associated responses and full course documentation.

1.52 The monitoring arrangements overall would enable the Expectation to be met. Annual and periodic external reporting to the University and professional bodies ensure that the maintenance of UK threshold academic standards and the standards set by the professional bodies are monitored and kept under review.

1.53 The team reviewed a range of documentary evidence including approval reports and annual monitoring documentation and minutes of the AQMG. The team also considered statistical data on progression and completion rates provided by the School and discussed

this with academic and support staff during the visit.

1.54 The team found that, to date, the procedures for monitoring the provision were effective although there had not yet been a complete cycle of the full process. Progression and completion rates for the first graduating cohort were high and external examiners commented positively about the standards attained. Students the review team met confirmed that issues raised by them about the course structure and assessment deadlines had been addressed promptly by the School.

1.55 For the current year the School has prepared an internal annual monitoring report in addition to that required by the University. The report draws on student and external examiner feedback as well as the module logs and provides an integrated action plan. The team learned that this was intended to strengthen internal oversight of identified actions.

1.56 The School has recognised that its internal committee operation will need to further develop in future years in order to take a more active role in ensuring actions arising from monitoring are progressed through the year. During the visit, the team heard that the Senate, which has so far met only once, is intended to provide this internal oversight of the monitoring and review processes and in future will meet termly.

1.57 External monitoring by the validating university and professional bodies ensures that standards are being maintained and that these processes are being further strengthened by the introduction of an internal annual monitoring process by the School. Overall, the team concludes that 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

1.58 Course validation, annual monitoring and assessment processes follow those required by LMU as described in the previous sections. Each of these processes require the involvement of external and independent expertise in the setting and maintenance of academic standards. This requirement is set out in the Memorandum of Agreement, Course Level Agreement and Quality Manual.

1.59 The University's process for validation requires the participation of two external panel members: one academic and one professional. Additionally, the validation is chaired by and includes members of University staff from other faculties other than that proposing the collaborative partnership.

1.60 The programme has external examiners approved by the validating University. External examiners ensure the standards of the programme are maintained on an ongoing basis. Additionally, the programme is professionally accredited by the statutory regulator, the ARB and the School has completed the process of gaining accreditation by the RIBA as described in the previous section.

1.61 Prior to initial validation by the University, the School undertook extensive research to inform course design working with a wide range of professional and academic stakeholders. This culminated in an internally initiated panel event whose outcomes fed into the programme design process.

1.62 The review team tested the arrangements described in the self-evaluation document by considering relevant documents, and meeting with staff who had been involved in examining, monitoring and review of programmes.

1.63 The policies and procedures of the University for setting and maintaining academic standards involve independent and external expertise at all stages. The programme is additionally monitored by the professional bodies on an ongoing basis. As such the arrangements are adequate to meet the expectation.

1.64 The School has made extensive use of external input in its programme design and on an ongoing basis through close working with its Practice Network. During the visit, the team heard how the School was seeking regular feedback through surveys and an annual meeting.

1.65 The School has an Academic Court, which is an external advisory group of experienced architectural educators. Additionally, it is seeking to ensure that its Senate is also informed by an external advisory panel of individuals from related areas of the arts, media and politics.

1.66 The review team is satisfied that the School has in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure that independent and external expertise is used at key stages of its procedures for setting and maintaining academic standards. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low. The level of ongoing engagement with the School's extensive professional networks makes a further significant contribution to the level of external expertise informing the programme.

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

1.67 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this judgement area are met with a low level of risk.

1.68 There are no features of good practice or recommendations in this judgement area.

1.69 The team made one **affirmation** of action being taken by the School under Expectation A3.2 that addresses the misalignment of progression points between the School and the University.

1.70 The School has secure frameworks to ensure that standards are maintained at appropriate levels and that the definitive record of each programme is used to govern the award of academic credit and qualifications.

1.71 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies at the provider **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 As described above, the School has a single programme, the Professional Diploma in Designing Architecture, which was validated in 2015 in accordance with the programme approval processes set out in the LMU Quality Manual.

2.2 The development of the School itself and the design of the specific programme structure were a strategic response to concerns within the architectural profession about the nature and cost of architectural education as expressed through The Farrell Review. The mission and vision for the School were initially developed collaboratively by a think tank, Alternative Routes for Architecture, during 2013. Members of this think tank went on to become the School's founding faculty.

2.3 The detailed development of the programme was informed by input from a range of stakeholders including educators, professional architects and students. Through a series of development meetings, the overall structure and rationale for the programme was refined and then critically reviewed by an external academic panel prior to presentation to the University for validation. Additionally, the programme design was informed by the need to ensure that the learning outcomes enable students to demonstrate the criteria required by the ARB and RIBA.

2.4 Following the opening of the School, responsibility for further programme design and development lies with the Director and the Executive Committee overseen by the Senate. The School is developing a strategic plan for the period to 2020, which will provide the basis for any further programme development.

2.5 The University approval process requires the School to submit programme documentation for scrutiny by a validation panel, which includes independent staff from the University, external subject specialists and student representatives. All documentation including Programme and Module Specifications are required to follow standard University templates. The validation panel are required to confirm that the proposed programme outcomes are aligned to the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and that appropriate physical and staffing resources for programme delivery are in place

2.6 These arrangements meet the expectation of B1 in principle. The School has a professionally informed approach to programme development with the University providing academic oversight.

