Higher Education Review of the National Film and Television School

June 2015

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the National Film and Television School. The review took place from 10 to 12 June 2015 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Mark Cooper
- Professor Debbie Lockton
- Mr Dan Derricott (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

In reviewing the National Film and Television School the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

The themes for the academic year 2014-15 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,[2] and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[3] A dedicated section explains the method for Higher Education Review[4] and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code.
[2] Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106.
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review web pages:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about the National Film and Television School

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at the National Film and Television School.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities is **commended**.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at the National Film and Television School:

- the integrated and interdisciplinary curricula and assessment that encourages students to develop their individual practice (Expectations B3 and B6)
- the extensive engagement of alumni in supporting student learning (Expectations B3 and B4)
- the comprehensive support for students' transition from study to industry (Expectation B4)
- the effective use of industry leaders as external assessors in students' second and final progress reviews (Expectation B6)
- the rigour of the annual course evaluation process to continuously assure and enhance the quality of the student learning experience (Expectation B8).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to the National Film and Television School.

By November 2016:

- liaise with the degree-awarding body to ensure that the number of external examiners allows for full coverage across the growing number of disciplines (Expectation A3.4).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that the National Film and Television School is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students:

- the increased focus on pedagogic practice in staff development activity (Expectation B3)
- the steps being taken to develop staff understanding of current priorities in the Teaching and Learning Strategy (Expectation B3)
- the actions being taken at strategic level to increase the visibility and awareness of support for student welfare (Expectation B4)

- the development of the student representative capacity, job description(s), training and support opportunities available (Expectation B5)
- the steps being taken to share external examiner reports with student representatives through the Academic Standards Committee and the development of the intranet for dissemination to the wider student body (Expectation B7)
- the steps being taken to expand the use of the intranet to support student learning opportunities (Expectation C).

Theme: Student Employability

The National Film and Television School has a systematic and successful approach to developing student employability, enjoying particular success in bridging the transition for students from study to industry. For example, the School works with companies to set, support and fund genuine live briefs that are delivered by students. The School is also proactive in supporting students to showcase their work and to develop networks at key events.

Employers are engaged in the delivery and development of the core curriculum and a range of extracurricular opportunities on an ongoing basis; this forms a central part of the School's delivery model. Visiting tutors from industry contribute workshops or mentor students through projects. Masterclasses are delivered on a regular basis by high profile industry figures, and the School arranges 'Meet the Industry' workshops towards the end of the programme to help students understand their career options.

The School has developed a number of industry advisory boards, which provide a steer on how the portfolio and programmes can be developed to respond effectively to the changing and future needs of the industry. A cadre of external assessors supports the delivery of programmes. These are professionals from industry, attached to each of the pathways of the programme, who review and comment on the individual work of each student at the end of the first and second year.

The School has a track record in preparing graduates who are ready for their chosen industry, not simply to go into jobs but also to create employment using the high-level skills developed during their time as students.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining Higher Education Review.

About the National Film and Television School

The National Film and Television School (the School) is a company limited by guarantee and registered as a charity. It has existed since 1971 and was granted status as a higher education institution in November 2013 by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills. The School is supported by and works with a wide range of high-profile partners.

The School has a track record for excellence that is recognised internationally. Turning out a host of 'work-ready' award-winning students and graduates, and many of the UK's most noted contemporary auteurs as well as commercial filmmakers, the School's alumni have shot, directed and produced many of the UK's most important and successful films and television programmes of the last 40 years.

The School is located on a single site at the old Beaconsfield Studios, and as such operates as a fully functioning, comprehensive and technologically sophisticated film studio, also incorporating a television studio, games lab and extensive post-production facilities. The School has plans to develop two new buildings, one of which will replace much of the

more dilapidated aspects of the estate. The School hopes to complete the building works during 2018.

The Royal College of Art has been the School's validating partner since January 2001. The College validates the MA Film and Television, a framework qualification, which integrates theory and practice, and embraces specialised courses in 13 areas. The master's is two years (full-time) in length, and involves seminars, workshops, and practical experience in production. The programme currently has just over 220 students.

Since 2012 the School has undergone a full Review for Educational Oversight and two annual monitoring visits by QAA. The present review found that the recommendations from the last review had been addressed, though action was ongoing in relation to staff development to reflect the pedagogic needs of teaching staff.

Explanation of the findings about the National Film and Television School

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1   The School's Master's Degree in Film and Television is validated and awarded by the Royal College of Art and is therefore subject to the scrutiny and approval processes of the College. The programme is, however, designed, developed and delivered by the School, and therefore responsibility for setting and maintaining an appropriate level is shared. As there is no relevant master's level Subject Benchmark Statement, the School makes use of the undergraduate Subject Benchmark Statement for Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies by ensuring its programme builds on and exceeds the descriptors set out in that document. The School complements this with an annual review and accreditation process by the professional, statutory and regulatory body, Creative Skillset.

1.2   The School demonstrates an awareness of its responsibilities for maintaining and securing academic standards within the context of external reference points. It could be more explicit as to how it articulates the programme as a level 7 programme, however, this appears to result from the awarding body's templates and reports not making specific reference to the level of the provision.

1.3   The review team requested further evidence from a recent programme validation process and discussed the use of external reference points with senior managers during the

review visit. While this did not point to any explicit, written articulation of how the programmes aligned with level 7 descriptors or characteristics, the School provided reassurance that this was a consideration in programme design and that exercises had been undertaken to map the whole provision against external reference points.

1.4 The School strikes an effective balance in developing its provision in line with academic external reference points and other industry-related reference points. The School makes good use of its relationship with its awarding body to seek advice on maintaining academic standards and in collaboratively developing the provision.

1.5 Overall, the School has demonstrated understanding and fulfilment of its responsibilities to secure academic standards. This includes the use of external reference points within *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and other reference points. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.6   The School operates within the academic framework and regulations of its awarding body, the Royal College of Art. A number of quality assurance mechanisms are used to monitor and maintain compliance with these, namely: the Internal Moderator, appointed by the College; the regular monitoring of programmes; and the operation of a Joint Academic Board, with representation from the College and the School. The awarding body's requirements are translated by the School into operational policies and practices through its Academic Standards Committee, which acts as the senior deliberative body for academic governance under the Board of Governors, and is documented in the School's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. The School currently awards credit only on the successful completion of the full programme and offers no exit points other than the full master's degree.

1.7   The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook clearly articulates the School's academic framework and approaches to assessment, and subsequently credit. The School has a clear deliberative committee structure for maintaining oversight of this, through its Academic Standards Committee, and supplements this through formal Joint Academic Board meetings. These collectively appear to provide an effective means for governing how credit and qualifications are awarded.

