Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts (ALRA)

October 2017

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts (ALRA). The review took place from 24 to 26 October 2017 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Hilary Grainger
- Mr Gary Hargreaves
- Mr James Coe (student reviewer).

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

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

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

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

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.
[3] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers):
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education.

Key findings

Judgements

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

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

Recommendation

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

By 1 January 2018:

- an audit of all public information be undertaken to ensure that it is accurate, fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy (Expectation C).

Key findings

About the provider

The Academy of Live and Recorded Arts (ALRA) was founded in 1979, by Sorrel Carson and Caryll Ziegler. It was the first drama school to offer a training which encompasses all media: live theatre, TV and film and radio. It provides training across two sites (London and Wigan). It aims to equip actors and theatre technicians of all backgrounds and ages with the skills fundamental to a productive and creative life in the performance industries through the provision of a specialist vocational drama education for students whose primary goal is to work within this industry.

In 1981 the Academy moved into the Royal Victoria Patriotic Building, originally a Victorian orphanage built on Wandsworth Common, where it has 10 rehearsal studios, workshops and a theatre. In 2000 ALRA received Dance and Drama Award funding from the then Learning and Skills Council and awarded the National Diploma in Industry Level Acting and the Certificate in Industry Level Acting for its three-year and one-year programmes respectively through Trinity College London. From 2011 these became the Diploma in Industry Level Acting Level 6 (undergraduate) and Diploma in Industry Level Acting Level 5 (postgraduate).

In 2006, ALRA became a partner college with the University of Greenwich, which awarded a Foundation Degree in Creative Studies to the Stage Management and Technical Theatre programme and validated the three-year programme as a BA (Hons) Acting. In 2008 the University of Greenwich validated the postgraduate programme as the MA in Professional Acting. This programme was extended from 12 to 15 months in 2010. The part-time Acting Foundation programme began in 2008 and was joined by a full-time foundation programme delivered in collaboration with Winstanley College in 2013. In September 2010 ALRA North opened at the Elim Centre, Turner Street in Wigan. Placed in the heart of the north-west, the aim of ALRA North is to provide industry-level actors for the many regional and touring theatres, TV, film and radio companies based there, while allowing students to train at regional costs.

In October 2012 ALRA North moved to The Mill at the Pier at Trencherfield Mill. In 2013 ALRA won the prestigious Drama School of the Year award from 'The Stage'. ALRA North won the Stage 100 Awards 2013 School of the Year.

In 2014 ALRA became a collaborative provision partner of St Mary's University, Twickenham, which currently validates the BA (Hons) Acting and MA Professional Acting.

The Academy currently offers the following programmes:

BA (Hons) Acting (validated by St Mary's University, Twickenham)
MA Professional Acting (validated by St Mary's University, Twickenham)
Diploma in Professional Acting Level 5 (validated by Trinity College, London)
Diploma in Professional Acting Level 6 (validated by Trinity College, London)

Since the QAA monitoring report in January 2016, there have changes to the staff structure, most notably in the creation of two Vice-Principal roles to replace the previous Programme Director and Assistant Principal roles (Vice-Principal Curriculum and Quality Assurance and Vice-Principal Operations and Student Experience).

There has also been a minor restructure within the teaching team to replace the Head of Acting and Resident Director roles as course leaders for Acting roles at the ALRA north and south campuses. The appointment of a Head of Quality and Academic Standards took effect from July 2017 replacing the role of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Officer.

The Academy is currently undertaking internal curriculum development on a new MA programme in Directing which will be considered at a validation event with St Mary's University, Twickenham (SMU) in December 2017. The Academy is currently consulting on the development of a two-year BA (Hons) programme for Leicester College who are validated by De Montford University.

Due to lack of demand, the Academy has withdrawn the Foundation Degree in Stage Management and Technical Theatre with effect from new entrants in 2017, instead delivering this as a new in-house programme without any higher education qualification attached to it.

At the time of the review there were 187 students on the BA in Acting (67 of whom are also taking the Level 6 Trinity College diploma), 38 students on the MA in Professional Acting (one of whom is on the Level 5 Trinity College diploma) and 32 students completing their 15-month MA (five of whom are on the Trinity College level 5 diploma).

The Academy was subject to a QAA Review for Specific Course Designation in January 2014 which concluded that there was confidence in how the Academy manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of its awarding organisations, confidence in how the Academy manages its stated responsibilities for the quality and enhancement of the learning opportunities it offers on behalf of its awarding organisations and reliance on the information the Academy produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers. Four advisable and three desirable recommendations and six areas of good practice were identified. In January 2016, the QAA annual monitoring report recorded that the Academy had made acceptable progress against its action plan.

The review team considered the progress made by the Academy in implementing the recommendations and concludes they have all been addressed although the team notes that the recording and reporting of minutes needs further improvement to include actions on resolutions.

The report describes the procedures operating, in principle, before the review based on the documentation provided to the review team. On the first day of the review, the review team was provided with a new governance structure and the report therefore reflects the new governance and committee structures operating in practice.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The Academy is responsible to its awarding body, St Mary's University, Twickenham (SMU) and Trinity College London (Trinity) for its higher education provision, academic standards and quality of the programmes as detailed in its respective collaborative agreements and which outlines the division of responsibilities.

1.2 SMU is responsible for setting threshold academic standards and ensuring that qualifications take appropriate account of external reference points, such as the Quality Code, the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, the good practice guidance from the Higher Education Academy (HEA), QAA Knowledge bases, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) good practice guidance, and the Consumer Marketing Authority's (CMA) higher education consumer law advice for providers and students.

1.3 SMU makes reference to the FHEQ, which ensures that cognisance and alignment of the external reference points are duly considered in order that the qualifications fully meet the expectations and the regulatory requirements for degree programmes. The relationship

with SMU and the use of external examiners allow effective adherence to the FHEQ and benchmarks are used in the validation process of programmes. The Academy is no longer running the Foundation Degree in Stage Management. The Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET) provides accreditation status to the Academy, for the professional dance, drama and musical theatre industries. This professional accreditation works alongside Trinity to provide validation of the level 5 and level 6 diplomas in Professional Acting which are mapped to the curriculum to the BA and MA programme specifications.

