



# Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of The Prince's School of Traditional Arts

October 2016

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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 Prince's School of Traditional Arts. The review took place from 11 to 13 October 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Mike Bramhall
- Ms Francine Norris.

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

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

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

A check is also made on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) with the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

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

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

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

<sup>3</sup> Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx).

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about The Prince's School of Traditional Arts

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at The Prince's School of Traditional Arts.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body **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** at The Prince's School of Traditional Arts.

- The development and maintenance of an extended community of practice that enhances the students' learning experience (Expectations B3, B4 and Enhancement).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to The Prince's School of Traditional Arts.

By February 2017:

- ensure that processes are in place to provide adequate support for supervisors and research students prior to the resumption of recruitment (Expectation B11).

By March 2017:

- develop a process for monitoring and evaluating informal student complaints (Expectation B9).

By June 2017:

- work with the awarding body to determine the most effective way of gathering formal individual student feedback about the MA programme (Expectations B8 and B5).

By October 2017:

- involve the wider community of teaching and support staff in the process of programme monitoring and review, and the dissemination of outcomes (Expectation B8).

### Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that The Prince's School of Traditional Arts is already taking to make academic standards secure and improve the educational provision offered to its students:

- the steps being taken to underpin the Staff Development Policy through the implementation of a Staff Appraisal and Personal Development Scheme (Expectation B3)
- the actions being taken to develop the website and a Social Media Policy (Expectation C)
- the introduction of the Programme Strategy Group to lead, plan and oversee integrated enhancement activity (Enhancement).

## **Financial sustainability, management and governance**

The financial sustainability, management and governance check has been satisfactorily completed.

## **About The Prince's School of Traditional Arts**

The Prince's School of Traditional Arts (the School) is part of a group of charities that reflect HRH The Prince of Wales' profound interest in a wide range of issues, such as education and the arts. It is situated in Shoreditch, London and attracts students from all over the world. It began in 1984 as the Visual Islamic and Traditional Arts Department at the Royal College of Art until it emerged as The Prince's School of Traditional Arts in 2004. The School's mission is to promote the knowledge and practice of traditional arts and crafts, and to support their regeneration as a valid means of contemporary expression.

The School offers a taught MA programme in Visual Islamic and Traditional Arts, and MPhil/PhD programmes. The School also runs Open and Outreach programmes, and the Harmony Schools Programme. Apart from a small number of research students who are still registered with the University of Wales, all the awards are now validated by the University of Wales Trinity St David.

At the time of its QAA Review for Educational Oversight in 2012, the School had 40 higher education students (26 full time and 14 part time). It now has 29 students on higher education programmes, consisting of 20 MA students and nine research students.

Data indicate that success rates are generally high. During the last academic year, there was a 100 per cent progression and completion rate on the MA programme. During the last four years, only three students have not successfully completed their studies, all due to early withdrawal from the programme. For research degrees, there have been seven successful completions and three withdrawals since the academic year 2012-13.

The School has identified a number of key challenges facing its higher education provision, including: adapting to changes at an organisational level; a change of validating body; financial support for postgraduate students; student recruitment to research degree programmes; and managing space and resources.

The School has made satisfactory progress with the recommendations and further development of features of good practice made in the Review for Educational Oversight report.

## Explanation of the findings about The Prince's School of Traditional Arts

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#) is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.

## **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* 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 Ultimate responsibility for setting academic standards and ensuring the requirements of the relevant reference points are met lies with the School's awarding body, the University of Wales Trinity St. David (UWTSD). The School delivers an MA in Visual Islamic and Traditional Arts, and MPhil/PhD research degrees. The first students were registered with UWTSD in September 2014. The design of the taught MA programme was initially with the University of Wales, but was subsequently revalidated by UWTSD in accordance with the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). This is made explicit in a legally binding Memorandum of Agreement. The School made reference to the Subject Benchmark Statements for Art and Design, and the History of Art, Architecture and Design, and the QAA *Master's Degree Characteristics* document in its validation documents and Student Handbook. The Subject Benchmark Statements inform the curriculum maps, which illustrate how knowledge and skills are mapped against the programme learning outcomes. UWTSD has established frameworks, assessment regulations and procedures for programme approval and modification, to which the School is subject. The processes in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.2 The review team considered the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining the Memorandum of Agreement, programme specifications, validation and

partnership reports, and external examiner reports. The team also met teaching and senior staff, and a representative from UWTSD.

1.3 The evidence reviewed shows the procedures to be effective in practice. The School has committed to, and fulfils, its responsibilities to UWTSD as outlined in the partnership agreement. The revalidation by UWSTD for the MA and MPhil/PhD courses confirms that UWTSD has confidence in the School's management of threshold standards and that appropriate attention was paid in this process to the FHEQ. This is also confirmed by partnership and moderator review reports from UWTSD (and previously the University of Wales) for both the MA and research awards. The review team found no concerns about threshold academic standards expressed in any of the MA external examiner reports, PhD student monitoring reports or PhD final examination reports.

1.4 While the awarding body has ultimate responsibility through its own regulatory frameworks for ensuring that the relevant external reference points are adhered to, there is evidence that the School effectively manages its own responsibilities for doing this within its partnership agreements. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.5 Academic governance of higher education provision at the School rests with UWTSD, which has control over academic credit and standards as outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement, and has clear guidance on academic regulations through its Academic Quality Manual and Collaborative Partner Manual. The School's Teaching and Learning Strategy assures academic standards through close scrutiny by external examiners, the Academic Board and the Research Degrees Committee (RDC), as well as review by UWTSD and student feedback. The Academic Board has strategic overview of the frameworks for academic standards and enhancement, and the alignment of internal processes with those required by UWTSD. MA examination boards are carried out externally by UWTSD, with appropriate input sought from external examiners. The School uses the regulations of its research degree-awarding bodies: the University of Wales through its Common Academic Framework and Codes of Practice for Research Degrees, and UWTSD through its Academic Quality Handbook and Research Supervisor Handbook. These documents set out the standards that ensure the academic integrity of the research degree awards, wherever they are offered, and cover institutional arrangements for assessment and award of credit. The process for academic regulations would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.6 The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements by examining documentation including the Memorandum of Agreement, Academic Quality Manual, Collaborative Partner Manual, Teaching and Learning Strategy, minutes of boards of examiners and relevant committee meetings, research degree reports and regulations, and reports from UWTSD and external examiners. The team also held meetings with teaching and senior staff and a representative from UWTSD.