1.8   The review team established a line of enquiry to examine how academic credit would be awarded going forward, in light of the awarding body's decision to review its own credit framework and potentially move towards formal modularisation. While it was clear to the team that the School was giving serious consideration to the implications for the programme ahead of its impending revalidation in October 2015, the awarding body had not yet finalised its own guidance. This meant that discussions between the School and the awarding body about the future programme's credit structure and exit awards were ongoing.

1.9   There is a clear and consistently applied process for the awarding of credit and qualifications, which is well documented; the Academic Standards Committee takes its responsibilities for maintaining this seriously. The review team considers the ongoing discussions around credit frameworks and exit awards to be a useful opportunity to ensure students' achievements are clearly recognised and transferable should they be unable to complete the full master's programme.

1.10   Overall, there is a transparent and comprehensive framework for awarding credit and qualifications. This is made possible through the School's effective interpretation and operationalisation of its awarding body's framework. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.11   The School uses the definitive record validated by the Royal College of Art to deliver the programme. The associated validation agreement, which is considered by the School as the formal memorandum of understanding between both parties, details the key policies, procedures, processes and expectations of the academic framework in which the School must operate in the delivery of the programme. The School's own Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook largely mirrors that of the Royal College of Art's regulations handbook. The School is aware of its responsibilities to students and alumni.

1.12   The intended learning outcomes for the programme are set out in the course handbook and are classed as the definitive programme record. Assessment regulations are also appropriately detailed and advised to students in an informative Student Information Handbook, and to staff in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. The School's Academic Standards Committee has oversight of the outcomes from quality processes such as revalidation, course modification, external examiner reports and annual course evaluation. The Committee produces an annual report on its work for the Joint Academic Board, which is chaired by the degree-awarding body's Pro Rector (Academic).

1.13   The review team tested this Expectation by scrutinising the course handbook with specific reference to the programme learning outcomes, programme specification detail and the content of the associated Student Information and Quality Assurance and Enhancement handbooks. Minutes from the Academic Standards Committee and Joint Academic Board were also consulted and followed up in meetings with staff and students.

1.14   Students are made aware of the learning outcomes before commencing their course. They are issued with the course handbook electronically by email before formally registering on the programme. The memorandum of understanding and revalidation document clearly identify the deliberative committee structure and course approval, modification and review processes, which follow the processes set out in the Royal College of Art Quality Assurance Handbook. The degree-awarding body formally reassured itself that the programme learning outcomes were at master's level at the last programme revalidation event in 2009.

1.15   The review team found that the School, in conjunction with the degree-awarding body, has appropriately referenced the programme learning outcomes, and that these provide a documentary reference point for the delivery, assessment, monitoring and review of its programmes of study, and the provision of records. These outcomes are effectively communicated to students. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.16   The School's MA Film and Television programme is validated by the Royal College of Art. The programme was first validated in 2001, and revalidated in 2003 and 2009. The revalidation process appeared to be very thorough; the panel included an academic and a professional external member. The conditions set by the revalidation panel were met.

1.17   The MA programme handbook sets out overall programme outcomes and specific outcomes for each specialist pathway. Although the pathways are mostly delivered separately within departments, the programme is a single one and undergoes a single approval procedure by the degree-awarding body. There are, however, exceptions to this where a new specialisation is added outside of the normal revalidation cycle, such as with the Games Design and Development pathway.

1.18   The School holds regular curriculum planning meetings with heads of department. Details of curriculum proposals and progress to date is presented at Board of Governors' Strategy Away Days. The School has a process of course approval and course modification, which is detailed in the School Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook.

1.19   The MA is reviewed annually by Creative Skillset and was successfully accredited in July 2014; it will be reviewed again in December 2015. The School also has industry advisory boards, which inform curriculum design and comment on student performance in the workplace.

1.20   There is programme modification procedure; documentation relating to a modification was provided in the evidence seen by the review team. In addition, the degree-awarding body has a new programme approval process; again, documentation relating to a new programme for validation was provided. New programmes are discussed, originally at heads of department meetings, and then the curriculum is approved by the management team before submission to the degree-awarding body.

1.21   The School's Academic Standards Committee has oversight of the outcomes from quality processes such as revalidation, course modification, external examiner reports and annual course evaluation. The Committee also monitors the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The Committee produces an annual report on its work for the Joint Academic Board, which is chaired by the Royal College of Art's Pro Rector (Academic).

1.22   The School has a sub-board of examiners that makes recommendations to the final examination board. The final examination board reports to the Academic Standards Committee and a list of students entitled to graduate is provided to the Royal College of Art. The degree-awarding body appoints a member of its staff as an Internal Moderator to ensure that assessment processes have been observed. The Internal Moderator produces a report three weeks after the board confirming or otherwise that this is the case to the Pro Rector (Academic); a copy of the report goes to the Academic Standards Committee of the Royal College of Art and to the School.

1.23   The review team met senior and academic staff and members of industry advisory boards. The team also looked at the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook, minutes from heads of department meetings, minutes from the Senior Management Team meetings, minutes of the Academic Standards Committee, minutes of industry advisory boards, and validation documentation and reports of the degree-awarding body.

1.24   Initial new course proposals are discussed by the School's Senior Management Team, which decides the strategic merit of the proposal and if the resources are available. The second stage consists of a detailed proposal, which addresses a number of issues: course management, resourcing, funding, student numbers and marketing information is considered and addressed. In addition, discussions take place with the relevant industry advisory board. The Academic Standards Committee looks at the proposal and approves it to be forwarded to the degree-awarding body for approval to proceed to validation.

1.25   The process of programme approval is clear and detailed in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. Records of management team and Academic Standards Committee industry advisory boards' discussions read by the review team showed a consideration of the relevant levels within the FHEQ. Detailed discussion within industry advisory boards demonstrates the input of industry into the curriculum.

1.26   The review team found that the process of programme approval is robust, involving a number of stages before approval is given by the School to proceed to validation. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.27   Programme handbooks contain programme outcomes for the MA programme, in addition to course outcomes for each pathway within the programme. The programme handbooks make it clear to students what is being assessed during their progress reviews and their final progress review. In addition, the final progress review documentation lists grade descriptors.

1.28   The programme handbook does not show a mapping of module outcomes to programme outcomes, however, module briefs given to the students are very detailed in showing the learning outcomes for the module and the assessment criteria employed.

1.29   The programme has external assessors who are from industry. These assessors meet with students at the end of the first year and their reports are part of the student's end-of-year progress review. External assessors are also involved in the students' final progress review. In addition, two external examiners are appointed, one from industry and one from academia. The reports confirm that academic standards are met.

1.30   There is an Internal Moderator from the degree-awarding body who moderates student work alongside the external examiners, and attends the final examination board and confirms that processes have been complied with.

