QAA

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

May 2008

Annex to the report

Contents

Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance for Higher Education (QAA) visited the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance (Trinity Laban) from 28 April to 2 May 2008 to carry out an institutional audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the learning opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards of the institution. Trinity Laban was formed from the merger, in 2005, of Trinity College of Music and Laban, a major centre for dance training and education. In this Annex the constituent colleges of the institution are referred to as Trinity and Laban, or as the colleges (lower case); the former Trinity College of Music is referred to as the College.

Outcomes of the institutional audit

As a result of its investigations, the audit team's view of Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance is that:

- confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards that it offers on behalf of City University and the University of Westminster, and of those that it offers under its own authority

- confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students

Institutional approach to quality enhancement

The enhancement strategy of the newly merged institution is still at an early stage of development. There are existing strengths to build on and newly introduced initiatives which should support enhancement. As it develops its approaches to quality enhancement Trinity Laban will wish to ensure that appropriate systems are in place for the co-ordinated planning, resourcing, implementation and evaluation of its initiatives in this area.

Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

The supervision and support arrangements for the small number of postgraduate research students at Trinity Laban are satisfactory and meet the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education,* published by QAA.

Published information

The audit found that reliance could reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that Trinity Laban publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

Features of good practice

The audit team identified the following areas of good practice:

- the institution's procedures for benchmarking of programmes at validation (paragraph 27)

- the focus that is given to performance-related aspects of the curriculum and the high quality of this aspect of provision (paragraphs 77, 78)

- the manner in which the institution's programmes aim to address the whole student experience and student well-being (paragraphs 87, 88)

- the strong level of engagement with the local and professional community (paragraphs 94, 97, 99).

Recommendations for action

The audit team recommends that Trinity Laban consider further action in some areas.

Recommendations for action that the audit team considers advisable:

- to review the current committee processes, so as to ensure that the Academic Board can effectively discharge its institutional responsibility for the overview of quality and standards (paragraphs 21, 31, 109)

- to review the attendance policy for the undergraduate provision at Laban with regard to its impact on student assessment and the equitable treatment of students across the institution (paragraphs 64, 67)

- to consider carefully the evidence relating to the timeliness of the return of student work, so as to ensure that agreed policy is followed (paragraphs 68, 69)

- to develop and implement more expeditiously a comprehensive institutional staff development policy (paragraphs 92, 93).

Recommendations for action that the audit team considers desirable:

- to ensure that the records and minutes of committees provide sufficient evidence of the engagement with the matters under discussion, with a view to internal communication and external accountability (paragraph 22)

- to progress rapidly towards a more consolidated and harmonised institution wide quality management structure (paragraph 51)

- to implement a more effective method for strategically linking learning resource planning and academic planning (paragraphs 28, 55, 82)

- to clarify the focus of institutional responsibility for the overview of quality enhancement (paragraph 102).

Section 1: Introduction and background

The institution and its mission

1   Trinity Laban is a small specialist higher education institution that builds on its constituent colleges' long heritage in training musicians and dance artists intending to make careers as practitioners. The institution's Business Case for Merger states that the merger will build 'on the strengths and track records of both Trinity and Laban to create an HEI well suited for the 21st Century with a capacity for further well-tailored collaboration across the arts'. It is the intention of Trinity Laban to retain the strong reputational brands of the constituent colleges that reside in their respective institutional titles and identities, at least for the medium term. Trinity Laban sees itself first and foremost as a teaching institution. However, both Trinity and Laban have nurtured significant research; have played major roles in the commissioning and performance of new works; and have pioneered the development of innovative pedagogical approaches. These are strands of activity which continue to be prominent, post-merger. Trinity Laban also places significant emphasis on its wide ranging knowledge exchange and public engagement activities. These include the provision of training for large numbers of pre-higher education learners, and interaction with local communities, national and international business partners, as well as with many members of the music and dance professions.

2   Trinity Laban's programmes of study leading to degree-level awards are validated by the University of Westminster and City University. The audit team understood that it was intended to move to a single validating partner in the near future. Trinity Laban also makes certificate and diploma awards under its own authority.

3   Trinity Laban is located on two separate main sites in south-east London. Trinity occupies premises within the Old Royal Naval College, where all of the music provision is located. Laban has recently occupied new purpose built premises at Deptford, which hosts the dance provision. The two main sites are a short distance apart. The institution has 680 full-time equivalent undergraduate students, 191.4 full-time equivalent postgraduate students, three full-time equivalent postgraduate research students and 48 students undertaking flexible programmes of study.

4   Trinity Laban's learning and teaching activity is grounded in practice-based, vocational training, which develops students to a professional standard and equips them in all aspects of their personal and artistic development according to their individual needs. Its distinctive approach to performance education marries the traditional focused technical training of a conservatoire with development of a broader skill set, emphasising individual creativity, open-mindedness and leadership capacity in order to prepare students for twenty-first century portfolio careers.

Mission and vision

5   Trinity Laban is the UK's first conservatoire of music and contemporary dance. Its mission is to provide specialist education of the highest international quality, which reflects the increasingly collaborative world of artistic practice and supports the lifelong career development of students and professional performing artists.

Vision:

Trinity Laban, at the leading edge of music and dance training, is forward thinking, contemporary and world-class. It enriches society and empowers individuals to fulfil their artistic potential.

Mission goals:

- To provide world-class training in the fields of music and contemporary dance and equip students for successful and rewarding professional and artistic careers

- To build life-long relationships

- To inspire and support creativity, innovation and artistic excellence

- To build a new model for collaboration in the performing arts

- To contribute to artistic and educational opportunity and social inclusion

- To restructure our financial profile to invest in excellence

- To develop the reputation and profile of Trinity Laban.

The information base for the audit

6   Trinity Laban provided the audit team with a briefing paper and supporting documentation. The index to the Briefing Paper was referenced to sources of evidence to support the audit enquiry. The team received a hard copy of all documents referenced in the Briefing Paper as well as access to the institution's intranet. The documents provided included prospectuses, the Business Case for Merger, the Academic Strategy, the Academic Quality Handbook, details of the recently introduced committee structure and the minutes of a wide range of course and college-level committees. The team learned in the course of the audit that some of the statements relating to quality processes that had been included in the recently produced Academic Quality Handbook were inaccurate, due to drafting errors. The relevant points were subsequently clarified. The institution also provided the team with audit trails of two recent programme-level reviews, including all submitted documentation, the minutes of review meetings and their consideration by relevant committees and the resultant action plans. At the request of the institution, additional documentation was provided to inform a supplementary trail relating to the employability of students.

7   The audit team was particularly grateful to representatives of the Students' Union who produced a student written submission setting out the students' views on the accuracy of information provided to them, the experience of students as learners and their role in quality management.

8   In addition, the audit team had access to:

- the report of the previous Institutional audit of Trinity College of Music in 2003 and the report of an inspection of Laban as part of the Outcome of Independent Dance and Drama Schools Quality Review of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funded provision in 2000

- the notes of audit team meetings with staff and students.

Developments since the last audit

Merger of Trinity College of Music and Laban

9   The single most important development since the last audit cycle has been the institutional merger. The then impending merger was referred to in Trinity's audit follow-up report, in the context of the need to consider the practices and processes of the new partner college, and the harmonisation of these in order to develop robust quality management and enhancement systems. This audit was therefore the first time Trinity Laban had been audited as a single institution. Prior to this audit, its constituent colleges were each scrutinised as separate institutions, or in the context of the collaborative provision of its validating partners. Until merger, each college was addressing the recommendations for action as individual institutions, and accordingly these actions are now considered separately in the following section.

10   In the Business Case for Merger the senior management of the two institutions planned a 'consolidation of Trinity Laban both academically and administratively, leading inter alia to degree awarding powers within 5 years'. At the time of this audit visit there were some signs of cross-institutional working within the merged institution and an Academic Strategy had been published

that 'sets out strategic priorities which will lead to the enhancement of our learning environment students and staff experience, alumni support, curricula and resources'. However, it was not always sufficiently clear to the audit team how the prioritisation of activity to deliver the benefits of merger was being managed within the institution. As will be seen from other sections of this Annex, progress had been slow in a number of areas. The team would therefore encourage Trinity Laban to ensure that the recently established milestones in the academic strategy are monitored carefully in future so as to meet the timeframe for its implementation. This will ensure the integration of key processes, services and related activity within the merged institution.

Trinity 2003 Audit follow-up

11   The Institutional audit of the (then) Trinity College of Music in May 2003 resulted in a judgement of broad confidence in the soundness of the College's current and future management of the standards of its awards. The audit team expressed broad confidence in the College's current management of the quality of its awards, and noted that 'if the College's current strategies continue to be implemented then broad confidence can also be placed in the likely future management of the quality of its awards'. The report identified a number of areas as being of good practice, including the student-centred ethos, the strategic approach to learning and teaching, the monitoring and review arrangements and aspects of support for student learning.