1.7 The evidence reviewed shows the procedures to be effective in practice. The School understands clearly its responsibilities and discharges them effectively to maintain academic standards. This has been confirmed through recent feedback from MA external examiners, PhD examination reports and reports from UWTSD. The review team saw evidence that the Teaching and Learning Strategy and Student Handbooks developed by the School acknowledge the academic regulations of UWTSD. The team also saw evidence that the Academic Board oversees the development, implementation and review of quality assurance procedures and regulatory frameworks, including oversight of annual monitoring reports and examination boards.

1.8 The awarding body has responsibility for academic frameworks and regulations. The School adheres to these requirements and has appropriate processes in place to ensure that staff understand and enact their responsibilities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

**Expectation (A2.2): 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**

1.9 The School is responsible for delivering programmes in accordance with its awarding body's regulations. The Memorandum of Agreement between the School and UWTSD makes it clear that it is the responsibility of the former to ensure that definitive programme documents reflect the expectations of the Quality Code, and serve to inform key stakeholders and be a reference point for the educational aims of each programme. The School produces the definitive documents through programme specifications and module descriptors, which are published in programme handbooks for both MA and research students. The programme handbooks are used in conjunction with the UWTSD Academic Quality Handbook, which includes the Research Degree Regulations and Code of Practice. The programme handbooks are approved by UWTSD. The School is also responsible for proposing any minor or significant changes to programmes in line with UWTSD requirements. UWTSD is responsible for the production of certificates and transcripts. The arrangements in place for the maintenance and use of definitive programme records would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.10 The review team tested the Expectation by scrutinising a range of documentation including programme specifications, module descriptors, the Memorandum of Agreement, programme handbooks, UWTSD Academic Quality Handbook, and internal meeting minutes. The team also held meetings with students, and with support, teaching and senior staff.

1.11 The evidence reviewed shows the School's practices and procedures to be effective and to fulfil its responsibilities regarding UWTSD's processes. Staff met by the review team confirmed their understanding of the processes in place, and many had taken part in the revalidation with UWTSD through updating the programme and module learning outcomes for the MA. Students confirmed that they had a good understanding of their programmes.

1.12 The School and its awarding body ensure that definitive records of programmes and qualifications are maintained. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.13 UWTSD is ultimately responsible for ensuring that academic standards are set and maintained at an appropriate level and are in accordance with its academic frameworks and regulations. Through its current partnership agreement with UWTSD, the School has responsibility for designing its programmes, which were revalidated in 2014. For the MA programme, the Programme Director has responsibility for programme design and reports developments to the Course Board of Studies. Research students follow individually designed programmes, which are considered and approved by UWTSD at application stage. Proposals are discussed as part of the initial interview; when a student is offered a place, the proposal is formally approved by the School's RDC and subsequently by UWTSD. The School's processes, and its adherence to those of its awarding body, would enable it to meet the Expectation.

1.14 The review team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining documentation including programme specifications, validation reports and minutes of meetings such as the RDC. The team also held meetings with senior and teaching staff, including a representative from UWTSD.

1.15 The evidence reviewed shows the procedures to be effective in practice. Processes for programme design and approval in the School are clearly set out by the awarding body, and are effectively operated and understood by staff. This is reflected in the validation reports and the subsequent action plan, which is monitored by UWTSD and sets out the School's planned response to the conditions and recommendations. The review team saw evidence that the alignment of learning outcomes to the FHEQ was specifically considered at revalidation through the programme specification and individual module descriptors.

1.16 While the awarding body retains ultimate responsibility for academic standards, the School discharges effectively its delegated responsibilities for contributing to the development and approval of the programmes and its associated academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

**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**

1.17 The School's awarding body is ultimately responsible for ensuring the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of all credit and qualifications awarded in its name. For the School's taught MA programme, the awarding body operates a credit-based system defining the award in terms of 180 credits at FHEQ level 7; parts one and two of the programme both require students to meet stated learning outcomes, which are aligned with level 7 and are tested at the summative assessment points for each stage of the programme. The MA programme specification and module descriptors set out each learning outcome that the student must demonstrate to pass or progress and the assessment criteria that will be used to assess achievement. All work submitted for assessment is double-marked internally, which, along with the exhibition of practice-based work, assures the School that it is maintaining standards in its internal marking. The internal and external examination boards were combined in October 2016. This board confirms assessment outcomes and are attended by the internal examiners, external examiner and the UWTSD Partnership Team Leader. Research degrees are awarded on the basis of submitted work and the successful completion of a final examination by a panel consisting of a chair, an internal examiner and an external examiner. No research degrees have yet been awarded by UWTSD. Progression within research degrees is monitored internally on an ongoing basis by the RDC, and through an annual review process resulting in a report by students and supervisors on progress.

1.18 There is an annually updated Student Handbook, issued to students, that sets out the programme structure and content including specific assessment criteria and learning outcomes. For both taught and research programmes, external examiners are appointed by the awarding body, which reports back informally at visits and formally through a written report. The School is required by the awarding body to prepare an action plan setting out how it intends to address any issues raised, with progress against the actions being monitored through the Annual Programme Review process. These procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.19 The review team tested the Expectation by scrutinising the evidence provided by the School including Student Handbooks, programme specifications, validation documents, assessment regulations, minutes of examination boards, and external examiner reports. The team also met senior staff, teaching staff and students.

1.20 The evidence reviewed shows the policies and procedures to be effective in practice. Internal assessment procedures for the MA programme meet the requirements of the awarding body, and awards are made following the MA examination board. For research degrees, the review team saw evidence of the level of scrutiny exercised by the assessment panel. The rigour of the processes is confirmed both by the external examiner and UWTSD Partnership Team Leader in their regular reports.