1.31   The review team met senior staff academic staff, employers and students. It also looked at programme handbooks, the reviews of students' progress, module briefs and the Internal Moderator's report. Students met by the team said they were clear about the objectives for each module.

1.32   Each department holds six-monthly 'progress reviews' whereby a panel considers tutor feedback, and the student's self-assessment and achievement data. At the end of each year, the progress review also considers written feedback from an external assessor.

1.33   The School introduced the external assessor to add further externality to the assessment process. The Director of Curriculum and Registrar, or a nominated deputy, is a part of the panel to increase consistency across departments. The staff who met the review team indicated that this also encouraged a dissemination of good practice.

1.34   The first progress review, six months in, judges whether the required standard is being reached and the student will be offered support if not. This review is assessed on a pass/fail/referral basis, which looks at proficiency and performance and includes an assessment of attendance and the self-evaluation by the student. The second progress review, at 12 months, starts to introduce the MA criteria. The student self-evaluates against these criteria, as does the head of department and the external assessor, and again the result is pass/fail or referral.

1.35   The external assessor meets every student and their feedback is given to the students. The third progress review after 18 months is led by the head of department and includes student self-evaluation; this is also a pass/fail/referral. The final progress review also involves an external assessor whose comments are available to the two external examiners and the Internal Moderator. The students self-evaluate and are assessed on detailed MA criteria and the final award is classified as excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, poor or very poor. These grades were introduced by the School and each has a clear grade descriptor.

1.36   The review team found that there are clear criteria for a pass/fail/referral for the first three progress reviews, and clear and detailed criteria for the MA classification. The School has increased the externality in the assessment process over and above that required by its degree-awarding body, with the use of external assessors from industry. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.37   The MA was originally validated in 2001, and revalidated in 2003 and 2009. The 2009 revalidation listed three conditions, which were met. The programme is due for revalidation in October 2015.

1.38   The Royal College of Art requires the School to monitor the programme through an annual course evaluation (ACE) process. There is an overall ACE for the whole MA programme incorporating summaries of the individual course evaluations and action plans, comments on academic standards from external examiners and an overall action plan. This is approved and monitored by the Academic Standards Committee and the Joint Academic Board.

1.39   The review team met students, senior staff and academic staff. It also read minutes of the Academic Standards Committee and Joint Academic Board, and looked at individual ACEs and School annual evaluations to the Royal College of Art.

1.40   Each head of department writes an ACE for their course by consulting with other tutors. This takes into account student feedback, external examiner reports, external assessor reports and comments from industry advisory boards, among other things. Each head of department presents the ACE to the Academic Standards Committee. Each presentation lasts approximately one hour, with the Academic Standards Committee querying or asking for clarification on certain points. The Academic Standards Committee then asks for the status of the previous year's action plan and approves the action plan for the next year. The Director of Curriculum and Registrar then writes an overview report, taking into account individual ACEs, which is approved by the Academic Standards Committee and goes to the Joint Academic Board.

1.41   Academic staff met by the review team confirmed their input into the ACE and gave examples of changes made as a result of the process. Students also confirmed that they were asked for module feedback and gave examples of changes as a result of such. This change was reflected in the relevant ACE.

1.42   The review team considered that the process of ACE supports the maintenance of academic standards. It requires a detailed consideration of a number of criteria, and, if issues arise, how they will be addressed. All ACEs are presented to and considered by the Academic Standards Committee, which monitors action plans arising from such. Staff met by the team identified where issues from ACEs had resulted in changes to particular pathways. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.43   The awarding body appoints two external examiners to advise on academic standards, one from an academic background and one from industry. Both external examiners cover all 13 pathways of the master's programme through two visits per year, one of which is to attend the examination board, and each provides an annual report to the School and degree-awarding body.

1.44   The external examiner reports for 2014-15 suggest that examining across the framework qualification, which in effect operates as thirteen different programmes, is challenging and does not allow for regular engagement with staff and students on all pathways. Furthermore, it was noted by an external examiner in his final report that he had only seen dissertations from around half of the disciplines over his three years as an examiner.

1.45   The review team established the coverage of external examiners as a line of enquiry. Through scrutinising additional annual reports from external examiners and the School's response to those reports, it became clear that while the School engaged well with the external examiners and responded to their feedback on the programmes, there was limited recognition or demonstrable action around the issues of coverage and capacity. The team discussed this further during the review visit with senior managers, teaching staff and one of the School's external examiners.

1.46   It was clear that the School was making the best of the current arrangements and had sought to supplement this with its system of external assessors, however, there was still no demonstrable action taken to raise concerns about coverage with the degree-awarding body, which determines the number and remit of external examiners. In discussion, the School recognised the issues raised and emphasised the introduction of the external assessor role to mitigate this. The review team recognised the value of this role to assuring the quality of student learning opportunities but was not convinced that this addressed the potential shortfall in securing the maintenance of academic standards.

1.47   Overall, the School makes effective use of external examiners in maintaining academic standards within the confines of the current arrangements. However, the overall effectiveness of this approach could be limited, especially as the provision grows. The review team therefore **recommends** that the School liaise with the degree-awarding body to ensure that the number of external examiners allows for full coverage across the growing number of disciplines by November 2016. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met, but that the cumulative potential impact of the issues around coverage and capacity by external examiners presents a moderate risk to the maintenance of academic standards.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.48   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All of the Expectations for this judgement area were met and, other than a moderate risk in Expectation A3.4, all of the associated risk levels were low. In all aspects of this judgement area the School complies with the requirements of its degree-awarding body. The team identified one recommendation in this judgement area relating to the coverage of pathways by external examiners. The review team therefore concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations at the School **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1   The approval of new programmes or significant modifications follows Royal College of Art processes and is led by the College. The School Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook lists the processes and references the Royal College of Art Quality Assurance Handbook. Prior to submitting a proposal the School will consult with the relevant industry advisory board, which consists of industry experts and academics, as to the content of the curriculum. Heads of department meetings will initially discuss a new proposal, which is then discussed by the School's management team and the Resources Committee to look at the strategic merit of the proposal and the fit with the School's strategy. If approved to continue there is an expression of interest template, which is submitted to the management team and the Academic Standards Committee.

2.2   The second stage is a detailed proposal where issues of course management, resource planning, funding, student numbers, and market information is considered and addressed. This is discussed by the Senior Management Team and the Academic Standards Committee and submitted to the Royal College of Art, which then establishes a validation panel. The validation report is then discussed at the Academic Standards Committee. The validation panel set conditions and recommendations; the School Director and the Director of Curriculum and Registrar, in discussion with the degree-awarding body, specify a deadline by which the conditions and recommendations should be addressed and reported to the Academic Standards Committee. The latter confirms that the conditions and recommendations have been addressed within the deadline. Once this has been confirmed the course handbook and programme specifications are developed, which are approved annually by the Committee.