2.7 The review team considered documentary evidence including the Strategic Plan and notes of a range of programme development meetings, Programme and Module Specifications, validation documentation and reports. The team met with senior staff who had been involved in the programme development from its inception as well as a range of staff from architectural practices forming part of the Practice Network.

2.8 The review team found that the innovative and strategic approach of the School in seeking to address contemporary issues in architectural education had strong support from current students and within the architectural practices forming the Practice Network. The team heard how the programme had been designed to be cost neutral through balancing study time in the School with periods of work placement. Additionally, a dispersed campus model, using the resources of the Practice Network to complement those provided by the School ensures students have access to a wide range of relevant equipment and expertise

2.9 The review team heard how the Design Think Tank module had been designed to ensure the reciprocal sharing of research and innovation between students and the Practice Network. Staff and professional architects the team met explained how the themes for the project were directly informed by contemporary professional practice. The team considered that the level of engagement with the profession in the design of a sustainable and innovative programme that supports employability is **good practice**.

2.10 The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the risk level is low. The commitment to innovative approaches to architectural education coupled with the extensive use of externality and the alignment with the requirements of the professional bodies provides a rigorous process of programme design and development.

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

2.11 Information on the School's recruitment, selection and admissions procedures is included in its Institutional Handbook. The School sets out its strategic priorities in recruitment, selection and admissions in this Handbook; however, through agreement with the University, the School has departed from standard practice and does not recognise any prior certificated or experiential learning. Applicants are given clear guidance on entry criteria and the requirements are set out on the School's website. These conform to the threshold standards established by the University and professional body requirements.

2.12 The School has established through agreement between the University and the Board of Trustees a clear policy on restricting intake to the Professional Diploma to 40 students per year and operates according to a maximum cap on recruitment. Recruitment to date has fallen short of this but this year the School is making an offer to 48 applicants to try to ensure that it comes in on target. The size of the School is part of its marketing strategy and this is made clear to students and other stakeholders.

2.13 Admissions requirements for potential students, including English language requirements for non-first language English speakers, and the stages of the application process are detailed in the Institutional Handbook and on the School's website, through the application form or through direct communication with the Operations Manager.

2.14 The Operations Manager is responsible for the organisational aspects of admissions while the Course Leader has responsibility for selection and ensuring that all staff involved are appropriately trained. A small team drawn from the Executive Committee meets to assess candidates' applications and then invites applicants for interview. A current student is involved in each interview. On receipt of the formal Interview Assessment Forms, all final selection decisions are made by the sub-committee team and a Spreadsheet of Interview results, offers and acceptances is maintained. The Course Leader is responsible for reporting to Executive Committee and Senate on recruitment.

2.15 Successful applicants receive a formal letter of offer, various School-based information and a formal Student Contract. The operation of these admissions and enrolment processes allow the Expectation to be met.

2.16 The team tested the Expectation by considering a range of evidence, including the Institutional Handbook, Admissions Committee minutes, an Interview Assessment Form and by visiting the School's website. The team met with staff and students to further evaluate the School's approach to meeting the Expectation.

2.17 The review team found that the School has a clear strategy in place for recruitment, selection and admissions, its admissions requirements are clearly communicated to applicants, and appropriate support is offered throughout the application process.

2.18 The School has reviewed and updated its admissions process recently, mapping them against the Quality Code chapter on Recruitment, Selection and Admission.

The conclusion is that the School has agreed to develop a concise Admissions Handbook that will consolidate all aspects of its Admission policies and processes. In addition, the School plans to establish formal policies in respect of complaints and appeals in the area of recruitment, selection and admission, and the development of an applicant portal on the website. The School has also made two new appointments: a Registrar and an Associate Director, part of whose collective responsibilities will be to oversee the new developments in admissions, communication and information.

2.19 The review panel strongly **affirms** the consolidation of admissions and recruitment information including the addition of a Complaints and Appeals policy (see also Expectation B9 and Information).

2.20 Students confirmed that the interview process has become more stringent, commenting positively on the level of challenge it now offers. Students confirmed that they were in regular contact with the School throughout the application process, commenting explicitly on their positive admissions experience and its efficiency and transparency. Students also commented on the distinctiveness of the course, the appeal of the Open Day and the clarity of information on the website, in attracting them to the course in the first place.

2.21 There are clearly defined procedures in place for the recruitment, selection and admission of students and current students comment positively on the effectiveness of the process. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

2.22 As the School only offers a single programme with a significant element of work placement in the First Year, traditional teaching occurs during two days a week in the First Year and then full-time in the Second Year. The programme is structured as an Inter-Practice Year (First Year) followed by a Proto-Practice Year (Second Year), and these years embrace a series of modules and projects outlined in the Programme Specification. The programme is reviewed annually by the School and the University and student feedback is collated and analysed for improvements by the Course Committee and the University AQMG.

2.23 During the Inter-Practice Year, students are assigned a Practice Mentor to oversee their practice progress in their First Year and 'stewardship' while in the formal teaching environment for the remainder of their week. Thereafter, in their Proto-Practice Year students receive different tutors and mentors for their Second Year modules and the Thesis.