1.21 There are clear procedures in place to ensure that assessment is robust, valid and reliable. These processes and their application by the School ensure that the award of qualifications is based on the achievement of the intended learning outcomes or research objectives, as appropriate. The review 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**

1.22 The monitoring and review of programmes and the achievement of academic standards is the shared responsibility of the School, through its Programme Directors, and UWTSD. The policies and procedures that the School is required to follow are set out in UWTSD's Academic Quality Handbook and Collaborative Partnership Manual. At an operational level, the MA Course Board of Studies and the RDC consider student achievement and oversee programme monitoring and review, with both reporting to the Academic Board, which has responsibility for strategic oversight. Since the revalidation process took place in the academic year 2014-15, the School has conducted an Annual Programme Review for the MA on behalf of UWTSD. This replaces the annual monitoring report previously required by the University of Wales. For research degrees, reports will be produced alongside the annual monitoring process, with summary reports to the RDC and UWTSD until the final University of Wales students have completed their programmes.

1.23 For research degrees, annual monitoring is completed largely on a student-by-student basis. Overarching monitoring of the provision has in the past been undertaken by the University of Wales moderator, but this post is not continuing under the new arrangements with UWTSD. The UWTSD designates a Partnership Team Leader, who formally visits and reviews the provision twice a year. Thus far, only one visit has been completed. A written report is submitted and the School is expected to respond to any issues identified. Additionally, the School holds an internal annual planning meeting where changes to the MA programme in response to ongoing internal review are considered. The School's own processes and its adherence to those of its awarding body would enable it to meet the Expectation.

1.24 The review team tested the effectiveness of the procedures by examining relevant documentation including annual monitoring reports, validation and Partnership Team Leader reports, partnership agreements, academic regulations, external examiner reports, and minutes of relevant meetings such as the Course Board of Study, RDC and Academic Board. The team also held meetings with senior, teaching and support staff, and students.

1.25 In terms of achieving and maintaining academic standards, the evidence reviewed showed the procedures to be effective in practice. There is a comprehensive programme monitoring process required by the awarding body, and, internally, the review team saw evidence of the School's deliberative committee structure effectively overseeing the process. The team also saw examples of responses to external examiner reports demonstrating how actions are taken forward. The most recent Partnership Team Leader report confirms that the MA programme has been delivered effectively in the last year despite recent major staffing changes.

1.26 Ongoing changes are made to the content of the curriculum each year in response to staff and student feedback, and these are discussed and agreed at an annual planning meeting. Staff met by the review team were clear about UWTSD's minor modifications process and understood that any changes would be identified through the annual monitoring process.

1.27 The evidence from documentation and meetings shows that the School has appropriate systems in place for programme monitoring and review with regard to maintaining academic standards, and is operating effectively in accordance with the requirements of its awarding body. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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**

1.28 The awarding body has ultimate responsibility for making use of external and independent expertise to set and maintain academic standards. Their regulations require the School to use external perspectives at key points, including at validation and each year at summative assessment points. During the revalidation process in 2014, input was sought from an external panel member in accordance with UWTSD requirements. For the MA programme, an external examiner attends the part one and two assessments and produces a formal written report each year. For research degrees, the external examiner is part of the assessment panel.

1.29 The School has a strategic educational mission to further the traditional arts, which embeds a commitment to externality through what is described by the School as its 'virtuous circle'. This is the system whereby the core educational provision of the School informs the development of outreach activity, which in turn, by bringing back wider perspectives on the subject, informs the School's approach and curriculum. The School's Board of Trustees is instrumental in ensuring the overall direction of the School in this respect, and its members have been selected for their wide range of expertise and international external perspective. In addition to a core staff of practising academics and artists, the School employs a wide range of visiting tutors, many of whom are experts in their field, and regularly uses alumni as contributors and teachers. In recent years, the School has also been active in developing collaborative projects with other institutions to gather external perspectives in terms of current approaches to arts education. These approaches would allow the School to meet the Expectation.

1.30 The review team considered the effectiveness of these procedures by scrutinising the awarding body's regulations and procedures, external examiner reports, validation documentation, details of outreach programmes, and minutes of relevant meetings. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff, and students.

1.31 The review team found these processes to work effectively in practice. Independent expertise is ensured at programme design and assessment stages through the requirements of the awarding body to use external examiners and external panel members at validation. Additionally, the team saw evidence that the School ensures opportunities for external perspectives through its Board of Trustees, and range of staff and outreach activities.

1.32 Although the School does not use external input directly to inform programme design, it does encourage the informing of the curriculum by the practice and experience of staff and alumni. The School has also demonstrated its commitment to ensuring externality through the appointment of an external member to its Academic Board. External examiner reports have noted that there is a successful balance between maintaining a close-knit professional community and preserving impartiality.

1.33 The School works in accordance with the regulations and procedures of its awarding body. The evidence from documentation and meetings shows that, overall, the School is effectively managing its responsibilities for maintaining academic standards and making use of external expertise through its trustees, visiting staff and alumni. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

1.34 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.35 All of the Expectations for this judgement area are met with low risk. There are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice in this judgement area.

1.36 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body at the School **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 Under the terms of the validation arrangements with UWTSD, the School is responsible for the design of its programmes. The School uses UWTSD's Academic Quality Handbook as the basis for programme design, and benchmarks the programmes to the appropriate FHEQ Characteristics Statements for master's and PhD level. The School has a clear educational mission and purpose, which is articulated in the Strategic Plan, and the portfolio of programmes has been developed to support this. The single, long-established taught MA programme and the small MPhil/PhD provision mean that the School has had limited involvement in the design and approval of new programmes in recent years. Higher education provision was reviewed and revalidated in 2014 by the current awarding body, UWTSD. The programmes will undergo periodic review every five years. The School ensures that external perspectives inform the structure and content of the curriculum by means of its policy to employ practitioners as teaching staff. The active input of trustees and external examiners also contributes to the currency of programme design. There is a procedure set out by the awarding body for making minor amendments to programmes but this has not been used since the revalidation took place. Internally, any proposed changes to programme content or delivery are discussed at Course Board of Study and approved at the Academic Board. The adherence of the School to its awarding body's formal procedures for programme design, development and approval, and its own internal processes, would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.2 The review team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining documentation relating to the School's strategic objectives, awarding body documentation including the Academic Quality Handbook and Collaborative Partner Manual, internal committee minutes, and validation documentation. The team also held meetings with senior and teaching staff, and students.