2.3   The Royal College of Art Quality Assurance Handbook defines major/minor modifications, as does the School Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. Minor modifications are approved by the Head of Department and are mainly done through the curriculum planning process; these are reported to the Academic Standards Committee through the annual course evaluation process. The Committee approves major modifications to courses before approval by Royal College of Art, although on one occasion when the dissertation schedule was changed the Committee agreed, even though it was a minor change, to seek approval as it involved all of the MA students. The School Director of Curriculum and Registrar advises whether a modification is minor or major, including whether the cumulative effect of minor modifications constitute a major modification. The Academic Standards Committee decides whether a major modification entails a revalidation.

2.4   The review team met senior staff and academic staff. The team also read minutes of the Academic Standards Committee's meetings, minutes of management meetings, minutes of industry advisory boards, the degree-awarding body's Quality Assurance Handbook, the School Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook, documentation for

validation and the subsequent validation report, and looked at a new course proposal template.

2.5　　Staff met by the review team were aware of the differences between minor and major modifications, and which required approval by the relevant head of department and which required approval by the Academic Standards Committee. The team noted, however, that the School Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook was not entirely clear whether minor modifications only required head of department approval or also required approval by the Director of Curriculum and Registrar. The minutes of management team meetings showed a clear engagement of the programme team with the curricula of the Film Studies proposal, with the proposal being sent back to the programme team for revisions. The curriculum for a Games Design and Development specialisation had been presented to and discussed by the relevant industry advisory board, and the board had made suggestions to improve the curriculum. In addition, the documentation for the Computer Games Development pathway was very detailed, and included a good analysis of other higher education programmes in the area and a skills gap analysis.

2.6　　The review team found that the processes for course design, approval and modification at the School are rigorous. There is a clear process for course approval, which involves industry advisory boards and the management team, as well as the course proposers. Documentation is thorough and it is clear that a great deal of dialogue takes place before a proposal finally goes to validation. Likewise, definitions of minor and major modifications are clear and staff are aware of where authority to approve such lies. In addition, the Director of the Curriculum and Registrar has oversight of the process. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation:　Met
Level of risk:　Low

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

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

Findings

2.7 The memorandum of understanding states that the School is responsible for admission and enrolment of students. The School operates a centralised admissions system; the Registry owns the administrative process, while the responsibility for individual admissions decisions for each applicant lies with each department. A shortlist of candidates is drawn up and they are invited to attend an interview. After the selection process is complete a final offer of places is made based on the cumulative decision of the selection panel, following an extensive and focused discussion and sharing of notes. In most areas the School normally establishes a reserve list beyond those initially offered places. This ensures that the available places and pathways are filled.

2.8 Initially, student applications are reviewed by a panel that consists of academics and industry members. The panel makes a decision to call the applicant for an interview based on set criteria. The panel interviews the applicant and decides by a majority whether to call the applicant in for a selection workshop for certain disciplines, and following that decides whether to make an offer. For reasons of transparency the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook detailing admissions processes is shared with students. The process is rigorous and fair, identifying each applicant's strengths and weaknesses. Information on the selection process is available on the School's website and the associated admissions, appeals and complaints procedure.

2.9 The review team scrutinised the admissions, appeals and complaints procedure and selection processes against student experience and the testimony of staff. The team also examined interview and selection records completed by panel members to ensure that the process is rigorous and fair.

2.10 A selection panel approved by the School's Director is comprised of the head of department, other tutors and industry professionals, who assess all applications. To ensure fairness, the Assistant Registrar, heads of department and panel members discuss the strength of each application received. Individual department selection processes vary based on the discipline, and often include viewing portfolios, interviews and/or workshops. The panel completes an assessment sheet for each candidate during the interview and selection process. It details the key areas of assessment with a tick box system that assesses student competency and has a space for free text, including comments on strengths and weaknesses.

2.11 The School has an effective Assessment and Concessions Committee, which meets to consider nominations for concessionary places. Candidates are then sent to the Royal College of Art for consideration before a decision is made.

2.12 The School collects demographic and subject specialism data on applicants and these data are formally reviewed by management and the Board of Governors. The School also references data and trends in the annual course evaluation process, which forms part of the formal review process overseen by the Academic Standards Committee.

2.13   Upon completion of the selection process the outcome is communicated to prospective students via email. All students who met the review team had found the admissions process to be fair. Some students said that the notification period of the outcome had been longer than the panel had stated at interview. The team recognised that the time taken to notify the outcome to the applicants had been increased, in some cases, due to the process for nominating and ratifying decisions on concessionary places. The School confirmed that departments are expected to adhere to their own timeframe for relaying the outcome of interviews to prospective students, typically aiming to notify candidates within three weeks. Through discussion, the team was reassured that the School recognises the importance of communicating any variation to its timescale for notifying applicants of the selection process outcome.

2.14   Overall, the review team considers the design and operation of the School's recruitment, selection and admissions processes to be effective. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.15   The School is halfway through implementing its Teaching and Learning Strategy. This sets out five institutional themes for enhancing the quality of the student learning experience and two key objectives for each aim. The Academic Standards Committee and the School's Senior Management Team agree specific actions each year based on a review of progress and performance in the previous year, as evidenced by, among other items, course evaluation and student surveys.

2.16   Strategic priorities are disseminated to staff through the Visiting Tutors' Handbook and good practice in these priority areas is shared between staff through staff development seminars. The themes in the strategy are broad and include enhancing the role of learning technologies, enhancing learner support, and developing and recognising excellence in learning and teaching. However, the annual actions resulting from the strategy are largely about portfolio development, resources and organisation rather than pedagogy. The School does not appear to use a formal system of academic staff appraisal as a means for driving strategic priorities and supporting staff development.

2.17   The School places a lot of emphasis on the philosophy, principles and values of its approach to teaching and learning. Three principles cut through this: individuality, the integration of thought and technique, and sustaining a community of practice. In particular, individuality appears to be an inherent focus within the delivery and the assessment model, which builds a view over time of the student and their style. The small scale of provision facilitates this. The School also benefits from being based at the old Beaconsfield Studios, which means it is able to provide specialist facilities in a well-known location. However, the School recognises that its estate needs attention. Its estates strategy seeks to address this; there are plans under way to add two new buildings by 2018.

2.18   The School has in place the systems for determining and delivering a strategic approach to developing student learning opportunities. However, the organisational focus of the Teaching and Learning Strategy appears to result in the topics of the staff development seminars only giving limited attention to issues of pedagogy, despite the School's previous QAA review (Review of Educational Oversight, 2012) making a recommendation to increase the focus in this area.

2.19   There is no evidence in the School's approach to programme monitoring or its strategies that it considers or benchmarks management information relating to progression, achievement or retention of students with particular equality and diversity characteristics in relation to cohort averages.