1.4   The policies and procedures of the Academy allow Expectation A1 to be met in principle.

1.5   The review team examined documentary evidence relating to the Academy's relationship with SMU and Trinity including the responsibilities checklist and external examiners' reports. The team also met senior, academic and support staff, together with students from across a range of programmes and campuses.

1.6   At the review visit the team was presented with an updated Governance Structure, which describes new arrangements that have been put in place for managing the internal validation process through a revised committee structure. The newly constituted Senior Leadership Team (SLT), previously known as the Senior Management Team, is assigned as the executive decision-making body with oversight of general management of finances to implement the strategy and to monitor systems and controls. The Quality Assurance Committee has oversight of quality assurance, the student experience and maintaining academic standards, and reports to the SLT. In developing these new internal structures, the Academy has a clear focus on the maintenance of threshold academic standards. The Academy has recently appointed a Head of Quality and Academic Standards with primary responsibility for the quality assurance of programmes.

1.7   Both the awarding partners expect all their programmes to be subject to annual review to ensure that there are consistent processes for monitoring and evaluating academic standards. SMU's academic regulations provide the basis through which the Academy discharges its responsibility for adhering to academic reference points. The Academy has participated in revalidation exercises which confirmed the appropriate level for each programme. The external examiner reports for the BA Acting confirm that the programme is 'broadly congruent' with the FHEQ.

1.8   The review team concludes that Expectation A1 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the Academy has appropriate structures and processes in place to ensure that it maintains the academic standards set by the awarding body.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.9   The academic frameworks and regulations are the responsibility of the respective awarding body, St Mary's University, Twickenham (SMU) and Trinity College, London (Trinity) as set out in the responsibilities checklists. These responsibilities are also found in the Trinity Course Provider Handbook, SMU Collaborative Handbook, Quality, Curriculum, Staff and Consultation Handbooks.

1.10   The Academy has a clearly defined academic governance and management structure within which it operates and implements the SMU and Trinity academic frameworks and regulations. It includes the Senior Management Team, Teaching and Leadership Committee, Operations Committee, Academic Board and Programme Board.

1.11   The policies and procedures of the Academy allow Expectation A2.1 to be met in principle.

1.12   The review team examined documentation including committee structures and policies, responsibility checklists and met the principal, senior staff, academic staff, support staff and students. The team also examined a range of documentation including SMU and Trinity handbooks and guidance, academy quality, programme and student handbooks and meeting minutes.

1.13   At the review visit the team was presented with an updated Governance Structure, which describes new arrangements that have been put in place for managing the internal processes through a revised committee structure and the Academy has begun to implement the newly formed reporting and operational structures and committees.

1.14   There is a clear deliberative committee structure to oversee matters relating to the development and delivery of taught courses of study and to ensure the maintenance of academic standards.

1.15   The responsibility for the academic governance resides with the Senior Leadership Team, which has the ultimate internal responsibility for ensuring compliance with academic regulations and programme rules. Ratification of assessment is undertaken by the Examination Board, following recommendation from the Programme Board. The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for the affairs of the Academy, including strategic direction.

1.16   The Teaching and Learning Committee oversees matters relating to the monitoring and development and delivery of taught courses of study and has the responsibility to develop the teaching strategy and disseminate good practice. The newly appointed Head of Quality and Standards is a member of the Teaching and Learning Committee and Quality Assurance Committee. The Curriculum Team meeting is charged with suggesting curriculum changes and the Quality Assurance Committee with the development and scrutiny of new programme proposals, new curriculum changes and responses to external examiner reports, student feedback and annual internal monitoring reporting. It reports to the Teaching and Learning Committee.

1.17   Academic regulations are made available to staff and students through course handbooks, the curriculum, collaborative handbooks and the virtual learning environment (VLE). Students are actively involved in curriculum development and there is a strong culture of staff and student collaboration and a sense of a collegiate academic community.

1.18   The Programme Board meets termly at each campus to oversee the assessment and marks of students on all programmes, ensuring compliance with academic regulations and programme rules. The Examination Board ratifies all recommendations. The Academy adheres effectively to SMU and Trinity processes for the award of academic credit. There is a clear system in place to govern the award of academic credit at course and programme level and assessment decisions.

1.19   The Academy has deliberative structures and processes in place that generate a clear sense of ownership in the governance and management for both campuses and to ensure that it maintains the academic standards set by the awarding body and organisation.

1.20   The review team concludes that Expectation A2.1 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the Academy has appropriate internal quality assurance and governance processes to fulfil its responsibilities to its awarding body.

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

1.21   The Academy shares responsibility with SMU for publishing accurate information to students about the programme and the nature of the award as set out in its responsibilities checklist. Programme specifications can be accessed to students through their course briefs. Students also receive a scheme of work for each course, which contains information on assessment, learning outcomes, and course description. These documents are supplemented by a curriculum handbook, a quality handbook, and a student handbook.

1.22   Through its collaborative agreement with SMU, the Academy is required to adhere to SMU Academic Regulations. The assessment regulations state that learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each element of assessment should be clearly stated in course/programme handbooks. The Academy discharges this responsibility through its schemes of work.

1.23   Schemes of work are developed by tutors and then checked by lead tutors, the Head of Quality and Academic Standards and relevant Vice-Principal who provides final sign off. Where relevant this information is cross-referenced to the Trinity diploma criteria. Definitive documentation on programmes is accessed through the Academy's VLE.

1.24   The policies and procedures of the Academy allow the Expectation to be met in principle.

1.25   The review team examined current schemes of work, course briefs and documentation provided to students on their studies and life at the Academy. The review team met with students and staff.

1.26   At the visit the team was presented with an updated Governance Structure which describes new arrangements that have been put in place for managing the quality assurance through a revised committee structure. The newly established Quality Assurance Committee will maintain oversight of the assurance of the completeness, accuracy and reliability of information provided to applicants and students. Teaching staff receive quality assurance training and ensure that course briefs and scheme of work are aligned to the FHEQ.

1.27   Students are aware where they can access information on their programme, and they find course briefs useful and informative.

1.28   The review team concludes that Expectation A2.2 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the Academy effectively discharges its responsibilities to maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification.