2.3 The review team found these processes to work effectively in practice. The School has a clear strategic mission and its portfolio of programmes is aligned to it. The team saw evidence that the School adheres to the processes, roles and responsibilities for programme design, development and approval that are clearly defined by UWTSD. The process is systematically evaluated through the School's deliberative committees and assessment boards.

2.4 A core team of senior staff was involved in the development stage of the revalidation process. For the MA programme, the Director of Education worked closely with existing staff in mapping assessment and learning outcomes in relation to the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement. Progress was reported to students and other members of staff through the regular committee meetings. The School did not specifically seek external input to the process but an external panel member was involved in the revalidation event itself. The review team saw evidence that the School, based on feedback and recommendations, made changes to the programmes. For example, although the curriculum

remained broadly similar, structural changes to the pace and timing of assessment have been implemented.

2.5 The processes for programme design and approval specified by the awarding body are robust and have been consistently applied to the School's portfolio. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.6 The School has overall responsibility for recruitment, selection and admission to its taught and research programmes. The Open and Outreach programmes help the School in terms of its diverse recruitment base. The School has a clear Admissions Policy, which is also referred to in its Teaching and Learning Strategy. The Policy includes procedures for dealing with appeals and complaints. The Policy is kept under review by the Academic Board. The School is also expected to adhere to the general principles of UWTSD's Admissions Policy and Collaborative Partner Manual. UWTSD requires its partners to comply with relevant legislation and for there to be clarity of roles and responsibilities in relation to admissions, including transparent admissions arrangements and selection of students for merit, potential and diversity.

2.7 The School publicises information for its potential applicants, including entry requirements, through its website, prospectuses and related publicity materials. The MA Admissions Panel, which includes the MA Director of Studies, MA senior tutors, student representatives and the Registrar, holds a formal meeting to assess the application forms and portfolios and decide which applicants will proceed to interview. The interview panel includes the MA Director of Studies, MA senior tutors, the Registrar and a student representative. Applications for research programmes have to be submitted to, and approved by, the admissions subcommittee of the awarding body prior to the offer of a place being made by the partner institution. This enables UWTSD to consider whether there is sufficient academic knowledge and supervisory capacity in the relevant area of discipline before a commitment is made to the applicant. These processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.8 The review team examined the effectiveness of the recruitment, selection and admissions policies and procedures by analysing documentation including a sample of applicants' recorded journeys through the admissions process, Admissions Policy, Teaching and Learning Strategy, UWTSD Admissions Policy and Collaborative Partner Manual, prospectus and website. The team also met students, support staff and staff involved in admissions.

2.9 The review team found that the policies and procedures for recruitment, selection and admission work effectively in practice. The website contains clear information about the content of the courses and how to apply, including the admissions criteria. The prospectus has clear information about the philosophy of the school, its teaching and learning methods and its expectations of students.

2.10 The review team saw evidence that the Admissions Committee works effectively and ratifies the offers of places to applicants. Staff and students are given 'training' in the admissions process through observing student interviews. The School communicates clearly and in a timely manner the outcomes of interviews for all applicants. For the taught programme, pre-course introductory projects are set and pre-arrival induction packs are given to students. The School arranges a one-week induction course for all its new students.

Students met by the team stated that admissions and induction processes were clear and that they had been given an accurate understanding of their course prior to commencement.

2.11 The evidence from documentation and meetings shows that the School has recruitment, selection and admissions policies and procedures that adhere to the principles of fair admission. Information for prospective students is clear and widely available. 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**

2.12 The School has a comprehensive Teaching and Learning Strategy, produced after consultation with staff and students. It articulates the School's approaches to teaching and learning and, in particular, to promoting the balance between arts practice, research and academic context in practical application, including opportunities to undertake field trips to extend practice. One of the key principles in the Strategy is for students to be supported and developed to promote their personal and professional growth. The School's distinctive approach to teaching and learning is also articulated on the website.

2.13 The School has in place mechanisms through its governance structure for monitoring and maintaining teaching quality, comprising annual peer observation, annual programme review, staff development, sharing of good practice and student feedback. The Staff Development Policy states that the School is committed to providing staff with development opportunities to ensure that individuals and departments contribute fully to support the ethos and work of the School and the vision for its development. There is a formal peer observation scheme in place. UWTSD approves recommendations from the School for the appointment of new tutors, taking into account the level of provision being taught, their teaching experience and scholarly activity. These policies and procedures would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.14 The review team tested the Expectation by examining a wide range of documentary evidence including minutes of relevant committees, annual monitoring reports, external examiner reports, performance statistics, the Teaching and Learning Strategy, the Staff Development Policy and records, the peer observation scheme, and research and scholarly activity. The team also held meetings with senior, teaching and support staff, and students.

2.15 The review team found these processes to work effectively in practice. External examiner reports and the awarding bodies' annual monitoring reports confirm the high quality of work and the effectiveness of the School's processes for managing and enhancing teaching and learning. Achievement rates for the MA programme are high and students confirmed the quality of the teaching and the resources available to them. The desire to recruit more PhD students has been compromised in recent years due to a shortfall in the capacity of staff to supervise them, which has contributed to the decision to consolidate this part of the provision before further recruitment (see Expectation B11).

2.16 A distinctive feature of the School is the support that students receive from alumni. Practising alumni provide visiting sessions each year on the MA programme and outline models of successful careers in the traditional arts. Many of the staff are themselves alumni and this ensures a strong continuity and sense of community. Students highlighted the high quality and benefits of teaching in small groups and access to quality time with their tutors in class and during workshops. Students described their tutors as being very supportive, inspiring and easy to contact outside of class sessions. Staff and students emphasised the value of being able to engage with the School's Open and Outreach programmes, which have significantly enhanced learning experiences and have provided further opportunities to work alongside and learn from each other in a well-developed community of practice.

The development and maintenance of an extended community of practice that enhances the students' learning experience is **good practice**.