2.24 There are a large number of collaborators in terms of the Practice Network. This is a particular strength of the School but student feedback prior to the review visit suggested that there is a variability in the parity of experience and also theoretical approach between practices. The review team found that the School is working to improve this through a range of measures: Practice Network questionnaires, the School's Practice Placement Annual Review Meeting, the induction and continuous training of Practice mentors, the Director's regular Updates for the Practice Network, and the appointment of a Registrar to oversee the details of placements. Students expressed their appreciation of the differences of the Practice Partners and the efforts of the School to ensure a satisfactory student experience in their placements.

2.25 The review team found the level of engagement with the profession in the design of a sustainable and innovative programme that supports employability to be **good practice** (see also Expectations B1, B4 and B10).

2.26 Students are able to attend weekly open lectures but texts of lectures are also available on the Google Drive. The School has no Library but students have access to the University's Library, although without borrowing rights. Additionally, Second Year students have access to the facilities of the Makerversity on site at Somerset House.

2.27 Although only recently established, the School has developed out of a committed team of experienced educators and professional practitioners with a strong mission and strategic objective.

2.28 The School prides itself on its 'dispersed campus' model (that is the city of London itself) , as one the unique features of its programme, providing students with a real-world learning experience in the Partner Practice offices and other appropriate venues around London. The organisation of this model is undertaken by the Operations Manager, and is in future to be aided by the appointment of a Registrar. Students are clearly enthusiastic about the unparalleled access to the resources offered by these London practices, and the process

is managed clearly and has the fervent support of all stakeholders.

2.29 The review team found the 'dispersed campus' model that encourages student independence and engagement in their learning to be **good practice** (see also Expectation B4).

2.30 The resources and supervisory arrangements put in place by the School would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.31 The review team tested the Expectation in discussions with School staff and students, external examiners, Practice Partner mentors, the University's Academic Liaison Tutor, and by reviewing relevant documentary evidence.

2.32 While students find the Makerversity facilities to be excellent, nonetheless they have expressed some reservations about the appropriate size of spaces at Somerset House and contend that there are some shortcomings and unevenness in access to resources with the non-borrowing rights at LMU Library. Nonetheless, when interviewed, the students praised the technical resources and spaces available through the Practice Partner Network. Furthermore, the review team found that the issue concerning borrowing rights is being addressed by a new financial arrangement with LMU that should enable future borrowing rights. Further communication about the availability of open source and other library resources will ensue.

2.33 The review team found that the School's Course Leader acts as the principal contact with the QEU and the Subject Standards external examiners who are managed by the University's Academic registry. Procedures for external examiners are laid down and all arrangements are outlined in LMU's Quality Manual.

2.34 The review team found that the focus of staff development was predominantly practice-based, albeit with some stress on the development of pedagogical skills. A Staff Handbook outlines all aspects of staff employment, including staff development. Given the size of the School, much of the assessment for staff development happens on an individual basis. Nevertheless, central to the staff development process is the appraisal system that operates with a formal Appraisal Form and is overseen by the Executive Committee. There is a sub-committee of the Board of Trustees with responsibility for staff and a small staff development budget. The University provides generic staff development opportunities and there is an intention to explore subject specific opportunities with the CASS School. The School intends to explore possibilities in relation to HEA, possibly with the help of LMU.

2.35 There is no formal teaching observation scheme but a team-teaching approach means there is a high level of transparency and opportunities for sharing good practice. There is a Staff Handbook which is used in the induction of new staff. New staff work alongside Course or module leaders to ensure they are familiar with necessary documentation and teaching and assessment practices. A member of the Board of Trustees is an executive Coach, and helps with relevant staff where necessary.

2.36 Teaching is mainly delivered by the Faculty, but the School provides an extensive set of workshops in collaboration with partners drawn from professional practices, for whom the Faculty Directors provide induction and support.

2.37 Overall the review team found that the systems for developing staff, students and stakeholders supporting student learning met the Expectation, and that the 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

2.38 The Institutional and Course Handbooks and Programme Specification describe the learning environment, resources and personal development and training aspects of the Professional Diploma programme offered at the School.

2.39 Part of the Mission of the School is to widen access. The small size of the School means that student development and achievement is at the forefront. This sense of student empowerment was noted by RIBA Visiting Board.

2.40 The First Year begins with a part-time work placement in parallel to the teaching schedule, and each student has a Practice Mentor allocated to them as part of that experience. In addition to the standard student support frameworks available through the School, first year students are provided with second year student 'buddies'.

2.41 There is a two-day Induction Event at the beginning of the programme that introduces students to the School, providing them with all relevant information and introducing them to the facilities available at Somerset House. Although the School has no Library itself, students have access (non-borrowing rights) to the LMU Library and the Makerversity facilities at Somerset House. After some student complaints, the issue concerning borrowing rights is being addressed by a new financial arrangement with LMU that should enable future borrowing rights.

2.42 The School works closely with the University to monitor achievement and identify issues. LMU's academic and assessment regulations are set out in the Course Handbook for students. There are two key evaluative points for students: the end of the First Year Exam Board, and the Awards Committee at the completion of the Second Year. These committees report to the LMU Subject Standards Board which has overall responsibility for monitoring and overseeing the annual progression for each candidate and the final award.