12   The audit team recommended that the College should consider further action in a number of areas to ensure that the academic quality and standards of the awards it offers are maintained. The recommendations were monitored by the College through its Quality Assurance Committee. The team advised the College to:

- implement as a matter of priority the points relating to staff development as described in the Human Resources and Learning and Teaching Strategies;

- clarify the managerial and resource relationships between the Human Resources and Learning and Teaching Strategies in respect of institutional staff development to enhance the student learning experience;

- continue to implement revisions to the current academic management structure as identified in the Learning and Teaching Strategy to resolve the current lack of clarity concerning channels of communication and lines of accountability

- complete its review of all aspects of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by QAA, particularly in relation to the sections on students with disabilities, admissions, complaints and appeals, and take appropriate action.

The audit team also suggested that it would be desirable for the College to:

- ensure that the information available to students on course structures and assessment is expressed more clearly and can be understood easily.

13   Trinity's mid-cycle follow-up was undertaken during the period that final negotiations were being undertaken for merger with Laban. Where relevant, the two colleges had addressed the issues raised in these external reviews within the context of their individual offerings. However, many of the planned actions have more crucially informed the framing of the newly merged institution's approach to quality management, as outlined within the Academic Strategy. Since 2003, progress has been made in taking forward actions to address the Trinity audit recommendations, but the audit team found that engagement with the issues identified at that time was not uniformly effective.

14   With regard to the recommendations on staff development, the audit team recognised that some progress had been made in a number of areas, but it was seriously concerned at delays in implementing the staff development strategy. The team noted that the issue of staff

development was also raised in the Higher Education Quality Committee Audit in 1997 and a recommendation was made then 'that the College should produce a staff development policy which identified strategic institutional needs thereby optimising limited institutional resources'. The team recognised that Trinity Laban faces considerable challenges in this area, which are discussed below (paragraph 90). Notwithstanding this, the continued delay in implementing an appropriate and adequate staff development strategy raised questions for the team concerning the alertness and responsiveness of the College to the recommendations of external audit.

15   The 2003 audit also recommended that revisions to current management structure at Trinity be implemented in order to resolve a lack of clarity concerning channels of communication and lines of accountability. The College's response to this recommendation needs to be viewed in the context of the institutional merger in 2003. This introduced a number of major changes to the management and committee structures of the merged institution. Thus the new Academic Board, introduced in 2005, became the most senior deliberative committee within the merged institution. Following this, a new Academic Board subcommittee structure was introduced in 2007-08, shortly before the audit. At the time of the audit visit many of the subcommittees had only met once to consider and confirm their membership and terms of reference.

16   Following the last audit there has been a review of course documentation. Students who met with the audit team expressed satisfaction with the information they received about their course of study and the assessment requirements. The *Code of practice* has been included in the new Academic Quality Handbook and evidence from scrutiny of the documents contained in the audit trails demonstrated that the *Code* is utilised by staff when validating new programmes and in annual and periodic review procedures. Trinity Laban acknowledged that some sections of the *Code* still require systematic review and implementation in the context of the newly merged institution, for instance with regard to complaints and appeals procedures, and the team were satisfied that actions were underway to implement this.

Outcome of Independent Dance and Drama Schools Quality Review of HEFCE-funded provision for Laban (2000)

17   In the special review, the QAA identified the following short-term and medium-term areas of improvement:

Short-term

● improving information technology provision

● receiving external examiners' reports more promptly from the University.

Medium-term

● considering ways in which the repertory course might be extended to provide students with wider performance experience

● Improving drop-out and completion rates on the BA and DIP programmes

● making the student and course handbooks more user friendly

● strengthening careers guidance

● refining quality assurance procedures

● improving the feedback to students on action taken in response to their views.

18   The audit team found that Laban had methodically addressed the above issues since the report, and many of them were resolved in the college's move to its new premises. The team noted that while all the identified matters had been acted upon, the recommendations relating to careers provision and student feedback were also of continuing relevance in the current audit.

Institutional framework for managing academic standards and learning opportunities

19   Trinity Laban's Briefing Paper stated that in support of developing an institutional framework for managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, it had sought to document its processes in two ways. The first is the Academic Strategy; the second is the Trinity Laban Academic Quality Handbook, which defines the areas of academic enhancement and development, and is supplemented by supporting actions and objectives which further develop the institutional offer in these areas. These new policies and procedures have been developed taking into account the UK Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points.

20   At the time of this audit, a new committee structure for the merged institution had recently been introduced. This aimed to provide for effective overarching consultative communication and decision-making, while maintaining subject-specific committees to deal with local college-based issues. This institutional-level committee structure had been specifically designed as a way to share local good practice institutionally, in line with the aims of the Academic Strategy. The new structure is intended to minimise bureaucracy as far as possible, but at the time of the audit it was considered by the institution that there was a need for some continued duplication of groups to handle discipline-specific academic matters most effectively.

21   A single Academic Board has been constituted as Trinity Laban's main decision-making body on academic matters. Reporting to the Academic Board are two subject boards, one for music and one for dance. These two committees were formerly the highest academic authority within the two constituent colleges. Course or programme level committees report to the subject boards which in turn report to the Academic Board on all matters relating to academic standards and quality. The audit team considered that the new committee structure was a large and complex one for the size of the organisation; it understood that this may be due to the desire to retain both the pre-merger Trinity and Laban committee arrangements and the additional committees introduced following the merger. In the view of the team, greater efficiency and value can be gained by a growing concentration on the new institutional committee structures, and a reduction of the time devoted to committee business at the college level. In reviewing the evidence relating to committee business, the team also noted some lack of consistency and even discontinuity in progressing matters within the fledgling committee structure, for example, matters of academic standards and quality relating to a collaborative arrangement being dealt with through the executive body rather than at either the relevant subject board or the Academic Board (see paragraphs 57 and 108 below).

22   The team was therefore not sufficiently convinced that the current deliberative committee processes at institutional level were always identifying and addressing matters that could potentially have an impact upon the maintenance of academic standards. The team also found that the level of debate, as evidenced by the records of the meetings, appeared to be relatively weak; the systematic identification of responsibility to take such matters forward often appeared to be lacking. With regard to committee support, the team found that the minuting style used for meetings offered little indication of the nature of discussion and decision-making, and considered that this might not be conducive to good internal communication, or of value for audit purposes. The team also noted the high level of apologies tendered for absence at a number of meetings.

23   The merger has given each college an opportunity to benefit from a joint strategic vision that includes shared aspirations for the quality of student learning. However, the audit team found that, thus far, a number of aspects of the student learning environment which might have had the opportunity to benefit from merger were not yet well developed and in some areas were still unchanged from those in place pre-merger. An example of this was a separation of student support services, which still functioned in relative isolation at each site. However, this matter had been recognised and developments were in train to achieve a higher level of institutional coordination (see paragraph 87). The team found direct evidence that students have embraced

the merger, and that they viewed the joint student union as an enhanced student resource in comparison to arrangements pre-merger.

24   The team concluded that Trinity Laban's framework for the management of standards and learning opportunities had been able to build on generally effective systems at the level of the colleges. Work was progressing with the establishment of an institution-wide quality management framework, but this would benefit from further systematic development in a number of areas, in particular, relating to the realisation of an informed institutional overview.

Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

Approval, monitoring and review of award standards

25   Trinity Laban's internal mechanisms for approval, monitoring and review are defined in the Academic Quality Handbook. The Academic Board retains the ultimate responsibility for such procedures. Each of the two constituent colleges implements these mechanisms with its own, slightly different process. The audit team both read and heard from staff that the differences remained from the evolution of the individual colleges, which had each been driven by the requirements of the two colleges' separate validating universities.

26   The processes for the approval of new programmes are fully detailed in the Academic Quality Handbook. These start with the granting of initial institutional permission to engage in detailed planning, followed by the formation of planning committees, interim feedback to the Curriculum Development and Enhancement Board, scrutiny by the Academic Board and culminating in the final validation event with the awarding university. In the case of programmes for which Trinity Laban has awarding powers, the institution conducts the final validation event itself. The final outcome of the validation event is reported back to the Academic Board, confirming that any conditions of approval had been met. In their scrutiny of the sampling audit trails and other documentation, the audit team was able to confirm that these processes were largely adhered to; slight variations reflected the different requirements of the validating universities. External peer membership was evident both on planning and validation committees, and planning committees had consulted with internal stakeholder groups, including students.

27   Audit sampling trails examined by the audit team demonstrated that full programme specifications, programme specific information and curricula were supported with detailed course handbooks, all developed as part of the validation documentation. Of note were the clear and detailed mapping of assessment onto programme learning outcomes; the clarity of the academic regulations; and the particularly detailed mapping of programme curricula and outcomes onto a variety of national and international benchmarks, including the subject benchmark statements, published by QAA, Credit Consortia Level Descriptors, distinctive characteristics identified by the Association of European Conservatoires and the Arts and Humanities Research Councils Skills Training Requirements. The team considered that this thorough benchmarking at the validation stage was an aspect of good practice.