2.20   However, there is a strong focus on teaching and learning at the School, and a significant investment of time and resource is provided in support of the individual development and success of each student. Students regard the support from their tutors as very good in most disciplines.

2.21   The review team explored the full breadth of the School's approach to strategically reviewing and enhancing student learning opportunities with senior managers, teaching staff, support staff, employers and students. In particular, the team followed lines of enquiry around the use of management information to assure equity of opportunity for all students, and around the focus on pedagogy and scholarly approaches to teaching and learning in staff development activity.

2.22   It was clear throughout the review visit that the philosophy, values and principles of the School's approach to teaching and learning were truly lived and embraced as well as being documented. This provides the School with a coherence and framework for the thirteen different pathways on the programme and ensures that all staff and students share a common end goal. The blend of integrated and specialist elements to the programme enable each student to find their own voice and achieve the learning outcomes of the programme in their own way, while still developing a core set of skills and knowledge, and developing an appreciation for the contribution of students on other pathways. The review team therefore considers the integrated and interdisciplinary curricula and assessment that encourages students to develop their individual practice to be **good practice**.

2.23   The School has capitalised on the wide-ranging successes of its alumni by ensuring they not only remain in touch with the School and act as ambassadors, but also contribute back to the life of the School through workshops, mentoring, work experience and many other opportunities. The review team considers the extensive engagement of alumni in supporting student learning to be **good practice**.

2.24   The School has a clear strategy for enhancing student learning opportunities. The School recognises it has made more progress on the organisational and portfolio related objectives than the pedagogy related objectives, although it has started to move forward with these now, including through the delivery of staff development sessions that have, in practice, made a positive impact on teaching. The review team therefore **affirms** the increased focus on pedagogic practice in staff development activity. Furthermore, the School has recognised that the Visiting Tutors' Handbook alone is not sufficient in developing staff understanding of the teaching and learning priorities. The School's efforts to make better use of heads of department as a communication channel, and plans to bring visiting tutors into staff away days, are positive. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to develop staff understanding of current priorities in the Teaching and Learning Strategy.

2.25   The School is confident in its approach to monitoring the success of students with particular needs or from particular backgrounds because of the small scale of its provision and the dedicated support of heads of department. The review team considers this approach to be working currently but should be kept under review as the provision grows.

2.26   Overall, the approach to teaching and learning is coherent and well thought through. There are examples from across the pathways of how this is resulting in confident and capable graduates going on to successful careers in their respective industries and then returning to the School to support current students. This cycle, together with the School's support for staff to maintain their professional practice, results in students being industry-ready, in line with the School's aims. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.27   The School has in place arrangements for supporting students within their disciplines and through specialist, centralised teams. This predominantly centres on the relationship between each student and their head of department, who they meet at least monthly for an individual tutorial. Tutorials provide a regular opportunity to review the student's engagement, progress and outputs beyond the day-to-day teaching contact through workshops and project work. Additionally, all students study the Screen Arts module and the dissertation module, which supports students to develop study and research skills that complement the more practical focus of other modules.

2.28   Beyond their discipline, students have access to a welfare service provision within the Registry. Details of this are communicated to students in the Schools' Student Information Handbook and it is referenced in the course handbook. Students with additional support needs are invited to declare this during the application process or when they begin their programme, and they are supported to apply for the Disabled Students' Allowance and fully engage with their programme.

2.29   The School has an extensive range of opportunities and support in place to support students in understanding their future career options and fulfilling their ambitions. This includes a series of business skills sessions at the end of the programme; workshops with industry professionals; visits to industry locations; masterclasses with high profile industry figures; and 'Bridges to Industry' projects, where students work on real briefs from industry with funding to support this.

2.30   The School has developed a wide range of support that appears to be integrated and focused on the common goals of supporting students to go on to become successful in their chosen industry.

2.31   The review team discussed a wide range of areas relating to enabling student development, especially in relation to supporting transition, academic study and employability with senior staff, students, teaching staff, support staff, employers and alumni.

2.32   Staff across the School were clear about their respective roles in supporting and enabling student development and success. A lot of emphasis is placed on the Head of Department, along with other permanent tutors where these exist, getting to know their small cohorts of students and helping them to flourish as individuals. Staff, students, alumni and employers confirmed the value of this in producing graduates that were not only ready to enter industry but also to make original contributions and create their own futures. The addition of alumni providing support to current students significantly strengthens this.

2.33   There was recognition by senior managers that pastoral support, namely the welfare service, may have become less visible to students as a result of being subsumed within Registry. Remedying this visibility is addressed in the Teaching and Learning Strategy. Students confirmed this to be an issue through a general lack of awareness of what support is available. The review team therefore **affirms** the actions being taken at strategic level to increase the visibility and awareness of support for student welfare.

2.34   The School's approach to supporting students' personal and professional development in the specific context of their chosen industry is particularly effective.

The array of additional initiatives that are offered in partnership with industry bodies, organisations and professionals creates an invaluable resource for students. When taken together with the high quality and availability of production resources, the review team considers the comprehensive support for students' transition from study to industry to be **good practice**.

2.35 Overall, the School provides a comprehensive framework for supporting student development and achievement. The School is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of this system and is taking action proactively to address the weaknesses. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.36   The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook contains the blueprint for how the School formally engages with students in the management of quality assurance and enhancement. It sets out that formal and informal student participation and engagement is crucial to the quality of the School's teaching and learning.

2.37   Student representatives are elected to the School's Students' Union annually and are directly involved in quality assurance and enhancement processes and activities. They are invited to attend the Health and Safety Committee, Academic Standards Committee, Joint Academic Board and the Board of Governors, where the contribution of student representatives is clear and enables the School to gain an insight into the student perspective. In addition to this, student representatives and the entire student cohort contribute further in student surveys, module feedback and in the self-assessment forms, which students complete as part of their six-monthly reviews.

2.38   The nature of collaborative working means that students interact with staff from almost all disciplines on a daily basis; because of this, the informal communication that takes place during these times is also effective in bringing about swift responses and change. The formal and informal mechanisms for engaging students work in tandem to meet the School's commitment to supporting and promoting activities to engage students in matters of quality assurance and enhancement.

2.39   The review team considered the information provided by the School, and by the two student representatives, students from a range of disciplines and pathways, and academic and professional staff. The team also considered the student submission, which was broadly positive.

2.40   The School encourages applications from first-year students to become student representatives of the School's Students' Union when the outgoing representatives are nearing the end of their term. If there are more than two applications the School requires an election to take place. The Director of Curriculum and Registrar meets informally with the student representatives every four to six weeks to address any issues or concerns or to seek input. Due to the nature of collaborative working on complex projects the two representatives often struggle to attend key committees due to other commitments. For example, students are formal members of the Academic Standards Committee but to date have been unable to attend any meetings due to project and work experience commitments. It is at the Academic Standards Committee that external examiner reports are discussed, but because representatives have been unable to attend, the content of these reports has not been systematically shared with the student body.