2.43 The School has a system of Tutors who support and monitor annual progress through half-yearly reports. The Deputy Director has responsibility for the pastoral care of students, providing academic advice and support, and seeking to resolve any student difficulties. The design of the above resources and processes to support the learning environment and student development would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.44 The review team examined student reports and plans, the Programme Handbook, examples of the Research Induction School timetable, and minutes of appropriate committees. In addition, meetings were held with staff and students to corroborate the documentary evidence.

2.45 The School has a Diversity Policy in the Institutional Handbook with a framework for supporting the needs of students with disabilities and special needs. The Handbook and Programme Specification are all made available to students prior to enrolment in order that students are informed about the programme demands and the support available to them.

2.46 The review team found that the appropriate resources are in place to establish a positive learning environment for the Diploma and students commented positively on these resources. The team also found the level of engagement with the profession in supporting employability to be **good practice** (see also Expectations B1, B3 and B10), and the

'dispersed campus' model that encourages student independence and engagement in their learning is also **good practice** (see also Expectation B3). Adequate progress support is appropriately offered by the School's Faculty who monitor annual progress through the end of year committees. Students confirmed that they felt adequately supported in their studies and that after some early problems, the School now gives feedback on progress in a regular and consistent manner.

2.47 Overall the review team felt that the processes for supporting students' work effectively because monitoring is regular and thorough, resources are appropriate and support provides effective opportunities for students to develop academically, personally and professionally. The engagement of the Practice Network as a vehicle for the enhancement of students' learning and professional opportunities is an element of **good practice** (see also Enhancement). The review team concludes that the systems and processes are effective in meeting the Expectation, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

2.48 The School encourages student participation both formally and informally in the development and enhancement of the provision. It subscribes to the principles of the London Met Student Charter in establishing a culture that enables partnership work with students. In this respect, the School has developed its own Learning Agreement to ensure awareness of the shared responsibilities of students and the School particularly in relation to the work placement.

2.49 Formally, student representatives are members of the School's committees, the Senate and the Course Forum. The Course Forum is modelled on the LMU course committee in respect of operation, frequency and Terms of Reference and the Senate will once fully established meet each term. Student representatives, chosen by the cohort attend these meetings. There are a minimum of two representatives per year group.

2.50 The School seeks individual feedback from all students via an annual module questionnaire and the Director additionally undertakes exit interviews with graduating students. The small size of the School also facilitates opportunities for ongoing informal dialogue.

2.51 Module feedback and feedback from the Course Forum enables the School to take action in response to student suggestions or concerns. A Course Log and individual Module Logs are kept as a requirement of LMU's annual monitoring process, which records feedback and actions taken.

2.52 These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met in principle. The informal mechanisms of the School taken with the formal process of Course Forum required by the University provide a range of ways for students to engage with the development of their learning experience.

2.53 The team considered documentation including a student written submission, minutes of Course Forum meetings and the Course and Module Logs for 2015-16. The team met with a range of students from both years of the programme including student representatives. Additionally, the team met students from the first graduating cohort and staff from the Practice Network of placement providers and employers.

2.54 Students the team met explained that the opportunity to contribute to the development of the new School and its distinctive approach had been a significant factor in them choosing to study there. This was supported by staff from the Practice Network who confirmed the positive impact of student input and research on work in the professional environment.

2.55 Due to the scale of the School there is a close working relationship between staff and students who share the same studio space during the second year of the programme, which facilitates ongoing informal dialogue and debate, which the students value.

2.56 However, students the team met had a limited experience of some of the formal mechanisms for student engagement. For example, while the written submission confirms students are made aware of the Student Charter via their Course Handbook, students the team met were not aware of it. Students also indicated that they had not received any

training for their roles as representatives and were not aware of their role in the Senate.

2.57 The team heard how both the informal and formal processes have been effective in the development of the provision. Changes to assessment deadlines and component weightings and adaptations to a first year module in order to achieve better preparations for year two study were cited as examples of where changes had been made to the programme in response to student feedback.

2.58 Staff the team met reported that the School was reviewing its approach to module feedback, which is currently collected at the end of the year. As part of its annual monitoring action plan the School is intending to move this to the end of each module in order to make it more effective in informing enhancement.

2.59 Overall the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low. The high level of critical student engagement with the development of this new provision taken with the small size of the School, means that informal and formal student engagement is effective.

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

2.60 Overall, the School follows the University's Academic Regulations and Assessment Framework which are accessible online via the website.

2.61 The main area of differentiation, however, is in respect of APL, which is not allowed by the School due to professional requirements and this has been agreed with the University. As such all modules are core and must be passed by students.

2.62 The School is responsible for identifying academic misconduct and is supported by the University's Student Caseworker Office. It is also required to operate within the University's policy on disabled students in developing action plans to support individual students.

2.63 All assessment is carried out internally at the School and there are a range of assessment strategies that have been developed with reference to the Subject Benchmark Statement for Architecture. Design modules are assessed through a portfolio of design work, which is internally assessed by two assessors. Subject Modules or components are assessed by Module Leaders and second marked by a member of the module teaching team.

2.64 The School has given careful consideration to the design of the assessment of group work to ensure that individual students are able to demonstrate the full range of learning outcomes. Two modules, Urban Studies and the Design Think Tank Project have been developed in this way with detailed assessment information set out in the module booklets.