28   The audit team learned that resourcing matters were addressed thoroughly during the validation process, and that if matters of concern regarding resourcing arose, they would be referred for resolution to the Joint Principals' Strategy Group, the senior executive group in the institution. After validation, the Board of Governors is required to grant final approval to operate the programme, having reassured itself of appropriate resourcing. Nevertheless, it appeared to the team that major resourcing decisions (for instance with regard to space management) could have been addressed more formally during consideration of the initial case to introduce new provision, and that Trinity Laban might wish to consider how best to bring together learning resource issues and academic planning at an earlier stage in the evolution of new programmes.

29   Programmes are generally approved for five years of operation, and are then formally submitted for a periodic review and re-approval. The paperwork for this re-approval process

embraces a periodic review of the programme, considering the position of the course in the context of national drivers, as well as student performance and achievement. The revalidation process is otherwise identical to the approval process for new courses.

30   Both colleges have appropriate processes for making minor changes to programmes and modules during their normal period of approval. Module modifications are approved at course committee level, subject board level and finally at the Academic Board, subsequently being submitted to the validating university. The audit team noted significant numbers of such minor modifications each year, and were unable to identify any discussion regarding the overall cumulative impact of such changes on the total shape of the programme or on the student learning experience. The team found no evidence, however, that this had affected standards or quality adversely. The processes are thorough, and include consultation with both internal and external stakeholders.

31   The audit team, in its consideration of programme approval activities, concluded that Trinity Laban, in conjunction with its validating partners, conducts an appropriately robust initial and periodic scrutiny of both new and established provision, and thereby assures the setting of appropriate academic standards in its provision. The detailed processes in the two colleges differ in some aspects, and the team believes that the institution should now aim to achieve a higher level of harmonisation and comparability. This would be assisted by the proposed move to a single validating partner. Trinity Laban will also wish to ensure that processes are managed in such a way as to ensure that the Academic Board has ownership, in its own right, of the standards and quality of the awards delivered, and thus retains an appropriate oversight of curricular development, approval and review matters in both of the colleges.

Annual monitoring

32   Both colleges require programme teams to conduct annual monitoring processes. Both processes report upon student performance, external examiner input and student feedback (obtained through questionnaires). In the case of Laban, the institution-level quality-related committees scrutinise the report before it is submitted to City University. For Trinity, the formal policy is also for the institutional committees to consider the report, but the team noted that time constraints had meant that, on some occasions, the annual monitoring report had been submitted to the University of Westminster before its proper consideration by the Academic Board had been possible.

33   In its reading of annual monitoring reports, the audit team found evidence of comprehensive reflection by the programme team, and the proposal of appropriate remedial action when matters required attention. There was similarly evidence in subsequent reports indicating that action had been taken. In one case, the team identified an instance where relatively critical matters of concern had been noted in the annual reports of a collaborative programme that had subsequently not attracted discussion or action from any of the deliberative committees considering the report. The team was reassured that the particular case had been addressed in an effective manner by the Joint Principals' Strategy Group and the validating university, and that remedial action had been put in hand.

34   The audit team would strongly encourage Trinity Laban to ensure that all annual monitoring reports receive full consideration in the institution's committees before they are submitted to the validating university. Such consideration is a part of the necessary overview of its major programmes taken by the Academic Board, and it is proper that it should be a report that has been discussed and confirmed by that board, which is received by the validating university. The audit team observed that while Trinity Laban had established and scheduled appropriate monitoring processes within the academic calendar, they rarely contributed to an holistic reflection on the health of the entire academic portfolio of the merged institution. The team explored with senior staff how the various deliberative and executive structures might identify matters of either good practice or concern and instigate the appropriate follow-up

action, and learned that while both the college subject boards and the Academic Board considered individual reports from validations, annual monitoring and external examiners, it was only during the current academic year that the Academic Board had determined that it wished to receive an overview of all reports from external examiners. The team considered that this was a positive move, and believed that Trinity Laban would wish to consider whether other indicators of academic standards might warrant a similar strategic overviewt.

External examiners

35   The process for appointment and the duties of external examiners are largely subject to the practices of the validating universities. For Trinity Laban's own awards, the expected procedures are informed by the practices of the colleges' validating universities and meet the precepts of the *Code of practice.* Trinity appoints additional specialist advisors to bring external professional scrutiny to the heavy burden of individual performance assessment in music. The role of these specialists and the processes employed for their appointment is well-defined in the Academic Quality Handbook, as are all other relevant requirements for the appointment of external examiners.

36   External examiners attend performance assessments in many cases acting as a member of the assessment team. They also sample academic coursework and assessments and attend assessment boards. Their reports are submitted to either the validating universities or directly to Trinity Laban as appropriate. The reports are considered by the relevant programme committees, whose discussions inform the formal response prepared by the programme leader. The formal responses are forwarded, in accordance with the procedures of the validating university, directly to the external examiner. The audit team noted that while the subject board and the Academic Board subsequently received the report and response within the annual monitoring process, the response might be sent from Trinity Laban without the prior benefit of oversight and input at an institutional level.

37   The programme committee deliberations and the external examiner's report also form part of the annual monitoring/annual programme evaluation reports. The annual monitoring reports are scrutinised by the respective subject boards and finally the Academic Board, prior to submission to validating partners for validated courses. As already noted, the audit team identified some examples where this standard procedure had not been followed (see paragraph 32 above).

38   The Briefing Paper explained that Trinity Laban was in the process of developing a briefing/training package for external examiners, and believed that this will assist in developing a new pan-institutional approach to academic standards. The audit team welcomed this initiative. External examiner reports seen by the team confirmed that the academic and performance standards of awards granted following study at Trinity Laban are secure, and comparable with those of similar programmes elsewhere. The team noted that suggestions from external examiners were scrupulously addressed at programme level.

39   The audit team was therefore able to confirm that at the programme and college level, strong and scrupulous use is made of independent external examiners and expert practitioners. The team also noted that Trinity Laban is planning to strengthen its systems for the institutional overview of external examiners' reports.

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

40   The *Code of practice* is fully addressed in the Academic Quality Handbook; the relevant precepts are quoted and highlighted for reference at the front of each section and inform the detailed information thereafter. The audit team read and heard that the various *Code* sections are reviewed regularly as part of the institutional enhancement processes, and in its meetings with staff heard that while there was no formal review cycle, the publication of amended sections of the *Code* would trigger a review of congruence between institutional policy and national guidance. While in its scrutiny of recent committee papers, the team was unable to identify

particular instances of such review outcomes being reported and debated, it was clear from the documentary evidence that the development of the institutional processes and procedures had been informed by the *Code.*

41   The audit team confirmed that Trinity Laban has fully embraced other aspects of the Academic Infrastructure. Programme Specifications are required as part of the documentation required for internal scrutiny during validation, and form a useful source of information both for staff and students. The relevant subject benchmark statements are routinely used during the approval of new and re-designed programmes, and in addition the institution makes use of a number of other appropriate benchmarks (see paragraph 27 above). The audit team saw evidence that *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) has served as the map for detailed learning and assessment outcomes at each level.

42   A number of Laban's dance programmes have been previously accredited by the appropriate external professional body, although following a change in strategy by the professional body, higher education programmes are no longer part of their remit. The Academic Quality Handbook clearly defines the processes used for engagement with such bodies.

43   The audit team came to the conclusion that Trinity Laban makes good use of the Academic Infrastructure and other external benchmarks; indeed the wide-ranging use of external benchmarks was considered a feature of good practice.

Assessment policies and regulations

44   Assessment policies and regulations are detailed in the Academic Quality Handbook, and have been defined with reference to the relevant section of the *Code of practice.* There is, once again, some variance in regulations between Trinity and Laban due to differing requirements of the music and dance as art forms, and the varying procedures of the two validating universities. The Academic Quality Handbook details generic matters such as regulations regarding attendance, disabilities, late submission, and coursework extensions. Trinity Laban has developed its own Code of Practice for Assessment in which the responsibilities of the various agents (programme leader, module tutor, external examiner etc) are clearly defined. Greater detail is then available for each of the two colleges, in which the differences between the performance art forms become apparent. Marking and moderation processes, academic malpractice regulations, appeals and complaints procedures are well defined.

45   Through documentary evidence, and through its meetings with students and staff the audit team became aware of significant inconsistencies in attendance policies and associated academic penalties which would affect assessment (see paragraphs 63 to 67 below). Students also alluded to inconsistencies in the approach of individual staff to the return of marked coursework. In meetings with staff the audit team was informed that late return of work was rare. Further exploration revealed that the National Student Survey results for the BMus and BA Dance Theatre programmes indicated notable student dissatisfaction with the timeliness of the return of marked work, and this message was reinforced in student course questionnaires (see paragraphs 68 and 69 below).