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

1.29   The Academy adheres to the validation requirements of SMU as its awarding body and Trinity as its awarding organisation. These responsibilities are articulated in SMU's Academic Regulations and Collaborative agreement and Trinity College London's Validation Requirements for Professional Performing Arts Diplomas. The relevant responsibilities of the Academy and awarding body and organisation are set out in the responsibilities checklist. The BA in Acting and the MA in Professional Acting are validated by SMU and the levels 5 and 6 Professional Acting diplomas by Trinity.

1.30   The Academy's Vice-Principal (Curriculum & Quality Assurance/C&QA) takes responsibility for programme development, supported by the course leaders. The Academy has recently developed its own internal validation structures, modelled on those of SMU. At the initial proposal stage, a form is submitted to the Head of Quality and Academic Standards and the Academic Director of Teaching and Learning at SMU. These are co-created by the course leaders, Head of Quality and Academic Standards and Vice-Principal (C&QA) at the Academy. The Academy's internal validation panel, which includes the SMU moderator, prepares documents for approval by the Academy's Teaching and Learning Committee and lead tutors confirm the artistic and educational content of proposed courses, before submission to SMU for final approval, and, in the case of diplomas, to Trinity.

1.31   To ensure curriculum alignment with FHEQ descriptors and the Quality Code, drafts are sent to the Quality and Standards Officer at SMU prior to submitting changes to SMU's Teaching and Learning Committee or school committee structures for consideration.

1.32   SMU and Trinity set the academic standards for the programmes and levels of qualification and are responsible for ensuring that modules and programmes operate at, or above, threshold standards. The Academy draws upon existing external examiner reports when devising new assessments for proposed revalidation of programmes, to ensure compliance with UK threshold standards.

1.33   Where course modifications are proposed, the Academy first liaises with the SMU Quality Assurance Officer to develop the form, which is submitted to the SMU Academic Director in Teaching and Learning and Quality Enhancement who comments before final submission to the SMU Teaching and Learning Committee.

1.34   The policies and procedures of the Academy allow Expectation A3.1 to be met in principle.

1.35   The review team considered a range of documentation including policies and procedures for the Academy, SMU and Trinity, revalidation and validation reports and a wide range of programme documentation. The review team also met with staff and students to gain a better understanding of the processes.

1.36   At the review visit the team was presented with an updated Governance Structure which describes new arrangements that have been put in place for managing the internal validation process through a revised committee structure.

1.37   The newly constituted Quality Assurance Committee now takes responsibility for the development and review of processes for annual review of modules and programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level and the management of the outcomes of these processes. Following approval by the Quality Assurance Committee, proposals are taken for final approval by the Senior Leadership Team for internal approval, before final approval by SMU for degree programmes and by Trinity for the level 5 and 6 diplomas.

1.38   The revised committee structure is in the process of being embedded and it is too early to examine the effectiveness of the new processes and procedures and their effect on validation and monitoring.

1.39   The revalidation of the BA in Acting has provided a successful pilot for the new validation procedure and the effectiveness of its operation. The MA in Professional Acting is currently undergoing revalidation and the MA in Directing will proceed to validation in December 2017.

1.40   There is an effective mechanism in place for course modification. The programme documentation, including programme specifications, programme briefs and schemes of work show appropriate alignment with UK threshold academic standards. The VLE tracker demonstrates the appropriateness and effectiveness of the assessment of learning outcomes. All staff have received staff development in support of the recent changes in the Academy's quality assurance policies and procedures.

1.41   The review team concludes that Expectation A3.1 is met. The associate risk is low because the Academy has appropriate procedures in place and the Academy is engaged fully with the appropriate frameworks and regulations of the awarding body and awarding organisation.

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

1.42   The Academy has responsibility for assessment and the achievement of programme learning outcomes. It ensures that relevant learning outcomes have been achieved and demonstrated in all assessed work by making used of its own internal structures, engaging in discussion with SMU and Trinity and external examiners. Students receive credits and qualifications that reflect the achievement of programme learning outcomes set at UK threshold standards. Assessment of the Trinity diplomas follows the procedures outlined in the Validation Requirements for Professional Performing Arts Diplomas.

1.43   Marking criteria and learning outcomes are outlined in the relevant Programme Briefs and Schemes of Work as are the moderating processes for each level. There is discussion of the external examiner reports and the opportunity to moderate assessment. The Academy's policies and procedures, together with the external examiner reports, confirm the suitability of the learning outcomes. External examiners review work annually, including practical work prior to the Programme Board and confirm the standards are met.

1.44   All students receive a scheme of work, prepared by the member of staff delivering the programme. This outlines the assessment point, the learning outcomes that will be assessed, a week-by-week explanation of topics to be covered and a reading list. All tutors are required to outline the assessment and the learning outcomes being assessed on the first day of each course.

1.45   Learning outcomes are clearly articulated in Programme Briefs and Schemes of Work which students receive at the beginning of term. Staff explain learning outcomes and assessment methods to students at the beginning of each course.

1.46   The policies and procedures of the Academy allow Expectation A3.2 to be met in principle.

1.47   The review team tested the effectiveness of the policy and procedures relating to the achievement of credit and qualifications by examining a range of documentation, including Schemes of Work, Programme Briefs, external examiner reports showing their application and by examining evidence on the VLE. The review team also met students and staff to gain a better understanding of the Academy's processes in relation to assessment.

1.48   The staff demonstrated that they are aware of the alignment to UK threshold standards in the design and approval of courses, programmes and qualifications.

1.49   The Academy has reduced assessment for the BA in Acting by 70 per cent on the advice of the external examiner. Formative assessment has been reduced and summative

assessment now takes place at the end of the year. The Academy has introduced a variety of modes of assessment that have been welcomed by SMU.

1.50   Students have assessment feedback meetings with their tutor in which they have a detailed discussion about the written feedback provided and discuss how the grade was achieved in the light of the assessment requirements. There is some discussion about the ways in which they might improve in the future.

1.51   The 2014 QAA Review for Specific Course Designation made an advisable recommendation that 'the marking of assessments is transparent and verified'. The Academy has taken deliberate steps to address this recommendation. Student handbooks now articulate clearly the processes for marking and moderation, and these are also made clear to students at induction.