2.65 The School has a policy on feedback requiring students to receive at least one piece of written formative feedback and written summative feedback for each module undertaken. This is supplemented by regular verbal feedback on design modules. The School states that it intends to keep the effectiveness of these arrangements under review informed by feedback from students.

2.66 Following internal assessment, samples of work are passed to the University for moderation prior to being passed to the programme external examiners. The University requires examiners to confirm marks via an online portal called Evision. Following completion of this process a University convened Subject Standards Board formally approves the award of credit.

2.67 These arrangements are designed to meet the Expectation of B6.

2.68 The review team considered documentary evidence including samples of feedback, external examiner reports, mark lists and looked at module specifications and the institutional and course handbook at information provided to students about assessment. The team met with staff, students and external examiners to discuss their experience of the assessment process.

2.69 While the School has a stated policy on assessment feedback students identify this as an area of weakness citing a lack of consistency in the timing and effectiveness of written feedback. Student survey feedback from 2016-17 includes a number of specific references to the lack of feedback throughout the year and further raises concerns over a lack of interim grades. The team learned that the School recognised that work was needed in this area and were closely monitoring adherence to turn around times and were in the process of redesigning the feedback form itself in part to improve consistency. As such, the team **affirms** the steps being taken to improve the quality and timeliness of written assessment feedback given to students. The team also learned that the lack of grades, which had originally been a matter of choice for the first cohort of students, had been exacerbated by the poor alignment of Subject Standards Boards with the School's academic year (see affirmation in Section A3.2).

2.70 As stated in Section A3.2, the programme specification and course handbook set out the learning outcomes of the programme modules in relation to the ARB's graduate characteristics and attributes and staff refer to the University's grade band descriptors during marking. However, external examiner reports express concern about the clarity of assessment criteria used by the School. It is **recommended** that the School further develop module assessment criteria to ensure transparency for all those involved in the assessment process (see also Expectation B7).

2.71 During the visit, the team heard that there had been a disagreement about marking in the Comprehensive Design Project module in the first year of delivery. Part of the assessment is a viva voce examination of students with an internal marking team, External Examiners and representatives from the University all present. The team learned that in order to resolve differences in opinion the School with the support of the University, had sought the advice of an independent internal assessor from the University and then a third external and independent assessor. External examiners reports comment on the lack of clarity of their role in this situation (see affirmation in Section B7). The team **recommends** that the School formalise the process for resolving any disagreements arising from the panel marking.

2.72 The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is moderate. Although the School follows the University's regulations and has begun to develop its own procedural policies for assessment and feedback, these are not currently being implemented in a fully consistent and transparent manner. Further, the number of participants in the final viva voce examination of graduating students, means that procedures for resolving differences in opinion need to be clear to all involved.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.73 The School follows the University's policies and procedures in relation to external examiners, which are set out in the Academic Regulations and Quality Manual. There is a parallel programme in operation at the University and the School has adopted the same processes for external examination as are in place for this programme.

2.74 The School works with the host University School to identify suitable nominees to undertake the role of Subject Standards external examiner and the process of appointment is overseen by the University's Academic Registry.

2.75 The University provides comprehensive information to examiners on their role and expectations through an Examiners Handbook which is available on the University's website.

2.76 External examiners confirm marking standards through examination of a sample of work. This process is recorded electronically through the University's Evision student record system. Additionally, for the Professional Diploma in Designing Architecture programme, external examiners visit the School and meet with students at the beginning of the summer term and then attend the two-day final viva voce examination.

2.77 Examiners are required to submit a report to the University on an annual basis. This follows a standardised format and asks examiners to confirm their understanding of the process of assessment, quality of information received and agreement with standards. The School's response to any issues raised is required by the University through the annual monitoring report.

2.78 These processes would allow the Expectation of B7 to be met.

2.79 The team reviewed documentation including the University Regulations and Quality Manual, external examiner reports from the first and second year of operation and the collaborative annual monitoring report. During the visit the team met with staff and students and held a discussion with an external examiner.

2.80 From the evidence of the first year of operation the comments made by the external examiners have been responded to effectively through course and module logs and the collaborative annual monitoring statement. These responses were reviewed by the AQMG chaired by the University. Due to the timing of the visit in relation to the annual monitoring cycle a formal response to the second year reports had yet to be made.

2.81 The team heard that the first year reports had been shared with staff at the School and students met by the team confirmed that that they were made aware of external examiner reports through the Course Committee meetings.

2.82 External examiner reports from the second year of operation however indicate that examiners are not clear about their role and remit particularly in relation to their attendance at the final viva voce examination. Furthermore, they report that briefing documentation including handbooks and project briefs were not provided to examiners in advance of their visit. Both of these issues impacted upon the operation of the process although did not compromise standards.

2.83 Staff the team met reported that they were reviewing the provision of information to examiners and had prepared more detailed briefing information to be used in forthcoming years. The review team **affirm** the steps being taken to ensure that academic staff and external examiners are fully aware of the nature and purpose of the role of external examiners.

2.84 Examiners reports also comment on a lack of clarity in the marking criteria used by the internal assessors to reach their decisions. This, when taken with the range of samples presented to examiners had caused both to comment that this was an area that needed development. See the recommendation in Section B6.