46   The audit team concluded that while in general, assessment policies were fit for purpose, Trinity Laban appeared somewhat inflexible in hearing the voices of its student population regarding the specific matter of attendance policy and its relation to the management of assessment. It will no doubt wish to consider how best to take the student voice into account as it develops a more consistent approach to the management of assessment across all its programmes.

Management information - statistics

47   Trinity Laban has established a student record system database that is used to monitor student performance and progression. In its discussions with staff, the audit team heard that the system was used to record performance after the relevant assessment boards have taken place.

The assessment boards themselves are served either by local databases or university databases, for the institution and university awards respectively. The validating universities maintain their own records for their awards delivered at Trinity Laban, and it then also generates its own records so that it may meet its obligations to the funding and other bodies.

48   Progression statistics are produced for validating partners on an annual basis as part of the annual monitoring/annual programme evaluation reports. These statistics are monitored through the committee structure by course/programme committees and the college subject boards and are subsequently submitted to the Academic Board for consideration and approval. Transcripts are produced internally by Laban for all of its programmes. Trinity courses validated by the University of Westminster have transcripts produced externally by the University.

49   In their discussions with staff, and their reading of annual reports and committee minutes, the audit team did not identify any ground for dissatisfaction with the statistical information that was managed within the institution. A single Trinity Laban internal student record system was being commissioned for the current academic session, and had thus far met all expectations. The team discerned a reluctant additional reliance on the record system of one of the validating universities, and it agreed that using multiple student record systems significantly increased the likelihood of errors in the registration, assessment and student progression processes. Indeed, the team scrutinised records of meetings in which data had been misinterpreted in translation from the internal institutional records to one of the validating universities. While the ensuing confusion was later resolved, the potential for further, and significant, error remains. The team would therefore encourage Trinity Laban to re-engage with its validating partners, to explore whether it might assume sole responsibility in all cases for the production of the records for assessment boards, thus reducing the risk to the academic reputation of all the partner institutions.

Summary

50   In the view of the audit team, the institution-level structures for deliberation and decision-making on matters relevant to academic standards were not yet optimally effective and these will benefit from further development and refinement. The team found that these structures retained much of the original shape of those inherited from the two constituent colleges, and many staff were involved in considering similar business repeatedly in committees and executive groups at different levels. From the evidence of committee minutes, many papers, in being passed from one committee to another were simply noted, rather than being debated and being used to inform decision-making. Thus key matters could all too easily become submerged and overlooked.

51   The audit team therefore welcomed Trinity Laban's recent decision to refine its committee structure, and it would encourage the institution to embark on a period of decisive and deliberate development that will more fully empower the new structure to take decisions and set policy for the combined institution. A more consolidated and harmonised quality management structure should also serve to remove the inconsistencies in practice observed across the institution, and enable the Academic Board to lift its horizon from the consideration of individual programme and college-based matters, commission the provision of comparative cross-institutional data, and take a broader overview of institutional-wide trends and concerns.

52   While considering this development of a more effective level of institutional oversight to be a high priority, the audit team found that the assurance of standards remained well managed and secure at the level of the constituent colleges, and through their reporting to the respective validating universities. Therefore, on the basis of the evidence seen, the team are confident that appropriate academic standards are being set and maintained at Trinity Laban.

Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

53   As noted above, the Academic Quality Handbook provides a guide to the policies, systems and codes of practice that Trinity Laban has developed. This Handbook presents two separately defined quality frameworks for dance and for music at Trinity Laban, which in turn reflect the use of two validating partners. As such, each chapter of the Handbook has separate sections to cover the regulations and procedures operating at Trinity and at Laban. In addition, each section of each chapter explicitly refers to and makes effective use of the *Code of practice.* This approach enabled those precepts of the *Code* mapped against the Academic Quality Handbook to be used consistently across the institution. As already noted (paragraph 27 above), Trinity Laban carries out detailed mapping onto subject benchmarks and other professional reference points in order to define standards and learning outcomes in its programmes.

Approval, monitoring and review of programmes

54   The audit team reviewed programme approval documentation, and the thoroughness of the process and of the related documents was evident. During approval events, there is an appropriate focus on linking learning outcomes to the continued or improved availability of learning opportunities. What was more difficult to establish was the formal process by which these discussions and their conclusions, particularly in relation to learning resource planning, were taken forward and embedded into academic or strategic planning. As a consequence, formal discussion regarding the provision of learning resources could be difficult to trail through the committee stages of the approval process. The team identified some examples of approval of programmes where resources had been a significant issue, and where it was unclear that there was a systematic standard procedure for the consideration of resource allocation, leading through to consideration during the final approval by the Academic Board. For instance, the team heard from students that introduction of a newly approved programme had put the practice room resources at Trinity under considerable pressure this year and that it was the students' view that not enough thought had been given to how the institution managed resources when approving new programmes. Other evidence also emerged from the re-approval of the BA in Dance Theatre. In this example, while learning resource planning and development was given appropriate emphasis during the revalidation in 2007, the team could identify no discussion regarding resource planning having been subsequently raised during the programme's final approval by the Academic Board.

55   The Academic Board's terms of reference state that it is responsible for 'considering the development of the academic activities of Trinity Laban and the resources needed to support them and for advising the Principals and the Governing Body thereon'. The audit team found no evidence of the resource-related aspect of this remit, however, and considered that the absence of minuted discussions regarding learning resource planning might suggest a deficiency in the Board's ability to exercise this responsibility. During a meeting with senior staff, the team asked where academic and resource planning came together at institutional level. The response confirmed that there was no clear view on how this was achieved. The team therefore considered it desirable that the institution implement a more effective method for strategically linking academic and learning resource planning.

56   Programme specifications are routinely prepared for newly validated and reviewed programmes and their content is ultimately approved by the Academic Board. The audit team found that the BMus specifications provided helpful information to students, being more explicit about awards, progression and exit points and highlighted the student support and learning resources available to help students in successfully achieving the award outcomes. Other specifications were not as thorough or clearly structured. While recognising that the format for specifications was in large part defined by the validating university, the team believed that it

would be desirable for Trinity Laban to aim for a greater level of consistency, which could be achieved by aligning the presentation of its programme specifications with the framework developed and used for the BMus programme.

57   The audit team noted one significant case of divergence from normal practice in the procedures for the annual review of programmes. This related to the management of student learning opportunities on a collaborative programme, the BMus Performance in Indian Classical Music. The team learned that the college executive (Joint Principals' Strategy Group) at Trinity Laban had identified concerns relating to the student experience on this programme, and had, quite rightly, moved to address these issues in a proactive manner. While acknowledging the value of the rapid actions taken, the team also noted that this matter was not subsequently explored fully through the institutional quality assurance framework, and in particular had not been subsequently included in the business of the Academic Board, despite the Board having previously received an annual monitoring report that highlighted a number of significant concerns regarding operation of the programme. The team took the view that the matters in question were of sufficient general relevance to the management of quality and standards to have merited fuller attention, after its resolution by management, within the normal cycles of the institutional quality assurance framework.

58   Processes for the modification of programmes are well established and originate from programme level through the subject boards and up to the Academic Board. It was evident from Academic Board minutes that programmes could undergo several modifications during an academic year. Tracking of the combined effect of these changes on the student learning experience and their cumulative effect on the outcomes of the award was not readily evident, although the implementation of modifications is appropriately managed, with all approved changes to programmes requiring the written agreement of all students affected.

59   Whilst there was evidence that Trinity Laban sought to protect the interests of existing students on programmes that were to discontinue, a prescribed process for the discontinuation of programmes had not been developed. The process currently in place was to tail off programme provision upon ceasing to recruit, while maintaining adequate student learning opportunities to enable the award's learning outcomes to be fulfilled. A similar protection of student's interests operated in the case of tripartite collaborative provision and this was documented in the tripartite Memorandum of Agreement. In the light of the limited number of programmes operated by Trinity Laban, most of which have operated successfully for several years, the absence of a prescribed process was not a significant weakness. The institution may wish to consider the development of formalised processes for programme discontinuation in the future.

Management information - feedback from students

60   The consistent use of anonymised student feedback for programme modules is built into the institutional monitoring and review processes. This feedback process is consistently implemented across Trinity Laban's programmes and feeds the annual monitoring process via a statistical analysis and written commentary from relevant component and module leaders.

61   There exist well-established mechanisms for informal student feedback. While these channels were not regarded as a substitute for more formal mechanisms, contact with personal tutors and other staff members such as instrument teachers is regarded by students as a primary and valued method of dialogue for programme-related issues. Students considered that their views were heard, but they viewed resolution of their concerns primarily as a college-level responsibility and not an institution-level matter.