1.52   There is a clear process for the marking of assessments mapped to the learning outcomes. All assessments are marked by independent markers, the first being the lead tutor. If the marks of the first and second marker fall within the same marking band, the first mark is recorded, and feedback is uploaded onto the student portal. If the second mark falls outside the grade band and no agreement can be reached, then the moderation process is invoked and the course leader acts as a third marker. In the event of no agreement then the Vice-Principal (C&QA) arbitrates and a recommendation is made to the examination board. All fail marks are reviewed by a third marker.

1.53   The Academy organises meetings with students at the north and south campuses to clarify the marking process with them to ensure that they are fully informed. Staff have been provided with training, and provision is made for new staff to receive training as part of their induction.

1.54   Formal arrangements are in place for extensions to assessment submission dates for students with extenuating circumstances and accommodation is made for students with learning or physical disabilities to present work for assessment in a variety of modes, including video or recorded presentations.

1.55   The 2014 QAA review recommended that staff 'provide written feedback on assessed student work that consistently reflects assessment criteria and intended learning outcomes'. Staff are given additional training in providing feedback to students on the online tracker system to ensure that it addresses the learning outcomes outlined in the Programme Briefs. The tracker system requires staff to group feedback under three headings Professionalism, Process and Performance. This is the first year of operation, but it is anticipated that students will be able to access their complete profile in the future.

1.56   The review team concludes that Expectation A3.2 is met. The associated risk is low because the Academy has appropriate procedures in place.

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

1.57   The responsibility for the alignment with UK threshold academic standards resides with the Academy's awarding body SMU and Trinity as the awarding organisation. The responsibilities of SMU in respect of monitoring and review are articulated in its Collaborative Agreement and accord with SMU's Academic Regulations. All programme content is validated and revalidated with SMU and Trinity before delivery. A responsibilities checklist is in place for both arrangements.

1.58   The delivery of the programme is overseen by one external examiner who visits assessments and reads, watches and listens to contextual work. The moderator from SMU also visits and interviews students to discuss the content of the programme. Trinity moderates the Academy's internal assessment of students and externally assesses students in their final year performance to ensure appropriate standards.

1.59   Trinity observes the delivery of the programme once every three years, after which the programme is revalidated in line with Trinity's validation requirements. CDET (Confirming quality in Dance, Drama and Musical theatre) inspect once every two years to ensure that students graduate with professional standards of attainment or levels of achievement commensurate with stated objectives at the start of the programme.

1.60   The Academy monitors delivery of the programmes by checking the content of Schemes of Work to ensure the appropriate academic standards are being maintained in line with UK threshold standards. Staff are observed in the first and third terms of each academic year. SMU approves all course modifications.

1.61   The Vice-Principal (C&QA) takes responsibility for the overall design, review and monitoring of programmes and for quality and standards of provision in terms of the Academy's internal structures. The Vice-Principal (C&QA) also provides the Annual Statement of Programme Evaluation and Review (ASPER) and the annual response to the external examiner report on each programme to SMU's Academic Director in Teaching and Learning Quality Enhancement. Completed annual monitoring reports progress to the Learning and Teaching Committee, Trustees and the final report is sent to SMU for consideration.

1.62   The policies and procedures of the Academy allow Expectation A3.3 to be met in principle.

1.63   The review team tested the evidence through scrutiny of the policies and procedures and supporting documentation showing their application. The review team also met staff and students to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of the Academy's processes and procedures.

1.64   At the review visit, the team was presented with an updated Governance Structure which describes the new arrangements that have been put in place for the internal validation process and the new arrangements for monitoring. The newly constituted Quality Assurance

Committee now takes responsibility for the development and review of processes for annual review of courses and programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level and the management of the outcomes of these processes. The Teaching and Learning Committee signs off all internal validations and monitoring documentation and has met twice at each campus in its new format as well as holding an Extraordinary meeting in August 2017.

1.65   The revalidation and monitoring of the BA Acting takes full account of UK academic threshold standards. This revalidation followed 18 months of development and consultation with staff, students and external advisers and led to a significant reduction in the number of assessments and clear alignment to the learning outcomes.

1.66   The documentation for the current revalidation of the MA Professional Acting and the validation of the MA Directing takes full account of UK academic threshold standards.

1.67   The annual monitoring process at the Academy takes the form of two parts. The first requires the programme-level information, which is provided for the Teaching and Learning Committee and the second, institutional information, which is completed using all programme monitoring and additional information and data to form institutional-level monitoring. This new process does not replace ASPER, but works alongside it. The two processes are designed to be mutually supportive. Completed annual monitoring reports progress to the Teaching and Learning Committee before being presented to the Trustees. The Academy sends the final report to the awarding body for consideration.

1.68   The review team concludes that Expectation A3.3 is met. The associated risk is low because the Academy has appropriate procedures in place and fulfils its responsibilities with regard to the requirements for annual monitoring and review of its awarding body and awarding organisation.

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

1.69   The awarding body SMU and awarding organisation Trinity are responsible for externality in relation to the setting of academic standards and in ensuring that external and independent expertise is used at key stages in setting and maintaining academic standards.

1.70   External advisers are appointed to programme approval panels and external examiners are appointed by the awarding body for validated programmes at the Academy, as indicated in the responsibilities checklist and the awarding body handbooks. The Academy's main responsibility is to ensure that appropriate consideration is given to the feedback provided by the appointed external examiner in their annual reports. The Academy makes use of independent external expertise in its academic governance and through working with external experts.

1.71   The policies and procedures of the Academy would allow Expectation A3.4 to be met in principle.

1.72   The review team examined a range of documentation including relevant reports, committee minutes, annual programme review reports and practices and met with the Principal, senior staff, academic staff, support staff and students.

1.73   The Academy engages with various external stakeholders in the development and review of programmes that includes professional expertise from industry. This occurs through dialogue with external individuals during the development of initial proposals for new provision and is ongoing through dialogue and engagement of visiting professionals who bring currency and good practice to delivery and assessment processes.

1.74   The Academy's programmes are vocationally focused and make full and substantial use of external and independent experts who are essential for setting and maintaining academic standards, programme approval and examination of assessments. Programmes are developed using industry specialists. The SMU's moderator plays an important role in externality, ensuring programme content is aligned to the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and that academic standards at each level are coherently defined and appropriate. For example, during the recent revalidation of the BA Acting degree, industry experts were consulted on the vocational relevance of the programmes to industry and progression into work.