2.41   On a day-to-day basis, and because of the close working proximity of staff and students, student representative engagement works effectively by default. The School provides no formal training, or handover and no job description to newly elected representatives. Many students who met the review team were also unaware of the two representatives and the role they play within the School. Students and staff recognise this as an area that needs to be developed for representation to become more effective. The School confirmed that it is taking steps to further develop the student representative system and produce a job description, training, support and appropriate handover. The review team

affirms the development of the student representative capacity, job description(s), training and support opportunities available.

2.42   Student surveys are comprehensive and enquire against a range of key performance indicators, and the data collected is informative to management. Results are discussed as part of the annual course evaluation process, through which actions are confirmed and monitored, and subsequently fed back to students via the range of committees they participate in. Students confirmed that they are aware of and have completed surveys, have engaged effectively in module feedback, and submit self-assessment forms as part of their six-monthly reviews.

2.43   In summary, although student representation works more by default in practice when compared to design, the School does take deliberate steps to engage students in the quality assurance and enhancement of their educational experience using a variety of mechanisms. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.44   Assessment consists of three six-monthly progress reviews and a final review at the end of the two years. The first review is conducted by the head of department and the Director of Curriculum and Registrar, and is informed by module tutor feedback and students' self-assessment. The second review also looks at external assessor comments on the student, as does the final review.

2.45   Course handbooks show the learning outcomes for each course and module briefs show the learning outcomes for each module. In addition, there are grade descriptors for the dissertation and master's grade descriptors. Students met by the review team were clear about what they have to do to pass.

2.46   Module work is marked by module tutors and then moderated at the next review. If a student fails a piece of work he/she can resubmit once, and the head of department and Director of Curriculum and Registrar can agree to compensate for marginal failure based on a student's overall performance.

2.47   Dissertations are double-marked and then a sample is third blind marked. A student must pass the dissertation to get the award and is allowed one resubmission.

2.48   The external examiners and the Royal College of Art Internal Moderator meet the students, normally in February, and moderate student work.

2.49   At the end of each year student results are considered by the examination sub-board, which recommends progress onto the second year and the award of MA to the final examination board. The final examination board includes two external examiners, one from industry and one from academia, and the Royal College of Art Internal Moderator. The Internal Moderator reports that appropriate mechanisms are in place for the objective and impartial assessment of students. The moderator writes a report three weeks after the board to the Pro Rector (Academic) at the Royal College of Art. External examiners are appointed by the Royal College of Art's Academic Standards Committee.

2.50   The assessment process is overseen by the Academic Standards Committee through annual course evaluations; in 2014 the Academic Standards Committee agreed to introduce third blind marking of a sample of dissertations on the recommendation of the external examiner. External examiners confirm academic standards are met and there is evidence that their reports are actioned.

2.51   The School has a process for the recognition of prior learning. The selection panel makes a recommendation, which then goes to the School Assessment and Concessions Committee, which in turn makes a recommendation to the Royal College of Art Concessions and Discipline Committee.

2.52   The review team met senior staff and academic staff and looked at minutes of the Academic Standards Committee's meetings, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Handbook, external examiner reports, external assessor reports, Internal Moderator reports, and responses to external examiner comments.

2.53   The review team found that that the assessment process is very thorough. The School has introduced industry external assessors into the assessment process, which goes beyond the requirements of its degree-awarding body. The review team considers the effective use of industry leaders as external assessors in students' second and final progress reviews to be **good practice**.

2.54   Progress reviews take into account student self-assessment, which allows the student to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses; these are revisited at each review. While the review concentrates on each individual student, both the curricula and the assessment vehicles cross all disciplines, such as production, editing and directing. The review team identified the integrated and interdisciplinary curricula and assessment that encourages students to develop their individual practice to be a feature of good practice under Expectation B3.

2.55   The Academic Standards Committee monitors assessment through the annual course evaluation process, which involves heads of department presenting their evaluations to the Committee and responding to any comments made by external examiners. This ensures that the School has clear oversight of assessment and the standards of its students.

2.56   The review team found that the assessment process is rigorous with externality at key points. The Academic Standards Committee has clear oversight of the process. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.57   The degree-awarding body appoints two external examiners for the MA programme, one an academic and one from industry. An annual report is submitted that asks the external examiner to confirm that the standards set for the award are in accordance with the FHEQ. The external examiner report template appends details of the FHEQ and the level 7 qualification descriptors for ease of reference. The Director of Curriculum and Registrar responds in writing to the external examiner reports on behalf of the School.

2.58   External examiner reports and minutes of School committees suggest the School engages well with external examiners, although the short timescales surrounding examination boards prove challenging for the external examiners.

2.59   The review team established a line of enquiry around the coverage of external examiners after noting this as a concern in one of the external examiner's reports. While this was focused specifically on the examiner's ability to monitor and confirm the maintenance of academic standards, this resulted in wide-ranging discussion about external examiners with senior managers, staff, students and an external examiner during the review visit, together with the scrutiny of further reports and institutional responses.

2.60   The School makes effective use of external examiners in the development of the programme and the monitoring of student learning opportunities. This is supplemented by the use of external assessors on each of the pathways, providing an independent perspective of the student learning experience and students' work. The review team followed through examples of changes to practice by the School, based on the advice of external examiners.

2.61   As already noted, external examiner reports are shared with student representatives through their membership of the Academic Standards Committee, but to date the representatives have been unable to attend due to project and work experience commitments. The School also has plans to share external examiner reports more widely through the further development of its intranet. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to share external examiner reports with student representatives through the Academic Standards Committee and the development of the intranet for dissemination to the wider student body.

2.62   Overall, there is a well-established and effective system of external examining in place that has demonstrably helped the School to maintain and develop its provision. The review team's findings about the coverage and capacity of external examiners are outlined under Expectation A3.4. The School has been able to make effective use of this external examiners in assuring the quality of student learning opportunities. The review team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.63　　The Royal College of Art requires the School to conduct annual course evaluations (ACEs). Each specialist pathway performs a detailed course evaluation, which includes external assessor comments. This evaluation is considered and commented on by the Academic Standards Committee, which also monitors action plans from the previous year and approves action plans for the next year. There is an overall ACE for the whole MA programme incorporating summaries of the individual course evaluations and action plans, comments from external examiners and an overall School action plan. This overarching evaluation is approved and monitored by the Academic Standards Committee and Joint Academic Board.

2.64　　In addition to the ACE procedure, external assessors from industry review the programme and industry advisory boards make suggestions about the curriculum.