2.17 The School's Staff Development Policy was introduced in the academic year 2015-16, and the review team saw evidence that informal development takes place. However, the School has in the past lacked a formal staff appraisal scheme to strategically identify staff development needs. The School has been working closely with an external consultant to develop a formal appraisal system, and this has led to the production of a draft Staff Appraisal and Personal Development Scheme, which is going through the relevant committee for amendment and approval. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to underpin the Staff Development Policy through the implementation of a Staff Appraisal and Personal Development Scheme.

2.18 The School has a number of strengths in teaching and learning, with students valuing the knowledge and dedication of tutors and the opportunities to engage with staff and alumni in a variety of ways. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.19 The School's Teaching and Learning Strategy sets out, as core principles, the promotion of professional and personal growth through a holistic experience of the traditional arts as a synthesis of wisdom, knowledge and practical skills, and the creation of a supportive open studio community in which ideas, knowledge and discoveries are shared. The educational aims and learning outcomes of the MA programme are designed to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The School provides students with a variety of higher education resources, workshops, learning spaces and services to support their learning, and an in-house specialist library, which is supported by active collaborations with other London libraries. The School's Strategic Development Plan outlines the resource requirements of the School, which are overseen by the Resource and Planning Group. These resources are also monitored by the School's Academic Board. There are library induction and information literacy sessions for new students. All students have a personal tutor to monitor their overall progress. Programmes are structured to ensure students can monitor their own progress. The MA programme consists of termly tutorials, module reviews and regular studio tutorials, while for research students there is an annual progress review, regular tutorials and the transfer viva. The processes the School has in place would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.20 The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements and resources through an examination of documentation including financial statements, external examiner and validation reports, and annual monitoring reports. The team also held discussions with teaching and support staff, and students.

2.21 The review team found that the procedures for implementing, monitoring and evaluating arrangements and resources work effectively in practice. Students met by the team were satisfied with both the academic and tutorial support available to them, and particularly valued the support from their tutors and visiting tutors, and the talks from alumni who had gone into practice. Students receive appropriate levels of feedback at every stage of their learning and assessment process. At induction, they welcomed the advice and support from second-year students. The team also saw evidence of support being made available for students whose first language was not English, or if they had a specific disability.

2.22 The School has in place a number of processes to support students in their professional development, and opportunities to promote the outcomes of their practice such as engagement in the Open and Outreach programmes. Students develop presentation posters and portfolios to prepare them for professional exhibition work. They also undertake live projects and the presence of master practitioners in the studio allows students to participate and discuss how principles and methodology extend beyond the studio.

2.23 The School has appropriate arrangements and resources in place to support students to develop and achieve their potential. Students are positive about the support and resources available to them. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met 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**

2.24 The School has a strategic objective, set out in its Teaching and Learning Strategy, to create a shared community of practice, research and open learning through working in partnership with the student body. The community ethos is supported by the studio environment of the School, the commitment to appointing staff who are practitioners in their own right, the Open and Outreach programmes, and the reciprocal relationship with alumni. The School provides a range of opportunities for students to engage in quality assurance and enhancement, with both formal and informal procedures set out in the Student Handbook and in the Teaching and Learning Strategy. The Student Forum meets on a termly basis and can be attended by all students as a means to discuss programme development, learning resources and welfare issues. It also serves as a means of feeding back to students about enhancement actions taken by the School. The system of module evaluation enables individual students to provide anonymised feedback about their learning experience using a standard form provided by UWTSD.

2.25 Student representatives are appointed for each year of the MA programme and from the research degrees cohort. Representatives are expected to attend formal committees including the Course Board of Studies and RDC. Issues raised at the forum and committees are brought forward to the Academic Board for discussion and action. Recently, membership of the Academic Board has been extended to student representatives, although currently they are only able to attend part of the meeting. The School, in liaison with the student body, developed a role descriptor for student representatives setting out the aims and objectives of the role. Additionally, the School supports experienced representatives to induct new ones each year, ensuring continuity between cohorts. The effectiveness of student engagement processes is reviewed annually as part of the Annual Programme Review. The way in which student engagement is monitored is also communicated through the Student Handbooks and the Teaching and Learning Strategy to ensure that all students are aware of the School's strategic priorities in this area. The School's strategies and procedures for engaging students would enable it to meet this Expectation.

2.26 The review team examined the effectiveness of the strategies and procedures in place to engage students by examining documentation including Student Handbooks, role descriptors for the student representative, minutes and terms of reference of relevant committees and the student forum, and sources of student feedback. The team also held meetings with teaching and support staff, senior staff, students and student representatives.

2.27 Overall, the review team found that the strategies and procedures for student engagement work effectively in practice. Students met by the team felt engaged in quality assurance and enhancement procedures and had been fully informed about the Teaching and Learning Strategy. They also confirmed that they found the School responsive to their collective input and suggestions. The team was informed about a number of recent enhancements as a result of student feedback including the provision of feedback to students from visiting tutors, physical improvements to lighting in the studio and the introduction of a colour harmony workshop.

2.28 Student forums are well attended by students and focus on ensuring effective information sharing. On the whole, formal committee meetings are also well attended,

although due to the part-time nature and stage of study of current research degree representatives, attendance at the RDC is less consistent. The review team was informed that reviewing research student representation was a priority for the School.

2.29 The School does not systematically collect individual student feedback through an annual or programme-level survey. The module evaluation process for the MA programme has not been widely adopted, but remains the only means by which students can feed back with a level of anonymity. Students met by the review team did not find the process particularly relevant, as the format of the evaluation does not align well to the particular scale and nature of provision at the School. Staff confirmed that the level of engagement with the process did not result in useful outcomes. These findings support the recommendation under Expectation B8.

2.30 The School has a number of ways to gather students' views and there is ample evidence of changes being made as a result of this feedback. Student representation is adequate at forums and committees, although the School recognises the need to review representation by research students. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.31 The School's approach to assessment is set out in its Teaching and Learning Strategy and is designed to enable students to monitor their academic, artistic and personal progress through their programme of study. A combination of formative, summative and diagnostic assessment is used, which aims to operate as a positive learning tool by providing critical but supportive feedback in a timely manner. The School uses oral tutorial feedback, studio critique format, module reviews, staged assessments, and self and peer evaluation as major aspects of the assessment process. There are clear procedures for the accreditation of prior learning set out by UWTSD, although these have yet to be used by the School. The procedures for assessment are set out more fully under Expectation A3.2. The School's own processes and procedures for assessment and its approach to complying with the regulations of its awarding body would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.32 The review team tested the Expectation by scrutinising the evidence provided by the School, including assessment regulations and procedures, the Teaching and Learning Strategy, external examiner reports, module descriptors, programme specifications, Student Handbooks, tutorial notes, annual monitoring reports, and minutes of Examination Boards. The team also met senior staff, teaching staff and students.