62   The audit team found a degree of permissive autonomy existing at programme level for the resolution of issues or for the enforcement of policies that had an impact upon student learning. In certain instances, this autonomy could preclude institutional oversight and lead to a disparity of student experience between Trinity and Laban programmes. This included the

treatment of matters regarding practice space at Trinity and the attendance policy at Laban. In each of these circumstances, there existed a historic and ongoing difference in views and understanding between staff members and students. Students from each college stated that these matters had serious implications for their studies.

63   Under scrutiny it emerged that there was a difference regarding the treatment of these matters at institutional level. While the Joint Principals' Strategy Group was taking deliberate steps to resolve the perceived lack of practice room space for Trinity students, an institutional lead on the attendance policy was less evident. The particular significance of this matter to the team was its relationship with other areas of the student learning experience regarding assessment, equity, and employability.

64   For the BA Dance Theatre at Laban, the policy required 100 per cent attendance for performance-based projects. This policy was embedded within programme documentation as a module learning outcome related to professional conduct. The policy requires any student who breeches the attendance requirement to submit a case for consideration by the mitigating circumstances panel that meets on a regular basis. Where a student fails to submit a valid claim for mitigation, or if a claim is not accepted, then the matter is referred to the end-of-year assessment board. Some students may therefore have to wait until the end of the year before being informed of the outcome. The BA Dance Theatre Ordinances and Regulations make it clear that students who fail to meet the professional conduct requirement may be required to withdraw from the BA programme. The attendance policy, coupled with the mitigating circumstances process therefore creates a situation whereby students who believe that they have had a valid reason for missing a lecture can experience significant levels of stress while still pursuing their studies, and prior to the announcement of the panel's deliberations. Students are able to attend and observe lectures if they are injured. However, the team learned that such attendance was in fact registered as half of one attendance, and thus the student still ran the consequent risk of breeching the attendance policy regulations, which could affect progression on the programme or award of their degree. During meetings, students expressed concern that the elevated stress levels generated by these conditions had a detrimental effect on the overall student learning experience.

65   Student commentary regarding the attendance policy also focused upon employment post-graduation. Students understood that the policy stipulated that attending external auditions during programme time did not constitute a valid mitigating circumstance if this resulted in missing a lecture. It appeared that, at least in principle, the situation could arise whereby a student seeking to audition for employment might thereby risk being excluded from the programme. Somewhat paradoxically, in the view of the audit team, it seemed that attending an audition for a future performance role could in this way have a serious negative impact upon a student's future employability.

66   An external examiner had commented for the annual review of the Dance Theatre programme in 2007 that there were alternative ways of demonstrating a student's commitment to the programme other than the rigorous implementation of such a stringent attendance policy. In addition, a component leader had suggested that as a student matured through the programme the 100 per cent policy might be relaxed by the final year, when auditions were most likely. This particular view was also offered by students during a meeting with the team; students clearly held strong views that the policy had a negative impact on their learning experience and, potentially, on their employability.

67   By contrast, the team learned that Trinity students are able to request absence from any lecture. It was a process that was well understood by the music students who were content with its operation. It enabled the students to understand better, in advance of any absence, the impact that it may have on their studies. The audit team concluded from the information available to it that the operation of the attendance policy for the BA in Dance Theatre programme had a disproportionate impact upon student assessment, and that it contributed to

an inequitable treatment of students across the institution. The team therefore judged that it was advisable for Trinity Laban to review the requirements and implementation of the institutional attendance policy as a whole, with particular attention to the undergraduate provision at Laban and the equitable treatment of students across the institution.

68   The Briefing Paper stated that the results of the National Student Survey were used to inform action plans at programme level and a working party was formed in response to specific comments on assessment identified in the 2006 report. Assessment arrangements and feedback were also significant in receiving low scores in the 2007 survey. In meetings students were questioned by the audit team about assessment load and assessment feedback. Students from both Trinity and Laban were forthright in their view that there were notable instances when assessment feedback occurred later than the policies stated in the Academic Quality Handbook. Students stated that feedback generally took longer than the 21 days specified for Laban, and considered that at Trinity varying practices existed for the timeliness and delivery of assessment feedback, and that this was generally longer than 21 days.

69   The audit team learned during a meeting with staff members that they considered that assessment feedback was timely and in accordance with institutional policy. Notwithstanding this, the team took the view that the representative comments from students and the quantitative data from the National Student Survey could not be ignored. This view was reinforced by the lack of any evidence of a systematic monitoring method capable of highlighting strengths or any potential weaknesses in the assessment process. Given the different perspectives on this matter, the team judged it advisable that the institution consider carefully the evidence relating to the return of student work to ensure that agreed policy is followed.

70   Students studying at Trinity Laban's tripartite collaborative partners are offered an opportunity to provide feedback on programme provision via meetings arranged by the validating university. A report of a meeting with students studying at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan UK (Bhavan) was seen by the audit team. The scope and nature of feedback sought and received from students at this meeting was thorough and appropriate as an instrument to aid the management and enhancement of programme quality. The report itself, however, was highly critical of the learning experience and the team was concerned that it had not been more explicitly brought to the attention of the Academic Board.

71   The audit team concluded that while Trinity Laban had effective arrangements for obtaining feedback from students, in certain areas less effective arrangements were in place to ensure that this information received the consideration it deserved. This was reflected both in the treatment and recognition of significant feedback concerns within the academic committee structure and in the response at college level to some issues of concern raised by students.

Role of students in quality assurance

72   Students are well represented in committees and in the working groups formed to develop new programmes or for the periodic review of programmes. With regard to student representation on course boards, the audit team heard that during the first year of a programme, nominated student representatives received advice and training appropriate for their role. This process was not as rigorously implemented for student representatives nominated from the second and third years of programmes. These student representatives would often rely upon the advice and guidance of former representatives or fellow representatives as to the conduct and scope of their duties. Student representatives are recognised and active within the student body and meet programme teams on a termly basis. Matters of concern are tracked in a response grid so that unresolved items are retained on the agenda for further attention. The student written submission observed that the current year had seen a record number of students volunteering to be representatives, over and above the elected Students' Union officers.

73   There is no systematic training of students for participation in quality assurance roles and processes but their active participation in all Academic Board committees and subject boards was evident, and the audit team learned from staff members during a meeting that students new to committees and working groups were introduced to their role upon joining. This arrangement was confirmed by the student written submission, which also stated that the representatives were able to articulate effectively their views at committee and that they were now more readily able to 'disseminate any relevant information to the general student body'.

74   At the time of the audit, research student numbers were not significant and particular arrangements for their general involvement in Trinity Laban's quality assurance processes were not in place. However, postgraduate students were represented on the Research Board and the Research Ethics Committee, and a research student representative had been identified to attend the new Research Degree Programmes Committee.

75   The audit team concluded that Trinity Laban promotes the active participation of students in its quality management and decision-making processes. There was evidence that students feel welcomed and valued in this role, and are able to contribute to maintaining the quality of their own learning experience.

Links between professional practice, research and scholarly activity and learning opportunities

76   It is a particular feature of the programmes operating at Trinity Laban that extensive use is made of professionals and practitioners in the delivery of programmes. Evidence from the audit confirmed the institution's commitment to the use of practising dancers, choreographers, musicians and composers in the delivery of the curricula so as to enhance the student learning experience and help produce employable students. Programme delivery at subject level is focused on effective teaching of the art form via practice-based curricula, creating a lively performance-based learning environment across the institution.

77   The team learned that at Trinity, instrument tutors were regarded by students as the first and most valuable point of contact for personal and programme-related issues. In this way, a working relationship developed between student and tutor that had a direct and positive impact on the student learning opportunity. By enabling this one-to-one contact with talented and practising musicians and composers, the curriculum retained its relevance by offering a direct linkage between tuition and the modern profession.

78   It was evident to the audit team that enabling students to learn a performance-based art form through working with professionals who practise that art form, makes a significant contribution to the quality of Trinity Laban's programme provision, and that the achievements in this respect constitute good practice. While the use of these practising part-time and sessional staff members undoubtedly enhanced the student learning environment, the team did not find evidence of a staffing policy that adequately described support arrangements for such staff members. This is discussed in more detail at paragraphs 90 and 91 of this annex.

79   The audit team found only limited evidence of staff research underpinning learning opportunities. The work in Dance Science was one example of this taking place. The team learned that the research environment at Trinity Laban was undergoing a process of review and that a stronger linkage between research and learning opportunities was in the early stages of development. The team was provided with evidence of the increasing range of relevant research and it welcomed the institutional commitment to strengthening this area of Trinity Laban's work.