2.65　　Modifications to the curriculum are discussed at an annual curriculum planning meeting and any modifications to course handbooks are made by the head of department after discussions with the Director of Curriculum and Registrar. The Academic Standards Committee reviews all the handbooks before the start of the academic year.

2.66　　The review team met senior and academic staff, read the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook, minutes of the Academic Standards Committee meetings, and scrutinised ACEs for the last two years.

2.67　　The review team found the discussion of ACEs was detailed, and action plans from the previous year were considered and actions signed off, before an action plan for the next year was approved. Although the ACE is written by the relevant head of department, it takes into account staff feedback, student feedback, and external examiner and external assessor feedback, among other information. In addition, the team confirmed that the ACE also takes into account interdepartmental relations and the views of the relevant industry advisory board. Senior staff told the team that the process was both challenging and productive, with each ACE being considered for an hour by the Academic Standards Committee. Staff gave a variety of examples of when the process had led to change. From its reading of the ACEs and the minutes of the Academic Standards Committee, the review team considers the rigour of the ACE process to continuously assure and enhance the quality of the student learning experience to be a feature of **good practice**.

2.68　　The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation:　Met
Level of risk:　Low

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

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

Findings

2.69   The School expresses its Academic Appeals and Student Complaints Policy in the Quality Assurance Handbook and the Student Information Handbook, which is given to students on enrolment.

2.70   The School has a clear student appeals procedural chart, which details the process of appeal. The process has two stages: an informal stage, then a formal appeal. The informal stage allows the student to discuss his/her grievance with the relevant head of department, who will advise them of the procedure they need to follow. If pursued, the Director of Curriculum and Registrar considers the appeal and informs the student of the outcome within 10 working days. If there is a need to progress matters, then formal notice of appeal against the decision of the final examination board needs to be submitted to the Chair of the final examination board. The board is expected to convene within 14 days to hear the appeal, but, if necessary, may be extended to 28 days. The student is then advised in writing of the outcome of the appeal and that the decision is final.

2.71   The student complaints procedure is a comprehensive three-staged process whereby the student initially discusses their complaint with the relevant head of department; however, and differently to the student appeals procedure, the student can consult with a Student Welfare Officer or Students' Union representative to support resolving the complaint before involving anyone else. This option allows the complainant the opportunity for early resolution without involving key members of School management where they may feel the objectivity of a complaint may be compromised. If the complaint reaches the final stage it will be heard by the Director of the School, who will hear any appeal made in writing within 21 days. If the appeal is rejected the student can then complain to the Royal College of Art Pro Rector (Academic). Ultimately, the student is advised in the Academic Appeals and Student Complaints Policy that they may contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, and details of this process and contact details are shared in any completion of procedure letter.

2.72   The review team examined the appeals and complaints processes in detail and discussed these in meetings with students, management, academic and professional staff. The School has only received one formal complaint in the last 10 years, with no recent examples. The School determines that this is due to the close association of staff and students in their day-to-day work. Matters get resolved quickly and effectively, and in consequence do not escalate. In meetings with the review team, students confirmed this and stated that they knew how to access the complaints process should they ever need to use it.

2.73   The student appeals procedure is also clearly understood by students, but again has not been used. This may be due in part to the fact that students do not receive a final summative grade until the completion of their course. They do, however, receive progress grades throughout the programme but none have ever felt the need to formally appeal.

2.74   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.75   External work-based learning opportunities are not provided as part of the MA programme, although much of the delivery of its provision is vocational and learning is centred on the practice of students' industry roles. Some students do undertake work experience externally, including Television Entertainment students, just after Easter of the second year. The School provides a general guidance document for employers offering work experience.

2.76   Although there is a very limited amount of provision delivered with others, where it does occur it appears that the School gives due consideration to ensuring that it is appropriate for the student and is managed effectively. The review team discussed the provision of work experience during the review visit with staff, employers and students who have undertaken work experience.

2.77   The School and employers manage the provision of work experience collaboratively. While it does not feed into assessment directly, there are opportunities for students to demonstrate and apply what they learn during the remainder of their programme, particularly in delivering their graduate project.

2.78   Overall, the review team considers the way the Schools works with others in managing its provision to be effective. The review team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.79   The School does not offer research degrees and therefore this Expectation does not apply.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.80   In reaching its judgement about the quality of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All applicable Expectations are met and the level of risk is judged as low in all Expectations. No recommendations were made in this judgement area. Five features of good practice were identified, covering four of the 10 applicable Expectations in this judgement area, and five affirmations were made to actions the School is already taking to improve provision offered to students. The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the School is **commended**.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The validation agreement explains the process for approval of materials for public release, and clearly promotes a partnership approach for the formal approval of information for publication. For example, either organisation making press or other public announcements, or releasing any form of marketing or other publicity materials relating to the MA Film and Television, does so only with the approval of a senior manager in the organisation. The same process is used in the production of course-related materials for students, for example School information, course and module handbooks. The Director of Curriculum and Registrar has ultimate responsibility for sign-off of materials and the marketing department will not upload or commit to print any information that has not been formally approved in this way. This includes minor amendments to existing information and documentation. Heads of department, with the support of their curriculum teams, are responsible for first preparing and then submitting information to the Director of Curriculum and Registrar prior to publication. Oversight of course information is also reviewed by the Academic Standards Committee before publication. The School also keeps an electronic record of student achievement and is therefore able to write references setting out students' achievements.

3.2 The range of materials and information produced, and the accessibility of that information to prospective students, current students and external stakeholders, supported by a formal sign off process, allows the design of the School's procedures to meet the Expectation. The review team considered and scrutinised information produced on the School's website and course materials. The team met senior staff, awarding body representatives, and professional and marketing staff to understand more fully the processes in place for formal sign-off of information. Students were also consulted on the accuracy of information and whether it is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.3 The School produces a range of course and organisation-related information. The materials are presented exclusively on the website for prospective students, current students and external stakeholders. All printed materials such as course leaflets are a direct copy of information on the website and are only printed on request. Likewise, the School does not produce a hard copy of its prospectus, again citing the website as the prospective student's key source of course information. The website also contains comprehensive information on fees and fee support, scholarships, the selection process and a range of helpful information for international students. The website is engaging, with all relevant information easily accessible to prospective learners, alumni, stakeholders, press and the general public.

3.4 The handbooks produced by the School are detailed, with useful information for students; these are issued to students before they commence their studies. The handbooks contain all relevant information on policies and procedures, student rules and regulations, information about plagiarism and the penalties students may incur, and a brief overview of the School's facilities and support services. Students confirmed that they find the information

and materials provided by the School to be accurate, of good quality and helpful to them in their studies.