2.33 The evidence showed the processes and procedures to be effective in practice. The review team saw evidence that staff and students engage in regular discussion about assessment practices. In addition, assessment strategies are reviewed annually through the Course Board of Study and the Academic Board, and also commented on by the Partnership Team Leader in their twice-yearly reports. The latest Partnership Team Leader report indicates that all assessment information is clear and made available to students and that the three module reviews are effective in giving feedback ahead of the final examination. External examiner reports confirm assessment as being appropriate, impartial and thorough.

2.34 Students value the approach taken to assessment and understand what is expected of them. Students are also satisfied with the quality of written feedback and its effectiveness in helping them to improve. Although feedback from visiting tutors has been recently introduced following student requests, students met by the review team stated that this had been more varied in quality and usefulness.

2.35 The School operates appropriate procedures that enable equitable, valid and reliable assessment. The use of staged assessments for individual modules with an emphasis on developmental feedback contributes to the high success rates of students. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.36 UWTSD is responsible for defining the role of the external examiner and for their appointment and training. The School is responsible for providing nominations of suitable examiners for both the MA programme and for individual research degree candidates. There is a single external examiner for the MA programme, with a new one having recently been appointed for the academic year 2016-17. The external examiner meets students to discuss their work, and attends the autumn and summer examination boards. Following each board, the external examiner completes a report in accordance with the awarding body's standard reporting method, which, following submission to UWTSD, is shared with the School, which is required to produce a formal response and action plan to address any issues raised. The report template requires the external examiner to confirm the completion of actions taken as a result of their previous recommendations. The School considers external examiner reports at the Course Board of Study and shares them in an electronic format with student representatives, who in turn circulate them to other students.

2.37 For research degrees, there is a single external examiner for each candidate, along with an internal examiner and independent chair, who convenes the examination panel. External examiner nominations are proposed and discussed internally at the RDC before being submitted to UWTSD for approval. External examiners prepare a comprehensive written report on the thesis prior to the viva voce and then complete it following the examination. The School's procedures and its adherence to those of its awarding body would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.38 The review team examined the effectiveness of these procedures in practice by examining a range of documentation including external examiner reports and associated responses, minutes of deliberative committees and examination boards, and the UWTSD Academic Quality Handbook and Collaborative Partner Manual. It also held meetings with students, teaching staff and senior staff.

2.39 The evidence showed the processes and procedures to be effective in practice. The review team saw evidence that the School adheres to the clear processes in place for responding systematically to comments and issues raised in external examiner reports and acting on the advice and feedback provided. The School sees suggestions and recommendations from external examiners as opportunities to enhance its programmes, and specifically references this in the Teaching and Learning Strategy.

2.40 Student representatives met by the review team confirmed that they had met the external examiner. They also have opportunities to read external examiner reports and to share them with the wider student group.

2.41 The role of external examiners is clear and well embedded in the quality assurance systems, and the School makes effective use of reports in the monitoring, review and enhancement of higher education provision. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.42 The monitoring and review of programmes and the achievement of academic standards are the shared responsibility of the School, through its Programme Directors, and UWTSD. The policies and procedures that the School is required to follow are set out in UWTSD's Academic Quality Handbook and Collaborative Partnership Manual. The procedures for programme monitoring and review are set out more fully under Expectation A3.3. The School's own processes, and its adherence to those of its awarding body, would enable it to meet the Expectation.

2.43 The review team tested the effectiveness of the procedures by examining relevant documentation including annual monitoring reports, validation and Partnership Team Leader reports, partnership agreements, academic regulations, external examiner reports, module evaluations, and minutes of relevant meetings such as the Course Board of Study, RDC and Academic Board. The team also held meetings with senior, teaching and support staff, and students.

2.44 Overall, the evidence showed the processes and procedures to be effective in practice. The review team saw evidence that the deliberative committee structure at the School effectively monitors and reviews the provision on an ongoing basis. Student representatives are present at most relevant committee meetings and, for the MA programme in particular, are regular and active participants.

2.45 In 2015 a cause for concern was raised by the University of Wales in respect of the School's research degrees provision. The review team was informed that this was due to a series of unrelated individual circumstances and that matters had now been fully resolved. As a result of this concern, the School made the decision to review the operation of its RDC and has decided to retain it, despite it no longer being a requirement under the new validation arrangements, to ensure there is effective internal monitoring across the provision.

2.46 Staff and students met by the review team had a clear understanding of the range of processes in place to monitor the provision, but participation by visiting staff was limited. Minutes of the Academic Board indicate that the School is reliant on a small team of senior staff to both participate in and reflect upon the outcomes of these processes. There is little involvement of support staff and visiting tutors in these processes and, therefore, outcomes such as the findings from external examiner reports are not widely disseminated across the School. In addition, the Board of Trustees receives general reports about the operation of the School but does not see monitoring or external examiner reports. The review team **recommends** that, by October 2017, the School involve the wider community of teaching and support staff in the process of programme monitoring and review, and the dissemination of outcomes.

2.47 The School has recently introduced a module evaluation scheme for the MA programme, using a standard format prescribed by UWTSD (see also Expectation B5). The scheme requires students to complete an evaluation and for the tutor to respond. Students met by the review team valued the informal mechanisms by which they could raise individual issues and the swift resolution of these issues. Both staff and students confirmed that the process was cumbersome within the context of a small provider and so completion

of these formal evaluations had not been widespread. As the School does not operate an annual student or programme-level questionnaire for MA students, opportunities for individual students to provide formal and confidential feedback are limited. The review team **recommends** that, by June 2017, the School work with the awarding body to determine the most effective way of gathering formal individual student feedback about the MA programme (see also Expectation B5).