2.85 Overall the team conclude that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is moderate. Evidence from the second set of reports indicates that although the School is expected to follow the established procedures of the University in relation to the external examination system there were some oversights in its operation in relation to the first graduating cohort, which need to be addressed.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.86 Responsibility for annual and periodic monitoring and review of the provision lies with the University and the School follows the established procedures as set out in the University's Academic Regulations and Quality Manual. The School's Diploma will be due for its first periodic review in 2018.

2.87 On an annual basis the programme is reviewed through an annual monitoring process. Module level logs are prepared which draw together feedback from students, staff and external examiners and contain action plans. The Course Leader is responsible for the collation of this material into an overall Course Log, which is the primary annual monitoring report for the provision.

2.88 Following the Subject Standards Board, a Performance Enhancement Meeting takes place which provides an opportunity for programme staff, external examiners and staff from the University to look at achievement data in relation to the Course Log and make recommendations for enhancement actions. The first of these meetings for the School's programme will take place in autumn 2017.

2.89 At the institutional level, the School is required to prepare an overarching summary Collaborative Annual Monitoring Statement each year. This document along with Course Logs, Course Forum minutes, student survey results and external examiner reports are formally approved annually at a meeting of the AQMG.

2.90 Due to the professional alignment of the programme, the School is additionally required to prepare annual reports for submission to the ARB and in due course, subject to successful approval, to the RIBA. The first annual report to the ARB will be submitted in January 2018.

2.91 The School has developed its own internal procedures in support of the University's requirements in order to assure itself of the quality of its provision. A key element of this is the Academic Court which advises the Board of Trustees, Senate and Executive Committee of the School producing an annual report on the academic health of the provision. The Court operates as an independent external peer reviewer/critic with members attending the School regularly to engage with the developing work of students. The first annual report was presented to the Board in September 2016.

2.92 These arrangements are designed to meet the Expectation in principle.

2.93 The review team considered documentary evidence including module and course logs, the Collaborative Annual Monitoring Statement and the minutes of the first Annual Quality Monitoring Group meeting. They also reviewed the Academic Court report and the submission for validation made to the RIBA. The team also saw completed questionnaires from members of the Practice Network. The review team met with a range of staff and students, members of the Court, staff from the University and staff from placement practices.

2.94 The team heard that the University were active in developing their monitoring of this new provision and that a new Link Tutor had recently been appointed. It was also confirmed that there would be a Performance Enhancement Meeting in the Autumn Term, which would

provide an opportunity to feedback to external examiners following the assessment of the first graduating cohort.

2.95 The review team also heard about the close involvement of the Board of Trustees in supporting the School and how the Academic Court provided independent, specialist advice to the Board about how the School was achieving its academic mission and objectives.

2.96 Due to the professional nature of the provision, a key focus of ongoing internal monitoring are the Practice Partners who provide a link between the School and the architectural practices in which students are placed during the first year of the programme. Practices wishing to join the School's network are required to complete an expression of interest questionnaire following which the School undertakes a risk assessment. Each year practice partners are invited to complete a feedback questionnaire and attend a review meeting. The team heard from staff that these processes were effective in ensuring oversight of this diverse network of placement providers.

2.97 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low. In addition to the rigorous processes of the University, the School has developed specific procedures for monitoring the Practice Network and uses its Academic Court as an additional peer check on the academic quality of the programme.

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

2.98 The School has aligned its processes for appeals and complaints with those of the University.

2.99 The School has fully adopted University policies in respect of appeals and the management of these processes is undertaken through the University's Student Casework Office (SCO). Students at the School are also able to access support from the Students' Union at LMU.

2.100 In terms of complaints, as a small provider with an ethos intended to develop collegiate working practices the School emphasises the importance of trying to resolve matters informally and regards itself as keen to learn from any mistakes it might make.

2.101 The School has developed a formal complaints procedure in collaboration with the University. The first stage of the process is internal to the School with a second stage review being undertaken by the University Secretary if required. If resolution is not reached the University will provide support to the student in using the external review processes of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

2.102 The processes for both complaints and appeals are set out in the Course Handbook and Institutional Handbook and are introduced to students at induction.

2.103 These procedures and arrangements meet the Expectation of B9 in principle. There is, however, currently no process for complaints and appeals in respect of the admissions process and as reported in relation to Expectation B2, the School is taking action to address this.

2.104 The review team considered documentary evidence including the Institutional and Course Handbooks, the Student Submission and the Complaints Log. During the visit they met with staff and students including the Deputy Director who is responsible for pastoral advice and support.

2.105 The student written submission confirms that students are well informed about the processes and procedures for making complaints and appeals and appreciate that the size of the School allows for issues to be raised informally. They understand that monthly one to one tutorials with the Deputy Director provide an opportunity for raising issues and find these helpful.

2.106 Students the team met confirmed that the School were responsive to issues raised and explained how, for example, staff had offered support to students to secure alternative arrangements when problems occurred in placement.

2.107 At the time of the visit, the complaints log had only one recorded entry with any other issues raised since the School opened having been resolved locally and informally.

2.108 The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the risk level is low. The processes for complaints and appeals are comprehensive but have yet to be applied in practice. Informal mechanisms for raising issues are operating effectively.