1.75   The review team concludes that the Expectation A3.4 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the Academy makes effective and appropriate use of relevant external experts at key stages of maintaining academic standards and the quality of its provision.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.76   In reaching its judgement about threshold academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.77   All of the applicable Expectations in this area have been met and the level of risk is judged to be low.

1.78   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations at the Academy **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   SMU and Trinity approve and monitor all the Academy's programme design and development. Trinity validates Level 5 & 6 Professional Acting diplomas, as registered on the Regulated Qualifications Framework. There is a three-stage validation process in place and outlined in the Trinity Programme Provider Handbook to which the Academy must comply.

2.2   With support from SMU, the Academy has developed internal systems to support staff and students in proposing and designing programmes. The internal validation procedures, modelled on those of SMU, are implemented by the Academy before engagement with SMU. At the initial proposal stage, a form is submitted to the Head of Quality and Academic Standards and the Academic Director of Teaching and Learning at SMU. Staff access the Internal Validation Document via the Academy's Head of Quality and Academic Standards. It forms part of the appendices of the Quality Handbook which is given to all members of staff. The document ensures that the internal validation process is explicit about the criteria against which programme proposals are assessed. SMU's regulations outline the criteria for validated degrees at each level and these are further expanded on in the Academy and SMU Collaborative Handbook. The document is completed with support from the Vice-Principal (C&QA) who takes responsibility for programme development. This process is outlined in the Curriculum Handbook. The Academy discusses drafts with SMU as development progresses.

2.3   The course leader completes the Internal Validation Document and submits it to Senior Management Team for Resource, Marketing and Financial Department sign off. The course leader gathers course content from lead tutors, completing the Programme Specification Document with the support of the Head of Quality and Standards. The Programme Specification is submitted to the Teaching and Learning Committee for internal sign off. The process ensures that appropriate staff, students, collaborative partners and external industry specialists are engaged at every stage.

2.4   Strategic oversight of the process rests with the Senior Management Team, with final internal approval by the Learning and Teaching Committee. Senior programme team staff, students and members of Registry and Marketing are all involved in the internal programme approval process. The Academy involves student representatives in its processes for programme design, development and approval at the Teaching and Learning Committee, where they are active participants in all new programme developments, approvals and modifications.

2.5   In designing programmes, the Academy draws on the Equality and Diversity in Curriculum Policy to take account the incorporation of students with protected characteristics in different assessment modalities and learning environments. The Academy ensures that roles and responsibilities regarding programme design, development and approval are defined and transparent by making all policies accessible to staff on the Academy website.

2.6   Use is made of reference points, external expertise and consultation with industry experts, and the design process in consultation with SMU requires the mapping of proposed changes to content and delivery to the relevant FHEQ level. External examiner feedback is also embedded in proposals for new programmes and modification to existing programmes and the ALRA Quality Handbook makes reference to the ways in which learning outcomes are mapped by level to the FHEQ benchmarks.

2.7   All staff involved in developing new content are required to undertake additional training on the Quality Code. All lead tutors, course leaders and Principals are working towards membership of the HEA to further strengthen understanding of external reference points and best practice across the sector.

2.8   The policies and procedures of the Academy allow Expectation B1 to be met in principle.

2.9   The review team tested the evidence through scrutiny of the policies and supporting documentation showing their application, and by examining evidence on the Academy's website. The review team also met staff and students to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of the Academy's processes.

2.10   At the review visit, the review team was presented with an updated Governance Structure, which describes the new arrangements that have been put in place for the internal validation process.

2.11   The newly constituted Quality Assurance Committee now takes responsibility for the development and review of processes for annual review of courses and programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level and the management of the outcomes of these processes. Following approval at the Quality Assurance Committee, proposals are taken for internal approval by the Senior Leadership Team before final approval by SMU for degree programmes and Trinity for the levels 5 and 6 diplomas.

2.12   The revised committee structure is in the process of being embedded and there is therefore limited evidence of the effectiveness of the new processes and procedures for validation and monitoring.

2.13   The revalidation of the BA Acting is a successful pilot for the new validation procedures and the effectiveness of its operation, including involvement of, and consultation with, students and external experts.

2.14   The MA Professional Acting is currently undergoing revalidation and the MA Directing is due for validation. Progress on these two developments attested to the effectiveness of the new process for internal validation. The SMU moderator was invited to act as a critical friend at the internal validation of MA Directing, the formal proposal for which was submitted to SMU in September 2017. SMU considers the new process to be robust and insightful. A full validation event is to follow in December 2017, where the revalidation of the MA Professional Acting will also take place. The Academy is following the standard SMU validation documentation.

2.15   There is a mechanism in place for programme modification and students are involved in this process. The programme documentation, including programme specifications, programme briefs and schemes of work, shows appropriate alignment with UK threshold academic standards, and the VLE demonstrated the appropriateness and effectiveness of the assessment of learning outcomes. The external examiner is involved in programme design, development and approval and consultation with students and external experts.

2.16   The review team concludes that Expectation B1 is met. The associated risk is low because the Academy processes for programme design and development adhere to the requirements of its awarding body and organisation.

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

2.17   The Academy's approach to admissions is set out in its admission policy. All admissions are made in accordance with the Academy's Equality and Diversity Statement and Code of Practice. An applicant is assessed on whether they meet the academic requirements of the programme and undertake an audition and a movement and improvisation workshop and then a vocal assessment.

2.18   Applicants who do not have the relevant academic qualifications are assessed through the non-academic admissions policy. Applicants have to undertake a written or digital task, followed by a workshop, which is then assessed. For applicants who are unsuccessful in their application there is a clearly laid out appeals process.

2.19   Oversight of admission and recruitment is maintained by the Registrar and the Principal and undertaken by the senior programme team members, course leaders, and lead tutors. At a strategic level, SMU maintains overall responsibilities for student admissions.

2.20   The Academy has a clearly defined approach to widening participation in auditions that works in parallel to a policy for the recognition of prior learning.

2.21   The policies and procedures of the Academy allow Expectation B2 to be met in principle.

2.22   The review team tested the evidence through scrutiny of information made available to students and the public, reading appropriate committee minutes, and analysing the Academy's policies on admissions. The team also met students and staff to gain a fuller understanding of recruitment and admissions.