2.48 The School's adherence to its awarding body's annual monitoring and review processes, and its own quality assurance procedures, allows it to operate satisfactory processes for the monitoring and review of higher education provision. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.49 The School does not have its own procedures for complaints and appeals but has adopted those of UWTSD. The procedures are accessible on the UWTSD website, in addition to general advice and guidance. The School's Student Handbook provides information about how to make a complaint or appeal, and signposts where the awarding body's procedures can be found. The Handbook also provides comprehensive information regarding assessment regulations and general student regulations including a code of conduct. The School does not subscribe to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. These processes would enable the School to meet the Expectation.

2.50 The review team tested the effectiveness of the procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints by examining documents and websites including the awarding body's procedures, Student Handbooks and partnership agreements, handbooks and manuals. The team also held meetings with students and senior, teaching and support staff.

2.51 The review team found that the procedures for academic appeals and student complaints work effectively in practice. In the last four years, the School has had no formal complaints and only one academic appeal, which was thoroughly investigated and not upheld by the awarding body.

2.52 While the School does not have an internal procedure for complaints, even at the informal stage, students are encouraged to raise issues informally either through their student representative or with members of staff. The evidence indicates that students are clear about where to access information about complaints and appeals, and that they regard this approach as being effective due to the size of the School and it being responsive to any issues raised.

2.53 While students are encouraged to speak directly to any member of staff regarding individual concerns, the School does not currently log or monitor these informal complaints and is therefore unable to routinely identify emerging trends or enhancement opportunities. The review team **recommends** that, by March 2017, the School develop a process for monitoring and evaluating informal student complaints.

2.54 While the School does not have its own complaints and appeals procedures, staff and students are clear about where to find the relevant information concerning the processes run by the awarding body. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

### **Findings**

2.55 The School has no current formal arrangements for delivering learning opportunities other than with its awarding bodies, and therefore, in the context of this review, this Expectation is not applicable. Although many students are also practitioners, being in employment is not a prerequisite for entry onto the course. In addition, neither learning outcomes nor assessments are dependent on workplace activities.

**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**

2.56 The School uses the regulations of its awarding body, namely the Common Academic Framework, Academic Quality Handbook, Research Supervisor Handbook and Codes of Practice for Research Degrees. These set out the standards that ensure the academic integrity of research degree awards and cover institutional arrangements with partner organisations. The School has been making the transition of awarding body for its research degrees from the University of Wales to UWTSD. The School has its own Research Supplement to the Student Handbook for the University of Wales awards and there is also a UWTSD Student Handbook. The application process passes through five stages: initial contact and suggested informational interview; application received and assessed in relation to minimum academic qualifications; consideration of the application; proposal by the School's Admissions Committee; and interview with the Admissions Committee. The RDC oversees the PhD supervisory, student progress, examination process and monitoring reports. The authority to approve supervisors, examiners and examination arrangements, and to make final decisions on awards, appeals, research registrations and transfers from MPhil to PhD, rests with the awarding body. The regulations and arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.57 The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements through an examination of documentation including contractual, quality assurance and research handbooks, annual monitoring reports, research supervision and student data, training information, and minutes of the RDC. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and support staff, and senior staff, including an awarding body representative.

2.58 The review team found that the procedures for managing and awarding research degrees work effectively in practice. The School has clear admissions procedures for research degrees. The team saw evidence that the consideration of applicants is carried out effectively by the RDC prior to final approval by UWTSD.

2.59 Students met by the review team confirmed that staff work with them during induction to identify their development needs in terms of research training and to ensure they understand the monitoring and support available. Students also confirmed that they had regular progress meetings with their supervisors, and had access to the Open and Outreach programmes to aid their personal development. Individual student progress is monitored by the completion of monthly reports and annual monitoring reports.

2.60 External examiner and UWTSD moderator reports verify that research is undertaken in an environment that provides support in the traditional arts in a contemporary context where there are secure academic standards. The review team saw evidence of a number of successful PhD completions in recent years with positive external examiner comments about the quality of work produced.

2.61 Adequate supervisory training takes place and there are plans for more support from the awarding body in this respect, in particular the participation of research supervisors in skills training sessions at UWTSD during the academic year 2016-17. The current training

covers awarding body regulations and expectations, assessment of thesis, protocol of discussion between examiners, conduct of the viva and post-viva reports. The School also intends to develop a research training module, augmented by the developing relationship with UWTSD.

2.62 While the arrangements for the admission, supervision and examination of research students are generally clear and applied in accordance with the regulations and requirements of the School and the awarding body, the School did suspend its recruitment to the research degrees following problems with capacity and the recruitment of research supervisors at the end of 2015. The issues of concern related to processes in respect of thesis submission, delays in the examination of a student and deadlines exceeded for thesis corrections, none of which were reported to the RDC. The School's procedures came under strain during a period of growth and expansion of research student numbers where supervisory staff experienced time pressures due to a shortage in numbers. The School decided to recruit a senior member of staff with responsibility for supporting research, quality enhancement and compliance. The School has a timeline in place to develop the supervisory staff and to support future research students. However, there is no clear action plan in place to ensure that supervisors and research students are fully supported prior to the re-commencement of recruitment to research degrees in the academic year 2017-18. The review team **recommends** that the School ensure that processes are in place to provide adequate support for supervisors and research students prior to the resumption of recruitment.

2.63 The School has an appropriate research environment providing secure academic standards and offering current students the support they need to achieve successful outcomes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate, due to insufficient emphasis and priority being given to assuring quality in the School's planning processes with regard to the reinstatement of recruitment to its research degrees.

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

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

2.64 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. Nine of the 10 applicable Expectations are met with low levels of associated risk.

2.65 Expectation B11 is met with a moderate level of risk, which indicates insufficient emphasis and priority being given to assuring quality in the School's planning processes.

2.66 The review team identified one new feature of good practice in this judgement area, which relates to the development and maintenance of an extended community of practice that enhances the students' learning experience.