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

2.109 The School offers the Professional Diploma programme validated by LMU, under an Institutional Memorandum of Agreement between the two institutions. The School contracts with external professional practices (the Practice Network) to support the delivery of the First Year Inter-Practice Year within the programme, which is a three-day per week, year-long work placement. The Practice Network comprises about 80 architectural practices around London, which includes practices from small experimental companies to big corporates. Their experience is brought into academic Critical Practice units and in the Spring Term, into the Design Think Tank which also involves participation by the practices. Some staff from practices are also involved in Year 2 as design thesis tutors.

2.110 The placement process is outlined in detail in the Institutional Handbook and clear course specific regulations have been developed to manage various aspects of the placement. Students sign a clear contract setting out respective responsibilities. Placements are managed by Operations Manager and overseen by Director, and there is regular contact and visits are made to practices.

2.111 Following an initial expression of interest, the School undertakes a range of due diligence checks, risk evaluations and legal checks, for each practice partner. The School has put in place mechanisms to support students in the case of failure of a placement principally by ensuring they have more providers than they need and are planning to put funds in place to help with the financial impact of this.

2.112 The arrangements in place would allow the School to meet the Expectation.

2.113 The review team tested the Expectation by considering evidence provided by the School, including the Institutional Memorandum of Agreement with the awarding body, practice contracts, EOIs and risk registers and Practice Network Questionnaires; and in meetings with staff and students, and the University's Head of Partnerships for the CASS School. During meetings with staff and students, the team was able to confirm that these arrangements were effective.

2.114 The review team found that the School has a range of measures to ensure the effectiveness of this collaborative relationship within the Partner Network: Practice Network questionnaires, the Practice Placement Annual Review Meeting, the induction and continuous training of Practice mentors, the Director's regular Updates for the Practice Network, and the appointment of a Registrar to oversee the details of placements. Students expressed their appreciation of the differences of the Practice Partners and the efforts of the School to ensure a satisfactory student experience in their placements.

2.115 The University ensures that academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities delivered through these collaborative arrangements are secure and effective principally through its Annual Performance Management meeting. The Head of Partnerships for CASS has oversight of collaborative provision in School and reports to the LMU PVC for collaborative provision. Furthermore, the University Academic Liaison Tutor forms a link between the School and LMU going both ways on dealing with queries between the parties

and also provides the check that standards are met by the School, by sitting in on meetings and assessment boards.

2.116 The review team found that the level of engagement with the profession in the design of a sustainable and innovative programme that supports employability was a strong element of **good practice** (see also Expectations B1, B3, and B4).

2.117 The School has a number of arrangements in place for delivering opportunities with others, and the review team concludes that these arrangements are secure and effective in meeting the Expectation with a low level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

2.118 The School does not deliver research degrees therefore this Expectation does not apply.

Expectation: Not applicable

Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.119 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. A moderate risk has been identified in two of the ten applicable Expectations with the remainder identified as low risk. The moderate risks are due to the lack of clarity around assessment criteria including resolution to disagreements, and the role of those involved in the assessment process.

2.120 There are two features of **good practice** in this judgement area. The first relates to Expectation B1 on the level of engagement with the profession in the design of a sustainable and innovative programme that supports employability; the second relates to Expectation B3 on School's use of the dispersed campus model that encourages student independence and engagement.

2.121 The review team made two **recommendations** in respect of Expectation B6 around the School formalising the process for resolving any disagreements arising from panel marking of assessments, and for Expectation B7, to further develop module assessment criteria to ensure transparency for all those involved in the assessment process.

2.122 The team made three **affirmations** of actions being taken by the School in respect of Expectations B2, B6 and B7. These relate to the consolidation of admissions and recruitment information including the addition of a Complaints and Appeals policy; improvement to the quality and timeliness of written assessment feedback to students; and the steps being taken to ensure that academic staff and external examiners are fully aware of the nature and purpose of the role of external examiners.

2.123 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the provider **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 Information is provided on the School's website for current and prospective students, staff and alumni. The School publishes its mission statement, history, values and governance arrangements on its website and in the Institutional Handbook, which includes extensive information about its raison d'être, the people involved, and the founding faculty. Applicants and current students are able to access information about the programme through the website, Institutional and Course Handbooks and the Programme Specification. The School gives particular prominence to its experimental and innovative teaching approach to architecture.

3.2 Three key documents for current students are the Institutional and Course Handbooks and the Programme Specification. These are all available on the shared Google Drive, which is currently maintained by the Operations Manager. The Course Handbook includes standard University sections of text as well as course specific information. It is updated annually by the University.

3.3 Most of the School's information is published online and on its website. The website includes application and admissions information plus biographies of all current students. It intends to extend this to alumni profiles as well. The School is yet to undertake an audit on the usability of the website, and plans to undertake this compliance audit soon. Students find the website to be mainly outward facing. They also feel that although accurate, the website needs more frequent updating and greater clarity on usage.

3.4 The School maintains regular communication with students from when they arrive at the two-day Induction Event until they graduate, using Faculty Tutors and Practice Mentors. The School also maintains regular contact with students and Partners through regular Director Updates.

3.5 The Executive Committee has responsibility for the oversight of the accuracy and currency of information, but currently does not have any written procedures or policies in this area. On a day-to-day basis it is the Director who is responsible for the website which is the key information source for prospective students. The Board of Trustees and Executive Committee are aware of the need to manage public information carefully and to ensure that it meets appropriate standards. The design of the processes allows the Expectation to be met.