3.5   For external stakeholders the School produces a reader-friendly vision and strategic objectives document that outlines facilities, courses, accreditation and standards, outreach and impact. This is supported by the Corporate Plan, which breaks down the vision and objectives in greater detail. The School also publishes an annual review and financial statements on the website.

3.6   The School has developed an intranet, which serves staff and students, and contains course and School-related documentation, handbooks and information; however, the current system is primarily used as a repository for documents and handbooks and not as an interactive tool to support student learning opportunities. The School recognises the need to develop the intranet into a more multifaceted resource, not only for student learning, but in the sharing of information with students, for example publishing external examiner reports. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to expand the use of the intranet to support student learning opportunities.

3.7   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.8   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk was low. There was one affirmation identified in this judgement area relating to the expansion of the use of the School's intranet. The review team therefore concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the School **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The School has an Enhancement Strategy, which is contained in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. Enhancement is also mentioned as part of its Learning and Teaching Strategy 2013-17, which sets out clear and demonstrable actions for each year and shows what actions have been completed and which actions are in progress.

4.2 There is a document entitled Course Enhancement Outreach that sets out enhancement aims for 2015 and includes, among other things: the enhancement of workshops, enhancing employability, and enhancing health and safety, with clear actions to implement such. This document is required by the British Film Institute and Creative Skillset, which provides funding to the School directly tied to course enhancement. The Enhancement Strategy identifies enhancing curriculum delivery, enhancing student support, enhancing student engagement and enhancing the learning environment. Heads of departments have discussed the building improvements and there is evidence of staff input into building improvements. This shows an involvement of all staff in the enhancement of the learning environment.

4.3 The new Enhancement Strategy specifies that from 2015 module evaluation will include a section on enhancement.

4.4 Teaching staff are involved in professional activities, and there are staff seminars that are used to disseminate good practice. In addition, suggestions from the industry advisory boards help enhance the curriculum and discuss any changes in courses and new course proposals.

4.5 Non-academic staff have annual appraisals, which identify staff development needs, and academic staff development is identified through annual course evaluations.

4.6 Students regularly work with professionals and are offered masterclasses with people from the industry and sessions on 'Meet the Industry'.

4.7 The review team met senior staff, academic staff and students. It also read the Enhancement Strategy, the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the Course Enhancement Outreach document, and minutes of heads of department meetings and staff development seminars; the team also considered the involvement of students with industry.

4.8 The review team was told that the School had clear priorities for enhancing student learning but that the School accepted that the Enhancement Strategy was new and evolving. The Senior Management Team devised the strategy but the Academic Standards Committee owns it. Staff also stated that there was a strong relationship between the Enhancement Strategy and the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The team asked senior staff how the implementation of the priorities was progressing and were given examples of how the School had addressed some of the priorities; staff accepted, however, that there were still some that need addressing, such as improving the use of the intranet, and the need to recognise excellence in teaching.

4.9 Academic staff met by the review team were also able to state what the School's priorities were in relation to the enhancement of student learning, and talked about the input

of industry professionals, the use of current technology to enable students to maintain currency, the new buildings and the introduction of elements of business training to widen student understanding. Students told the team of the invaluable work experience provided, and that they feel that the introduction of business elements into each course was at the right time and effective.

4.10   In meetings with employers and alumni, it was clear to the review team that there are strong links with the film and television industry, and that this benefits students in terms of networking and the work experiences such links provide.

4.11   The School has an Enhancement Strategy, and the Learning and Teaching Strategy has clearly defined actions, some of which have been achieved. There are very strong links with industry; these links, and the work experiences they provide, enhance the students' learning opportunities. In addition, the School's plans in relation to new building will enhance the student learning environment. The review team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.12 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation for this judgement area was met and the associated level of risk was low. No recommendations or affirmations were made in this area. The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the School **meets** UK expectations.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The School has a wide-ranging and successful approach to developing student employability through specific innovations. The integrated nature and small scale of the School's provision mean that these innovations often develop at provider level and naturally extend across the pathways.

5.2 The School enjoys particular success in bridging the transition for students from study to industry, in part by creating industry-like conditions during the programme, but also through actively facilitating opportunities that put students in contact with key industry players.

5.3 For example, the School works with companies to set, support and fund genuine live briefs that are delivered by students. Toshiba recently worked with the School to challenge students to deliver a commercial, which resulted in high quality output as well as invaluable experience for students. These 'Bridges to Industry' projects continue to be sourced by the School and delivered by new cohorts of students.

5.4 The School is also proactive in supporting students to showcase their work and to develop networks at key industry festivals, events and awards shows. These include events hosted by BAFTA and the School's own final degree show, which is hosted at the British Film Institute, Southbank. This is supported by the School's annual production of a 'talent directory' listing their graduating students.

5.5 The School engages employers in the delivery and development of the core curriculum and a range of extracurricular opportunities on an ongoing basis; this forms a central part of the School's delivery model.

5.6 This approach is most prevalent through the use of visiting tutors who contribute workshops or mentor students through projects. Visiting tutors are often currently practicing film and television professionals who offer a specialist insight into their area of work on a recurring basis to each new cohort. The School enters into a formal relationship with visiting tutors and considers them to be a part of the wider teaching staff team.

5.7 Furthermore, masterclasses are delivered on a regular basis by high profile industry figures, and the School arranges 'Meet the Industry' workshops towards the end of the programme to help students understand their career options. These offer students a range of different perspectives that can then be used to inform their own practice and their approach to developing a career.

5.8 The School has successfully developed a number of industry advisory boards that are often made up of powerful key players from the relevant industry. These boards provide a steer on how the portfolio and programmes can be developed to respond effectively to the changing and future needs of the industry. Similarly, the School's own Board of Governors is made up of senior executives from major industry organisations and helps to develop the School's provision.

5.9 A cadre of external assessors supports the delivery of programmes. These are professionals from industry attached to each of the thirteen pathways of the programme, who review the individual work of each student at the end of the first and second year. The comments from this review feed into the assessment process and provide the student with structured feedback from a different perspective. External assessors also provide feedback to the School on the quality of the student learning experience in the pathway they

are reviewing and on how this experience is preparing students for employment. This feedback informs the annual course evaluation and subsequent programme development activity. Similarly, the degree-awarding body ensures that one of the programme's external examiners is an industry professional, which adds a different perspective to the formal examining process.

5.10   Overall, the School has committed to developing a higher education provision that produces graduates ready for their chosen industry. This is with the view that the School's graduates do not simply go into jobs, but create jobs using the high level skills developed while a student. This was summed up during the review visit with the view that some employers are so confident in the quality of School graduates that they would employ them without having seen their work, and similarly by stories of organisations hiring groups of graduating students at a time after having worked with them on projects.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 29-32 of the Higher Education Review handbook.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Public information
Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

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

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

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or **e-learning**)
Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

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

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

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