2.67 The review team makes four recommendations in this area: involve the wider community of teaching and support staff in the process of programme monitoring and review, and the dissemination of outcomes (Expectation B8); work with the awarding body to determine the most effective way of gathering formal individual student feedback about the MA programme (Expectations B8 and B5); develop a process for monitoring and evaluating informal student complaints (Expectation B9); and ensure that processes are in place to provide adequate support for supervisors and research students prior to the resumption of recruitment (Expectation B11).

2.68 The review team makes one new affirmation regarding the steps being taken to underpin the Staff Development Policy through the implementation of a Staff Appraisal and Personal Development Scheme (Expectation B3).

2.69 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the School **meets** UK expectations.

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

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

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

##### **Findings**

3.1 The School uses a number of methods to make available information to prospective and current students including the website, prospectus, social media, publications and newsletters. The website includes detailed information about the mission, values and overall strategy of the School. All information concerning the School's current educational programmes and any proposed marketing material that uses UWTSD's name and logo must to be approved by UWTSD. The School also has to ensure that Student Handbooks and other information are produced in line with UWTSD guidance and distributed to students at the School. The Student Handbooks contain all the course and module information. The School's Programme Strategy Group retains oversight of marketing, the website structure and content, and social media. The application and admission process is detailed on the website, with notes and guidance. Pre-registration induction material is provided that includes timetables and general information. When students have successfully completed their examinations and UWTSD committees have approved their marks and final outcomes, the students receive a degree certificate from the awarding body. The School's arrangements for the production of information would enable it to meet the Expectation.

3.2 The review team tested the effectiveness of the School's arrangements for publication and assurance of information by exploring the availability and accuracy of information on the website, Student Handbooks, prospectus, social media, programme specifications, module descriptors, transcripts, and minutes and terms of reference of the Programme Strategy Group. The team also held meetings with senior, teaching and support staff, and students.

3.3 The review team found the procedures for checking and producing information about higher education provision to be effective in practice. Students expressed their satisfaction with the quality of information available to them at the application stage, prior to enrolment and during induction to the course. They were also confident in their knowledge of School policies and procedures and where to find this information.

3.4 Students and staff confirmed the recent update of the School's website and its ongoing development. The team also saw evidence that the recently formed Programme Strategy Group has oversight of the information on the website.

3.5 The main form of communication to students outside the classroom or studio is via the website and social media, as the School does not have, or plan to have, a virtual learning environment. Earlier this year, the School commissioned a website and social media audit, which resulted in urgent recommendations to ensure the content is secure and backed up regularly. In addition, the School is in the process of drafting a Social Media Policy. The review team **affirms** the actions being taken to develop the website and a Social Media Policy.

3.6 The School makes available clear and accurate information to prospective and current students, which it uses to make informed choices about their programme of study.

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The School has appropriate mechanisms in place to check that information produced is accurate. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

3.8 The review team makes one affirmation in this judgement area regarding the actions being taken to develop the website and a Social Media Policy.

3.9 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the School **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's commitment to enhancement is set out in its Strategic Plan, which was developed following discussions with all staff. The Board of Trustees oversees the strategic direction of the School and approved the Strategic Plan in January 2016. To progress the delivery of the Strategic Plan, the School has formed two groups: the Programme Strategy Group and the Resource and Planning Group, with staff representatives from across the different areas of activity. A key strategy for the enhancement of its programmes is to integrate all its work and activities, including research, educational initiatives, community and outreach projects, and the School's taught academic programmes. The School refers to this integration as its 'virtuous circle'. The Teaching and Learning Strategy sets out the School's ethos of providing a shared learning environment for staff and students. This enables the sharing of discourse and practice, which is central to the School's approach to enhancement, by providing a reciprocal environment for development. The Teaching and Learning Strategy also sets out the School's stated commitment to student engagement, while the committee structure has been designed to ensure that there is a forum for addressing and feeding back on issues raised by students. As part of Annual Programme Review for UWTSD, there is an explicit requirement for the School to provide a commentary on enhancement. The School's strategies and procedures would allow this Expectation to be met.

4.2 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the strategies and procedures by examining the Strategic Plan, Teaching and Learning Strategy, annual monitoring reports, external examiner and moderator/Partnership Team Leader reports and responses, collaborative projects, and minutes of relevant committee meetings. The team also met senior, teaching and support staff, and students.

4.3 The School's strategies and procedures for enhancement work effectively in practice. The overall environment of the School offers much in terms of enhancing learning opportunities including the Open and Outreach programme, public lectures and networking for students. The School has been active in forming links with other institutions, which has provided further opportunities for exchange and an annual lecture on professional practice. Staff met by the review team spoke of the benefits of internal and external staff development, and heard from a range of teaching and support staff about the individual staff development they had undertaken both internally and externally to the School, for example the Open and Outreach programme short courses, which not only extended their skills but also impacted on their understanding of the student experience and reinforced the community ethos of the School. These findings support the good practice highlighted under Expectation B3.

4.4 Staff met by the review team explained how the actions from the Strategic Plan are being implemented. Central to this process is the Programme Strategy Group, which held its first meeting in July 2016 and is responsible for monitoring the Strategic Plan and ensuring that the different strands of enhancement are integrated and follow the overall Strategic Plan. The review team **affirms** the introduction of the Programme Strategy Group to lead, plan and oversee integrated enhancement activity.

4.5 The review team heard of many instances where student feedback through committees had informed the development of the curriculum and the provision overall. Examples included the introduction of a colour harmony workshop, feedback from visiting tutors and improved studio lighting. Students met by the team confirmed that they found the School responsive to their suggestions.

4.6 The evidence from documentation and meetings demonstrates that the School is taking deliberate steps to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

4.7 In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation in this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

4.8 The review team affirms the introduction of the Programme Strategy Group to lead, plan and oversee integrated enhancement activity.

4.9 The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the School **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 to 24 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#).

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

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

### Academic standards

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

### Award

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

### Awarding organisation

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

### Blended learning

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

### Credit(s)

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

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

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

### Dual award or double award

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

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

### **Enhancement**

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

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

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

See also **distance learning**.

### **Framework**

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

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

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

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

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

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

### **Programme specifications**

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

### **Quality Code**

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

### **Reference points**

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

### **Self-evaluation document**

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

### **Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

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

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

### **Threshold academic standard**

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

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

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

### **Widening participation**

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

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