Resources for learning

80   Trinity Laban's colleges offer two distinctive learning environments in each of which there has recently been substantial investment in equipment and facilities to deliver music and dance. The College buildings themselves are a tangible and beneficial student learning resource, in

particular the Laban centre. This is a highly specialised building that is designed to provide a tailored environment for dance and is in itself a resource that is clearly valued by staff members and students. It brings together the Laban Library and Archive, a Dance Health Unit, the Laban Theatre and numerous dance studios to form a well-resourced learning environment that is of clear benefit to the students. Trinity is primarily located in historic buildings at Greenwich. These have been comprehensively, renovated for purpose, offering high-quality practice facilities, specially built recording studios, as well as recital rooms, percussion pods, a music technology suite and listening stations in the library. The college also includes the Jerwood Library of the Performing Arts, and special research collections and archives. The audit team noted that, partly in response to student feedback, a capacity audit had been conducted for the Joint Principals' Strategy Group, that drew upon external data regarding benchmark norms for the provision of practice rooms for students drawn from across the UK higher education music sector. This exercise had recently led the institution to effect a plan that will increase the number of practice rooms at the Greenwich site.

81   Students generally praised the quality of the physical learning resources at Trinity Laban. However, they also raised very significant concerns regarding the availability of practice space, particularly at Trinity for music practice, and more generally regarding the timetabling of rooms across the two colleges. The student written submission had also highlighted these problems. The audit team understood that the issue of individual practice space was a long-standing one, familiar also in comparable institutions, and one of which the college was fully aware. Nevertheless, the team formed the view that Trinity Laban had not been able to achieve a satisfactory management of student expectations in response to the perceived lack of practice rooms for music students. The team identified the risk that this situation could be exacerbated by the introduction of new programmes without first fully assessing the potential impact on the booking of practice rooms. The team discussed this matter in detail with students and staff and found that the student view did not concur with the view expressed by staff members that practice rooms were readily available at the extremes of the day. The team noted that Trinity Laban was taking gradual but deliberate steps to resolve this matter, subsequent to the commissioning of the capacity audit noted above.

82   The audit team learned from discussions with staff that historically Trinity had a library committee, while information technology had been previously considered more of a management and administration resource than a teaching resource. Consequently, a new learning resources committee had recently been formed. At the time of the audit, this institution-level committee, with the remit to monitor and review resources for learning, had met only to discuss its terms of reference and finalise its membership. Prior to the formation of this committee, it was unclear where the institutional management of resource allocation resided within the committee structure, outside of the Academic Board. More broadly, it was not clear to the team how the strategic oversight of resource allocation was formally located at an institutional level. For example, the team could not find evidence of systematic planning for the financing of additional learning resources during a new programme's approval process.

83   During meetings with the audit team, students commended the excellent library facilities at Trinity Laban and the helpfulness of library staff members in assisting them with their work and enquiries. Students also commented upon the willingness of library staff to buy in sought after texts identified by students. The only aspect of the library provision questioned by students was the restricted library opening hours during holiday periods. Students praised the intranet access at Trinity but commented that no such resource was available at Laban. This shortcoming had been identified in the recent revalidation of the BA in Dance Theatre and was being addressed at the time of the audit. Overall, the team formed the view that the institution's provision and maintenance of library resources was commendable and served to enhance the student learning experience. While the use of information technology at Trinity and Laban is already of direct benefit to learning, this will be strengthened further by the planned implementation of internet facilities at Laban.

Admissions policy

84   Trinity Laban's admissions policy is clearly articulated in Section 6 of the Academic Quality Handbook and is in accordance with the *Code of practice.* A robust system is documented for the accreditation of prior learning and an admissions/selections committee for each college authorises offers based on general entry requirements and an audition. Auditions are standard across Trinity Laban and feedback is always available to applicants. The institution ensures that staff members involved in admissions are competent at auditioning in the art forms. Well-established procedures are also in place to conduct auditions on location at venues in the European Union. Auditions for the programmes that are run collaboratively involve staff members from those institutions who are familiar with the specialism of the collaborative programme in question.

85   Students commented on a very positive recruitment process. From the evidence available, the audit team concluded that Trinity Laban is professional in the conduct of its admissions policy and is consistent in its implementation.

Student support

86   A system of student support, both academic and non-academic, is in place, which embeds personal development planning within a personal tutor system. Separate systems operate between Trinity and Laban, but both encompass academic and pastoral care, with support for employability specifically addressed within some programmes. Students declared satisfaction in terms of the support and guidance received, although their comments highlighted the differences that existed between the two colleges, both effective in meeting student needs. Positive comments were made in relation to the structured 'buddy' system and personal tutor system in operation at Laban; at Trinity the arrangements were such that the students often communicated closely with the instrument tutors, augmenting the well-established personal student tutor system.

87   The student services department in each college forms a hub for student support. Across Trinity Laban these services include the management of disability issues in relation to teaching and learning, student health and nutrition, personal counselling, chaplaincy, and careers advice. However, the concept of a centralised student services for the institution as a whole had not yet been developed and students accessed such support mainly at college level. The audit team learned that a review of student services across the institution was to be undertaken by an external consultant. The institution had already identified a shortcoming at Laban with regard to careers advice. The institution had an impending review, which indicated a clear institutional ambition to develop a more centralised, efficient and generally accessible concept for its student services.

88   Trinity Laban includes in its support for students, provision to care for their physical health and wellbeing. At Laban, there is a specific commitment to look after the whole student, and in this respect the college offers a commendable level of service. At Trinity, there are aspects of the student support system that, although less focused upon student health and nutrition, nevertheless provide support for a level of care, particularly in regard to the response to student injury and physiotherapy, that in certain ways exceeded the extent of the provision at Laban. Thus, at Trinity, students had free access to Alexander technique sessions, and there were instances whereby the cost of private consultancy to assist with the resolution of an injury had been underwritten by the programme team. The audit team considered that the general commitment to supporting students' physical health as performers was distinctive and commendable, but it also noted some inconsistencies in institutional policy. A difference in levels of service across the institution was highlighted by students during meetings with the team. Whilst at Laban students had access to triage and physiotherapy, students felt that this access was at times qualified by the strict operation of the undergraduate attendance policy (see paragraph 64 above). In addition, students were expected to pay for their own treatment subsequent to identification and initial treatment of an injury or an initial session of physiotherapy. Laban staff members explained that it was a requirement that all dance students obtained appropriate

insurance cover, but students made clear that the operation of an insurance policy excess could require them to have to pay for certain treatments, regardless.

89   Overall, the audit team found that Trinity Laban's arrangements for student support at college level were effective and commendable, particularly in light of the distinctive focus on student health and welfare. While the team judged that support services were effective in maintaining the quality of students' learning opportunities, it also considered that the institution would benefit from identifying and resolving the inequities in student support that still exist between the two colleges. A more formally established oversight of student support at an institutional level would assist the provision of equitable services to all students. There was evidence that Trinity Laban had recognised this need and the team would encourage continuing action to achieve a higher level of coordinated support.

Staff support (including staff development)

90   The audit team recognised the particular circumstances bearing upon staffing policy in a conservatoire environment, in which there is substantial involvement of part time practitioners in the delivery of the curricula. This presents the institution with staff support challenges, and these had been identified during the previous (pre-merger) audits of Trinity College of Music (see paragraphs 12-14 above). There were clearly inherent difficulties in gaining staff attendance at staff development events, in part because for many staff the development of performance capacity and capability is enabled by other aspects of their work portfolio. The team noted that the merged institution has now begun work with the Higher Education Academy in developing staff pedagogic skills and capacity, by arranging Academy workshops and supporting staff study toward recognised higher education teaching qualifications. In addition the recent Academic Strategy set out clear institutional objectives for academic staff development. A People Strategy and staff development handbook were to have been implemented across the merged institution from 2007-08. This initiative had been delayed until 2008-09. The team acknowledged that Trinity Laban had established a human resources department and had advanced some way in identifying needs in its human resources strategy, learning and teaching and other institutional strategies. Although there was evidence of progress, particularly in the training of staff to become assessors and in the annual faculty development workshops, the team found that much of the implementation of these strategies still remained aspirational. The team noted that the 2003 audit report had acknowledged the work of the Human Resources Department but expressed concern that the human resources strategy and the learning and teaching strategy needed 'to be considered jointly to ensure that staff development at individual and institutional level is integrated and adequately supported'.

91   Prior to merger, the two colleges had separate policies for staff development and reward. The Briefing Paper stated that Trinity Laban was committed to facilitating staff development opportunities, and to contributing to the personal, professional and career development of academic and administrative staff members. This objective is set out in Trinity Laban's Strategic Plan 2007-2012, along with an action plan. To this end, a draft new institutional staff development policy had been developed, but this had not yet been ratified. Nevertheless, some staff development opportunities had taken place and included community engagement projects, support for conference attendance, and some strategic work to help staff to attain fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. The team nevertheless considered that at the time of the audit, there remained significant omissions in the staff development and support framework at Trinity Laban. There was, for instance, no clear evidence of an annual staff appraisal policy having been operating on a formal basis. While some 'team teaching' takes place, there was no evidence of a systematic and documented procedure for the peer observation of teaching.