3.6 The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing the School's website and considering evidence provided by them. The team further evaluated the School's approach to meeting the Expectation by discussing with students and staff, including a demonstration of the website and Google Drive.

3.7 Within the School, there is a shared drive on Google that is split into different sites for student and staff access. This shared Google Drive hosts copies of all the relevant University and School documentation. This enables all staff and students to access up-to-date documentation.

3.8 The review team found that although there are effective processes for sharing information with students and all relevant public information is available on the School's website, there are no clear formal procedures in place for the maintenance and management of information. The Executive Committee has sought to address this recognised area of weakness by the appointment of an Associate Director with responsibility for website content and development, communication and community. The consolidation and development of information is appropriate for recruiting the new cohort for September 2018 (see the affirmation in Expectation B2 and B9).

3.9 The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is 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

3.10 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The single Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

3.11 There are no features of good practice or recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area. Generally, the quality of information is demonstrated to be fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.12 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the provider **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 The School has clearly stated strategic ambitions to provide a unique and progressive learning experience for students through its Professional Diploma programme. Due to its recent establishment, it is still in the early stages of implementing some aspects of its provision and fully realising all of its goals, for example, in terms of widening access.

4.2 The School has a Board of Trustees, many of whom have been involved from the School's inception, have established a comprehensive sub-committee structure intended to ensure support and oversight of key aspects of the provision.

4.3 During the 2016-17 academic year, the Director has begun to develop an expanded vision and mission that allows for future development and the measurement of success. This has been shared with the Executive Committee and Trustees but not yet been formally approved.

4.4 The establishment of the Academic Court, which is a particular feature of the School's governance structure along with the active engagement of the Trustees is significant in establishing an ethos of critical reflection and enhancement. The annual report of the Academic Court, which identifies areas for enhancement in terms of the quality of student outcomes is embedded into the annual cycle of business.

4.5 The School's Senate, which sits between the Executive Committee and Academic Court and Board of Trustees has so far only met once in May 2017. Its Terms of Reference set out its stated responsibility for enhancement. The Senate is intending to establish an external Advisory Panel, of professionals from disciplines that work alongside architecture to further inform its work.

4.6 The School is required to engage with the quality enhancement processes of the validating University through a rigorous process of module level and course level annual monitoring. Although, the School has only completed one cycle there is evidence of the effectiveness of this processes in identifying areas for enhancement in response to the feedback of students and external examiners.

4.7 These arrangements meet the Expectation in terms of design by providing a clear strategy and oversight at provider level for the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

4.8 The team reviewed documentation including the Strategic Plan, Minutes of Trustee meetings along with the Terms of Reference and Reports of the Court and Senate. The team also reviewed annual monitoring documentation including Module and Course Logs and the Collaborative Annual Monitoring Statement. The team met with a range of staff and students including members of the Senate, Academic Court and Board of Trustees. It also met with members of staff from the Practice Network.

4.9 The positive and productive relationship with the University, professional bodies and the wide-ranging Practice Network mean that the School actively draws on good practice to enhance the student learning opportunities from both academic and professional perspectives.

4.10 The School has in place a robust governance structure, which provides appropriate oversight and support for enhancement. Given the very recent establishment of the School there is evidence of a high level of engagement from trustees and a clear sense of shared ambition and purpose.

4.11 During the first two years of operation the Executive Committee has been responsible for ensuring that actions arising from the annual monitoring process have been implemented. There have been enhancements in response to student and examiner issues raised in the first year of operation and students the team met were positive about the School's commitment to the continued improvement and refinement of the student experience giving examples of changes made in response to their feedback. These include improvements to tutoring arrangements for second year students and actions to reduce bunching of assessment deadlines.

4.12 A new internal monitoring process has been implemented this year demonstrating a commitment as the School matures to increased responsibility for monitoring and review. The role of the Senate is intended to develop as the primary internal deliberative committee. The team heard that staff saw the Senate as the focus for debate and sharing of good practice across the School's community going forward.

4.13 The School has recently appointed a Registrar and Associate Director to increase support for the development of its central processes such as admissions and work placement.

4.14 During the visit the team heard about the importance of the School's Practice Network as contributors to establishing the unique character of the provision and its curriculum. Practice Network staff met by the team described how their involvement with developing the Think Tank project enabled them to share expertise and resources while addressing current debates and agendas within the profession. They confirmed that the School was proactive in communicating with them and provided effective opportunities for them to feedback such that they felt active participants in the development of the School. The team found that the engagement of the Practice Network as a vehicle for the enhancement of students' learning and professional opportunities is **good practice**.

4.15 The team concludes that the expectation is met and the risk level is low. Although the School has only been in operation for two years there is a clear strategic commitment to enhancement, which is understood from Board level through staff and students to the Practice Network. The University's processes for enhancement are being followed effectively and internal mechanisms such as the establishment of the Senate continue to be developed.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.16 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The School takes deliberate steps at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. The single Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

4.17 The review team identified the engagement of the Practice Network as a vehicle for the enhancement of students' learning and professional opportunities as a feature of **good practice**.

4.18 There are no recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area.

4.19 The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the provider **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.

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.

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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