2.23   The Academy gives applicants the opportunity to show their potential through the admissions process. This highly personalised approach to admissions is underpinned by significant outreach activity, staff training and student support, while effective processes ensure consistency across application decisions for both north and south campuses. This approach is in line with the Academy's approach to widening participation in admissions. The Academy's emphasis on widening participation in admissions is considered as part of programme validations and underpins its approach to admissions. It is contained in the job descriptions of key staff.

2.24   On induction, students undertake a range of activities which supports them to succeed on their programme and become familiar with life at the Academy. This activity is supported by the Student Liaison Officer who works with both the north and south campuses to ensure students receive an equal experience.

2.25   During the review visit the team was also made aware that students are able to undertake a Trinity College diploma without enrolling for either the BA or MA course offered by the Academy.

2.26   The review team concludes that Expectation B2 is met. The associated risk is low because the Academy has appropriate processes in place that are effectively discharged for the recruitment, selection, and admission to higher education programmes.

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

2.27   The Academy's Teaching and Learning Strategy outlines how teaching is to be delivered and provides a strategic approach and guidance on the development of learning approaches and technologies to support changes in the study requirements and expectations of students. The strategy illustrates progressive pathways, skills students should develop, and provider wide approaches to teaching. It is enhanced by the Equality and Diversity in Curriculum Policy that is intended to observe protected characteristics are considered in all assessment modalities alongside institution-wide observance of the Equal Opportunities Policy.

2.28   The strategy identifies formal and personalised learning and performance monitoring, alongside interactive learning technologies. This is supplemented with a number of policies and operational practices relating to the development of teaching and learning activities. The Academy's approach to learning and teaching is also contained in the programme specifications, course descriptors and student handbooks.

2.29   The Teaching and Learning Committee meets termly with oversight of all matters relating to the development and delivery of taught courses and to ensure the maintenance of academic standards, and is represented by senior management, teaching staff and students.

2.30   The policies and procedures of the Academy allow Expectation B3 to be met in principle.

2.31   The review team examined the Teaching and Learning Strategy as well as supporting documentation and processes and held meetings with senior and academic staff, support staff and students from all programmes with representatives from both campuses.

2.32   At the review visit, the team was presented with an updated Governance Structure that set out new quality assurance procedures for learning and teaching within academic committees.

2.33   The Teaching and Learning Strategy contains a set of priorities reviewed annually by the Teaching and Learning Committee. The Committee reports to the Senior Leadership Committee and recent minutes confirm a systematic review of priorities and processes. The Programme Director's annual report confirms there have been deliberative attempts to embed teaching and learning practices through the Teaching and Learning Committee.

2.34   Staff and student consultation and feedback provide opportunities to refine approaches to teaching and learning and teaching methods. Any proposed changes to courses are guided by student feedback and any changes are made in consultation with the student body through the Lead Student Representatives. Students are positive about their inclusion in decisions about their curriculum.

2.35   Students are satisfied with the quality of teaching and support for their learning. A number of changes to student learning have been derived from student feedback. For

example, successful teaching workshops have been extended and additional specialist practitioners have been explored in more depth due to high demand and feedback from students.

2.36   The Academy has a clear observation system in place for formal and peer observation of teaching that enables and emphasises the discussion of best practice. The Academy's staff appraisal process includes reflection on feedback on teaching from students and peer observations. Learning from peer observations feeds into the staff development programme's good practice sessions.

2.37   Students have access to a virtual library and digital theatre provision supplementing the physical library resources. The student learning portal and dedicated student email addresses allow consistent delivery of feedback to all students. There is a dedicated Learning Support Coordinator to help and guide students. Postgraduate students have access to the British Library and Manchester Library and specialist online journals. The main digital interaction with students is managed through specialist software which supports key documentation including the student handbook, course briefs, curriculum handbook and quality handbook.

2.38   The Academy is committed to ongoing staff development which is underpinned by subject-specific and educational scholarship. This includes membership of the HEA of which the Principal and Vice-Principal and a number of teaching staff are enrolled. The Principal is a Principal Fellow of the HEA. There are professional development opportunities through a continuing professional development scheme with funding for research projects by full-time, part-time and freelance teachers. The teaching staff are practitioners, and this brings currency to the Academy and to the vocational nature of the teaching, delivery and assessment. Staff are financially supported to achieve qualifications such as master's and new acting techniques.

2.39   The vocational nature of the programmes is designed to equip students for work. The Academy has strong links with industry and this includes network events for students with industry agents, professional workshops and presentations and performance work in professional venues. There are enrichment activities outlined to students and contained in the enrichment timetable.

2.40   There are clear mechanisms to ensure that all staff are equipped to safeguard student welfare. The Pastoral Care Policy allows learners to have three diagnostic sessions with a counsellor paid for by the school and this is overseen by the Principal and signed off at Senior Leadership Team.

2.41   The review team concludes that Expectation B3 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the Academy works extensively with staff and students to articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices.

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

2.42   The Academy works with its awarding body (SMU) and awarding organisation Trinity to develop its approach to student development and achievement. The Academy has a vocational focus, which is designed to enhance student employability. This is developed alongside enrichment activities including networking events, weekly enrichment sessions and involvement of external organisations in programme delivery.

2.43   As well as developing practical skills as actors, a contextual studies course encourages students to develop academic skills to succeed on their programme. This is accompanied by a practical research project, which encourages students to reflect and develop their independent study skills.

2.44   The Academy makes use of blogs and vlogs to support educational achievement, which are an important part of the learning experience and which reflect the dynamic nature of a conservatoire training. Students are able to access either the Manchester Library or British Library depending on their location, while the Academy subscribes to a range of electronic resources. Student learning is supported by student referral guidance and a pastoral care policy.

2.45   The Teaching and Learning Committee is responsible for the development of the teaching strategy, delivery of all taught courses and for ensuring the maintenance of academic standards, reporting to the Senior Management Team. The Teaching and Learning Strategy provides the strategic approach and guidance on the development of learning approaches and technologies and to support changes in the study requirements and expectations of students.

2.46   The student portal, through the VLE, provides direct online dialogue with tutors in response to their feedback allowing immediate online engagement with the feedback process. This is in addition to weekly whole school briefings delivered by lead tutors on both campuses. Postgraduate students are given guided tutorials.