92   Separate staff handbooks for Trinity and Laban were made available to the audit team alongside a draft generic Trinity Laban staff handbook. The individual handbooks had not been updated to reflect the nature of the merged institution and while the development of the generic

handbook was a welcome sign, it was evident to the team from information contained within the draft document that its implementation had been intended for the academic year 2007-08. The team found that the merged institution's procedures relating to the appointment, appraisal, training and development of academic staff were not adequately developed into a single reference source. The new staff handbook sought to draw together the human resource policies of each college and to provide details of staff development opportunities. The team understood that these delays had been occasioned by the demands of the pay framework implementation and the institutional merger. Nevertheless, given the evident difficulties in progressing developments in this area, it was the team's view that the timely delivery of a completed and agreed institution-wide staff development policy would require more robust supervision at institution level.

93   The audit team concluded that arrangements for academic staff development and reward were present, to an extent, at a college level but were not yet consistent and effective at the institutional level. The team noted that Trinity Laban had identified the need for development in this area and institutional priorities and action plans had been drawn up within the People Strategy. The team welcomed these initiatives, which were clearly now overdue. In view of the considerable setbacks experience to these developments, which had already been recommended in the previous audit, the team would advise that Trinity Laban now implement more expeditiously a comprehensive institutional staff development policy.

Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement

94   Trinity Laban's policy framework for quality enhancement contains three central elements. First, the Academic Strategy 2007-12 sets out a number of key aims for enhancement of the student experience, in terms of learning and teaching, research and scholarship, knowledge exchange and public engagement, academic staff development, and resources. Second, 'Creative Futures' (a centre for research, enterprise, and academic enhancement) is responsible for the coordinated management of initiatives in learning and teaching, research and scholarly activity, knowledge exchange and transfer, and public and community engagement. Third, the Academic Quality Handbook sets out the institution's procedures for quality enhancement in line with the key aspects of the national Academic Infrastructure.

95   In discussions with staff, and through the reading of committee minutes and programme reviews, the audit team found a number of specific initiatives for the systematic dissemination of good practice. Creative Futures plays an emerging role in developing a shared institutional ethos for the encouragement of quality enhancement. That centre is currently managing a variety of externally-funded research and learning and teaching enhancement projects.

96   The audit team learned that Trinity Laban has an ongoing and active engagement with the local, national, and international community through a range of initiatives. This commitment to knowledge exchange and public engagement, clearly reflected in the Academic Strategy, is wide ranging in its scope and impact and has been developed over a number of years. For example, Trinity runs a successful Junior Trinity Saturday School for 3 to 19-year old local children, while Laban actively encourages the local community to use its facilities as a community resource as well as having extensive education and community and pre-higher education programmes, including the Centre for Advanced Training for talented young dancers. Trinity's activity in the local community includes a variety of projects and events delivered in a range of settings through two outreach programmes, 'Raising the Roof' and 'Isle of Dogs Music'. Activity is focused in the institution's neighbouring communities: the London boroughs of Greenwich, Lewisham and Tower Hamlets. Work is delivered in partnership with external organisations, including the World Heritage Site, where Trinity is based. All students at the institution have the opportunity to participate in community projects through the work of the professional skills department and working with professional project leaders and musicians, they participate as performers, members of workshop teams and assistants.

97   Laban engages with the national and international community through the work and international tours of the Transitions Dance Company. Trinity Laban offers three awards that are embedded into the Transitions Dance Company, the MA Dance Performance, the Postgraduate Diploma in Dance Performance and the Transitions Dance Company Diploma. The Company is supported artistically and administratively by Laban, and its work teams the postgraduate student dancers together with recognised and respected choreographers. By commissioning new work and recruiting dancers who have the ambition to emerge onto the international dance scene, the Transitions Dance Company makes an active contribution to the field of contemporary dance.

98   Laban developed the first ever master's degree in Dance Science five years ago. This development has in turn led to close relationships with contemporary dance companies and support for community-based education sector more widely. The Briefing Paper explained that 'a recent project involving 300 school children and undertaken in conjunction with Hampshire Dance found that dance has a creative focus that can potentially improve the health and well-being of young people, in particular female teenagers, who represent a particularly 'hard-to-reach' group in terms of reluctance to participate in exercise and perception of self-esteem'. During the audit, it emerged that the Dance Science team had won substantial grant funding from the Leverhulme Trust to continue this community-based research work.

99   The audit team considered that these initiatives aimed at an active engagement with the wider community were commendable. Many of the activities developed through this external engagement feed back into programmes, or directly involve students, and so enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities. The team believed that the successful programme of public engagement brought many benefits to students and to the community. It demonstrated an effective quality enhancement initiative of Trinity Laban as an institution, drawing its strategic direction from the achievements of its constituent colleges.

100   The development of the area of Dance Science at Laban has also served to underpin another area of cross-institutional enhancement of the student experience. Internal research with students has led to the development of the Dance Health Unit, which is of potential benefit to all dance students. External funding to enable an extension of dance science research has led to publication in peer-reviewed journals, and significant interest from other higher education institutions. There was evidence from meetings with staff and students that health issues are now also being systematically incorporated into music programmes, particularly in the availability of physiotherapy following stress or injury. Thus a strategic focus on the health of the performer is developing, and an event focusing on health is planned for the induction programme for all students.

101   As a supplementary trail, the audit team was requested by Trinity Laban to consider the institutional approaches to employability, understood as an aspect of the quality enhancement strategy. The team confirmed from the audit trails that the curricula for both dance and music were clearly and extensively oriented to the professional competences required for a successful career within the respective professions of music and dance. The importance of music and dance within education, and within the community, is evident in validation documents and programme specifications. The team also saw publicity materials for a variety of postgraduate fellowships designed to offer a bridge between full-time study and work in the professions of music and dance. Staff curricula vitae demonstrated that teaching staff are actively and professionally engaged. A careers support service to support a wider range of employment was in place at Trinity, but not at Laban, and there were plans for a higher level of coordinated support. These were all positive features of the employability agenda in the institution. However, in meetings with students, the team found that they did not feel that employability was particularly well addressed, in comparison with similar institutions. Students cited a competitor institution that organises apprenticeships in dance. It also had strong links with dance companies, which meant that it was able to organise auditions and placements as part of the programme. Students would like Trinity Laban to offer such opportunities. Further, students at Laban also felt that the attendance policy at the college was an obstacle to attending auditions for employment,

especially in year three (see paragraph 67 above). From the evidence presented to it to support the supplementary trail, the team concluded that an enhancement initiative was clearly evident at Trinity Laban with regard to the professional orientation of its programmes and aspects of its support for employability in the art forms. However, the team also identified unevenness in the support for wider employability, and only a limited recognition by its students of the strength of the institution's commitment to employability.

Management information - quality enhancement

102   The institution produces a range of data to monitor the quality of the learning experience and to secure the standards of the awards delivered on behalf of the validating universities. Evidence from the audit trails confirmed that Trinity Laban draws upon a comprehensive range of student feedback as an essential component of its quality assurance procedures, which feeds into annual monitoring. Examples include module evaluation, programme evaluation, and student input to course committee meetings. Similarly, there was evidence in the audit trails that external examiner reports were discussed at subject boards within each college, and in annual monitoring reports; and that minor modifications were made to programmes as a result. However, it was not clear to the audit team at what point the Academic Board had oversight of these issues. Nor was it clear that the information derived from the quality assurance system was harnessed in a systematic way as part of an institutional approach to the quality enhancement of learning opportunities. The team identified a number of areas where the institutional response to monitoring and feedback information could have been used more effectively to support development and improvement in the student learning experience. The team considered that there was a clear potential for the greater exercise of institution-level ownership and accountability for initiatives relating to the enhancement of Trinity Laban's academic provision. It would therefore recommend clarification regarding the focus of institutional responsibility for quality enhancement.

Good practice

103   The audit team identified a number of examples of good practice, some of which had derived from, or served to inform, the enhancement strategies outlined above. The team particularly wished to commend as good practice Trinity Laban's work in the followings areas: the procedures for benchmarking of programmes at validation (see paragraph 27); the strong level of community engagement, both in its degree level programmes and more widely (see paragraphs 95 to 98 above); the way in which the focus on performance-related work shapes the curriculum (see paragraphs 78 and 79 above); and the manner in which Trinity Laban's programmes aim to address student well-being (see paragraphs 88 and 89 above).

Section 5: Collaborative arrangements

104   There is only a small amount of collaborative provision for which Trinity Laban has accountability. The first of these is a pathway through the BMus (Hons) Performance in Indian Classical Music, delivered by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan UK (Bhavan), an Indian cultural centre for music and dance. The second is the Foundation Degree in Musical Theatre, delivered in conjunction with Reynolds Performing Arts, which is part of Reynolds Group PLC, a private limited company. Both initiatives are validated by the University of Westminster through a tripartite agreement. Memoranda of Collaboration have been signed by all parties. In addition a Memorandum of Agreement between Trinity Laban and the providers clarifies the obligations and rights of each party.

105   Institutional procedures for ensuring academic standards and quality of collaborative provision are in place. These are set out in section 4 of the Academic Quality Handbook, and align with the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning),* published by QAA. The provision is subject to the same monitoring and review processes that are currently in place for internal programme provision, including scrutiny

by the external examiner and the University of Westminster's Campus Academic Standards Group. In addition, Trinity Laban appoints a liaison officer who makes at least two visits per term to the partner institution. Written reports of these visits are presented at the relevant college Subject Board.

106   The audit team noted that a robust first-recognition process had been followed by Trinity Laban and included a due diligence evaluation. It was also noted that the University of Westminster's own recognition procedures had been followed, and that the validation of the programme was a separate and independent process to that of recognition. The Memoranda of Agreement set out extensive mechanisms for quality management and enhancement; further, requirements for staff development are set out. These refer especially to Bhavan, in terms of familiarisation with the structures, processes and procedures required of western higher education.

107   The process of formal institutional recognition of Reynolds Performing Arts was completed in June 2007, and is valid for three years. A Memorandum of Agreement was signed in September 2007. At the time of the audit, the Foundation Degree programme appeared to be working well.

108   However, the audit team identified some concerns regarding the provision at Bhavan. A number of issues regarding assessment had been raised by students during an audit by the University of Westminster's Campus Academic Standards Group. Similar concerns were raised in the external examiner's report of 2007. While the Memorandum of Agreement assigns responsibility for quality and standards to the Subject Board, which reports to the Academic Board, the team could find no evidence that these matters of concern had been discussed at the Academic Board. In a meeting of the team with senior staff, it was confirmed that action had been taken at a senior management level in order to resolve these matters, and this was confirmed by the minutes of management meetings. While recognising the need to take rapid remedial action, the team considered that points which had been addressed should have subsequently been reported to the Academic Board, as the responsible academic authority. With regard to this partnership, the team also noted that the condition requiring formal signature of an agreement to cooperate between academic partners was not fulfilled until many months after students had been enrolled in the partner institution. Trinity Laban will no doubt wish to ensure that appropriate procedures and checks, are put in place to ensure that it is not thus put at risk again in the future.

109   The audit team observed that the collaborative provision at Trinity Laban was recently developed, and that in the case of the arrangement with Bhavan, it involved only a small number of students. Nevertheless, the team considered it a weakness that there was no systematic method by which the Academic Board could be informed in a timely manner of matters regarding the standards and quality of this provision. The team would therefore advise the institution to review its current committee processes to ensure that the Academic Board can effectively discharge its institutional responsibility for the overview of standards and quality of any collaborative provision.

Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

The research environment

110   The Briefing Paper stated that Trinity Laban supports a wide range of research-based activity, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary work, including work that combines practice with theoretical perspectives. The institution currently has a small number of postgraduate research students registered, equivalent to three full-time equivalents in total. These students are studying exclusively at Laban, under City University regulations. Trinity has no history of registering postgraduate research students. Laban has not sought to increase these postgraduate student numbers over the last few years, pending the agreement on clearly identified priorities for research within the merged institution.

111   The Trinity Laban Academic Strategy sets out plans for research and scholarship and includes the following four objectives for research students:

● articulate clear exemplars for research in practice based environments

● provide training for research supervisors in conjunction with validating partners

● include doctoral students as graduate assistants for research projects to help grow Trinity Laban's research culture

● review Laban's PhD programme and extend doctoral provision across the higher education institution.

112   At the time of the audit, Trinity Laban was also developing a new institution-wide research degree programme in collaboration with City University. This will enable students of music as well as those of dance to enrol on postgraduate research degrees.

113   Oversight of postgraduate research student activity is exercised by the Research Degree Programme Committee, which reports to the Research Board. This Committee is responsible for nomination of supervisors and their training, monitoring the progress of students, the quality of supervision and addressing students feedback.

Selection, admission and induction of postgraduate research students

114   The audit team confirmed that the procedures for the selection, admission and induction of students meet the expectations of the *Code of practice.* Admission normally requires a master's degree for entry to doctoral study, but a wider range of professional and academic qualifications can be considered. Selection is based on a proposal, available resources and an assessment of the student's training needs. Decisions are made by the Research Degree Programme Committee and then passed to the Chair of City University's Research Committee for final approval by either the Chair or the full committee.

115   Induction arrangements for research students are in place. These include an introduction to City University by attendance at a one-day induction workshop. This enables students to meet with students from other disciplines and provides access to City University's Society of Research Students. In addition, there is induction regarding the resources available at Laban and City University, together with an assessment of the student's research training needs.

Supervision, progress and review.

116   Postgraduate students are supervised in their studies by a team selected from appropriate college staff, the composition of which must be approved by City University. Supervisors are trained by City University and Trinity Laban is seeking to develop more comprehensive supervisor

training in collaboration with the University. Progress monitoring is carried out by Research Degree Programme Committee, which follows the procedures of City University. These include all the expected milestones (approval of research project, annual reports, transfer to PhD, selection of examiners and final oral examination), which are marked by reports being sent to the University. Initial progress reports are produced by the supervisor after six months. The report at six months identifies initial progress and identifies any additional training needs. Subsequently, an annual report of progress is produced and considered by the Research Degree Programme Committee. Formal communication with City University is channelled through the Dean of Studies at Laban, pending appointment of a programme leader for the new Trinity Laban Research Degree Programme.

Development of research skills

117   Research training is undertaken at City University where training in generic research skills is available. In addition, training in subject-specific techniques is undertaken by Laban.

Student feedback mechanisms

118   In principle, feedback from postgraduate research students is gathered through the student representative system but the audit team learned that no student had volunteered for a representative role in 2005-06 or 2006-07. The annual research programme review for 2006-07 had identified students' apathy as a problem in developing a sense of a wider research community. An action following this review was to promote a research culture and to encourage students to be involved in research workshops at City University and the creation of focus groups to enable feedback to be gathered. During the 2007-08 session, a student representative had been identified and had attended Research Degree Programme Committee meetings. The team also gathered that planned termly meetings with students on a forum-type basis designed to gather feedback in discussion had not been effective, due to the small number of research degree students and, consequently, poorly attended meetings. All research students complete an annual questionnaire, which seeks comments and opinion on resources and supervision arrangements. This feedback received a formal response and is summarised in the annual review report.

Complaints and appeals

119   Complaints and appeals are dealt with in accordance with City University's procedures and regulations. These are set out in the City University Research Handbook which is provided to all postgraduate research students on registration. Students are encouraged to seek resolution through an informal process before lodging a formal complaint. It was not possible to meet with any students who had experience of these procedures during the course of the audit visit.

120   The audit team considered that the supervision and support arrangements for the small number of postgraduate research students at Trinity Laban are satisfactory and meet the expectations of the *Code of practice.*

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Section 7: Published information

121   Trinity Laban publishes a range of information on its website, in printed and electronic form. The approval of academic documentation is carried out at several levels. Course programme handbooks are approved by the programme leader with input from the deans of studies and Academic Registrar. Publicity material such as the prospectuses, are overseen by the Academic Registrar and web-based information is checked by the newly appointed Web Content Manager. The same arrangements apply to material produced in print and web-based form by the collaborative partners delivering Trinity Laban courses. At this stage in its development, the institution has decided to continue to publish separate prospectuses for music and dance.

122   The audit team learnt from the students it met, and through reading the student written submission and programme committee minutes, that the information available to students, both before and during their courses of study, was accurate and helpful. This applied to module content and assessment and award criteria, as well as to regulations on both academic and non-academic appropriate conduct. At times however, students from the dance courses were notified at a late stage of changes to certain class activities. The planned introduction of intranet access for dance students based at Laban should improve opportunities for communication of such information. The team concluded that Trinity Laban had appropriate procedures in place for ensuring that published information was accurate. As noted above, the institution is working to develop an intranet facility at Laban to match that available to Trinity students, and is preparing a review of its website and intranet facilities following recommendations from the Information Strategy Committee and the appointment of a web content manager.

123   The small size of Trinity Laban means that its entry on the Unistat website consists of largely factual demographic data of only limited evaluative value. Consideration of the National Student Survey data is incorporated into the College's quality assurance processes. However, the audit team was unable to establish that the institutional consideration of the data had given adequate attention to those areas related to assessment practice, which had received very low scores.

124   The audit team found that reliance could reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that Trinity Laban publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.