2.47   The Teaching and Learning Strategy sets out how students will be supported through their programme including tutorials, student support, counselling and study laboratories, with information on reflective practice and student engagement.

2.48   The policies and procedures of the Academy allow Expectation B4 to be met in principle.

2.49   The review team examined the Teaching and Learning Strategy and processes, and held meetings with senior and academic staff, support staff and students from programmes from both campuses and had a demonstration of the VLE.

2.50   The Academy has a number of policies and operational practices relating to the development of teaching and learning activities. Approaches to learning and teaching are explained on the Academy's website and in programme specifications, course descriptors and student handbooks. Teaching methods are also explained during induction. The Teaching and Learning Committee meets termly with oversight of all matters relating to

the development of the teaching strategy and delivery of taught courses and to ensure the maintenance of academic standards, and includes membership from senior management, teaching staff and students.

2.51   Teaching and Learning practices are embedded in the curriculum. Practices are further supported by the Equality and Diversity in Curriculum Policy that is intended to observe and 'moderate the approach to the incorporation of protected characteristics in different assessment modalities and learning environments' alongside institution-wide observance of the Equal Opportunities Policy.

2.52   The Academy runs an induction programme for new students which builds upon the audition and admissions interviews to maximise the opportunities for students with an introductory session from learning support staff on both campuses. Students have access to a virtual library and digital theatre provision supplementing the physical library resources. A Student Learning Portal allows consistent delivery of feedback to all students with oversight by the Vice-Principal (Operations and Student Experience). The Learning Support Coordinator facilitates learning support. The Academy provides professional resources and facilities available to support the provision and the Teaching and Learning Strategy outlines how teaching is to be delivered.

2.53   The vocational nature of the provision means that significant amounts of delivery is through practical workshops and associated performance work, including workshops by external visiting professionals. There is a focus on formal and personalised learning and performance monitoring, working with and for the students. Interactive learning technologies, through the VLE, allows students to track and monitor their progress, and input work including a reflective video journal with direct interaction by staff who provide formative and summative assessment.

2.54   Proposed changes to courses are guided by student feedback and any changes are made in consultation with the student body through the Lead Student Representatives.

2.55   Teaching observation is designed to reflect current pedagogical and professional practice and takes place each year for all staff. Observations are formal, drop in and peer and are used by the Senior Leadership Team to ensure oversight of the quality of teaching at both campuses.

2.56   Students are well represented within the Academy and from both campuses. There are termly meetings with The Principal and Head of Quality and Academic Standards and regular year group meetings and representation on committees. Student evaluation feedback is analysed by the Head of Quality and Academic Standards and the Vice-Principal.

2.57   The review team concludes that Expectation B4 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the Academy works extensively with staff and students to articulate and review the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices.

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

2.58   The Academy's approach to formal student engagement is contained within the Teaching and Learning Strategy, which outlines a range of ways students can play a part in enhancing their learning experience at the Academy. The Academy has a Student Charter setting out what is expected of students and what the Academy will provide.

2.59   There are a number of ways in which staff engage with students. This includes student representative meetings, student surveys, and student membership of the Academy's academic committees. Information for students on the Academy's representative structures is made available through the student's Quality Handbook. Students are made aware of how their feedback has been responded to through the Academy's 'You Said We Did' procedure, which is disseminated through student representative meetings. Students are represented by Lead Student Representatives. Student representative elections are held during induction at both the north and south campus.

2.60   The policies and principles of the Academy allow Expectation B5 to be met in principle.

2.61   This review team examined a range of documentation including minutes of the Teaching and Learning Committee, Academic Board, the student submission, revalidation panels, and by viewing the student submission. The effectiveness of student engagement was further assessed through meetings with students and staff. The Academy involves students in shaping their provision. Students are consulted on changes to the curriculum, and the student met by the team cited instances where students were able to secure changes to their curriculum through feedback. This includes the securing of additional teaching of course elements, which students found particularly beneficial. Students were effective and valued partners in the recent BA Acting revalidation.

2.62   At the review visit, the team was presented with an updated Governance Structure that further embedded students' role within academic committees. The Academy has an 'open door' policy and students are in regular contact with staff. The Student Liaison Officer further supports this work acting as a conduit between elected representatives and staff.

2.63   The 2014 QAA review noted that the Academy's extensive and helpful student support was considered good practice. The Academy has continued to develop elements of this work with training of and continuous engagement with student reps and rolling out new tools for gathering student opinions such as the National Student Survey.

2.64   The review team concludes that Expectation B5 is met. The associated risk is low because the Academy has appropriate policies in place to effectively engage with students.

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

2.65   The Academy complies with the assessment policies of SMU and Trinity, and obtains approval for assessment strategies through its programme approval and validation processes, involving both staff and students. Staff from the Academy attend examination boards at SMU, as well as chairing its own meetings to oversee academic standards. The Curriculum Handbook, which is generic to all programmes, and the Programme Briefs, which are programme specific, detail assessment methods and the moderation process in accordance with programme learning outcomes. The Academy sets assessment tasks for its programmes and, in so doing, complies with SMU's Assessment Policy Principles. Assessments are mapped against the FHEQ to ensure compliance.

2.66   The two generic types of assessment operating across the Academy are Studio Production and Written/Digital, and two other types that are each used once in the BA in Acting, which are viva voce and the personal research project. All assessments test the learning outcomes of the course and feed back on three broad areas of Process, Professionalism and Performance of the student.

2.67   The Academy employs a variety of formative assessment methods to test students' understanding and abilities and to rehearse elements of learning. These are assessed summatively in viva voce, studio production, written/digital submission and the level 6 personal research project. These methods include the sharing of rehearsed, devised or scripted performances, physical or vocally driven performance pieces, oral presentations and submission of reflective vlog, blog, podcast or written journal or essays. Formative assessments are tailored by staff to the needs of a particular cohort.

2.68   Students engage in peer formative assessment, conducted by panels drawn from across two campuses in preparation for their Contextual Studies 3 personal research project. The pattern of preparation for the assessment of this project begins with the embedded formative peer assessment in Contextual Studies 1 and Contextual Studies 2 in order to foster confidence in students to assess the work of others objectively.

2.69   Students are provided with information about the calculation of their overall degree mark in the Curriculum Handbook and are provided with a link to the SMU Academic Regulations.

2.70   Students undertake a series of study skills classes designed to embed appropriate academic practice in their learning. Specialist support is put in place by the Lead Skills Tutor to allow for a tailored support mechanism to enhance each learner's approach to assessment, including targeted coaching.

2.71   Written feedback is provided at the end of each term in years 1, 2 and 3 by tutors, or by the director at the end of each project. The written feedback is provided against three criteria, Process, Professionalism and Performance. This is entered on the online student portal and the student receives a set of reports for Actor Voice, Actor Movement, Acting, Rehearsal, Performance and Contextual Studies. There is also space for lead tutors to

comment. The portal also allows students to respond to this feedback. Students receive tutorials from their year tutor, depending on learning needs, academic and pastoral issues at levels 4, 5 and 7. The timetable for Assessment Feedback meetings and Progression interviews for levels 4, 5 and 7 is provided in the Curriculum Handbook.

2.72　　The arrangements for assessment and moderation of the diplomas awarded by Trinity are outlined in Professional Performing Arts Diplomas; Level 5 & 6 Diplomas in Professional Acting Syllabus from September 2011. The Academy is only required to assess students at a pass/fail level; however, Trinity considers it good practice for the students to be given a clear indication of the level of achievement which is provided by the Academy. Students must be assessed formally at least once annually and must pass their assessments in all core subjects and integrated professional studies in order to proceed onto the next year of the programme. Detailed guidance on assessment procedures and weighting are given in the Programme Provider's Handbook.

2.73　　Trinity moderates the Academy's internal assessment of first, second and third year students and externally assesses them in their final year performances. The Academy's documentation indicates that the SMU BA and MA degrees and Trinity diploma curricula are exactly the same and the Academy maps credits and curriculum between Trinity and SMU awards. The Academy has arrangements in place for accredited and alternative prior learning in accordance with SMU's procedures for accreditation of prior experiential learning.

2.74　　The policies and procedures of the Academy allow Expectation B6 to be met in principle.

2.75　　The review team examined the policies and procedures and all supporting documentation showing their application and the information available to staff and students on the online student portal. The team also met staff and students to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of the Academy's processes.

2.76　　The Academy has reduced assessment by 70 per cent on the advice of the external examiner. Formative assessment has been reduced and summative assessment takes place at the end of the year. Students and staff attested to the success of this new approach to assessment. The Academy has introduced a variety of modes of assessment which have been welcomed by SMU.

2.77　　Information relating to assessment methods and associated feedback mechanisms is articulated clearly to students in the Curriculum Handbook, the Programme Briefs and Schemes of Work. Students are informed about plagiarism, provided with information about the procedures in place for extenuating circumstances, failure and retrieval, marking and moderation in the Curriculum Handbook. Further information is provided in Programme Briefs and Schemes of Work. Students whom the review team met attested to the clarity of this information.

2.78　　The 2014 QAA Review made an advisable recommendation that 'the marking of assessments is transparent and verified'. The Academy has taken deliberate steps to address this recommendation. Student handbooks now articulate clearly the process for marking and this is also made clear to students at induction.

2.79　　There is a clear process for the marking of assessments mapped to the learning outcomes. All assessments are marked by independent markers, the first being the lead tutor. If the marks fall within the same marking band, then the first mark is recorded, and feedback is uploaded onto the student portal. If the second mark falls outside the grade band and if no agreement can be reached, the moderation process is invoked and the

course leader acts as a third marker. In the event of no agreement then the Vice-Principal (C&QA) arbitrates and a recommendation is made to the examination board. All fail marks are reviewed by a third marker.

2.80   Meetings with students are organised at the north and south campuses to clarify the marking process with them to ensure that they are fully informed, and existing staff are provided with additional training. New staff receive training as part of their induction.

2.81   Students also have assessment feedback meetings with their tutor in which they have a detailed discussion about the written feedback provided, discuss how the grade was achieved in the light of the assessment requirements and discussion about the ways in which the student might improve in the future.

2.82   Formal arrangements are in place for extensions to submission dates for students with extenuating circumstances. These are handled by the Vice-Principal (C&QA) and reasonable adjustments are made for students with learning or physical disabilities to present work for assessment in a variety of modes, including video or recorded presentations.

2.83   The 2014 QAA Review recommended that staff 'provide written feedback on assessed student work that consistently reflects assessment criteria and intended learning outcomes'. Staff are given additional training in providing feedback to students on the online tracker system to ensure that it addresses the learning outcomes outlined in the Programme Briefs. The tracker system requires staff to group feedback under three headings Professionalism, Process and Performance. This is the first year of operation, but it is anticipated that students will be able to access their complete profile over their entire programme in the future.

2.84   The Academy has arrangements in place for accredited and alternative prior learning in accordance with SMU's procedures for accreditation of prior experiential learning. Staff are provided with guidance for assessment and feedback in the Curriculum Handbook and there is additional staff development in place.

2.85   The review team concludes that Expectation B6 is met. The associated risk is low because the Academy operates equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment and makes effective use of the awarding partner's academic frameworks.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.86   The awarding partner is responsible for the appointment of external examiners who monitor assessment and marking by the Academy to ensure that it is appropriate to achieve the standard required in the qualification specification. They carry out annual visits and issue action plans detailing issues and actions required. The awarding body has responsibility for defining the role of external examiners and the employment of examiners with appropriate subject experience.

2.87   The main role of the external examiner is to verify that the grades, credit and awards are at an appropriate level before they are presented for ratification at assessment boards. External examiners attend the examination board and review students' work for progression and award decisions. The Academy has a clear system in place for dealing with external examiners reports through its committee system.

2.88   The policies and procedures of the Academy allow Expectation B7 to be met in principle.

2.89   The review team examined relevant committee minutes, internal and external reports and met with senior, academic and support staff and students.

2.90   The external examiner appointed by SMU is required to work to the University's quality assurance processes and reporting protocol. They make an annual visit and meet the students and staff. The role of an external examiner is clear. Similarly, an external examiner is appointed by Trinity, who makes regular reporting visits as outlined in the Trinity College Programme Provider Handbook.

2.91   Following the 2014 QAA review, it was recommended that students were directed to external examiner reports and that the Academy formally consider external examiner reports through its committee structure. Students are now clearly shown where they can access external examiner reports and the newly constituted Quality Assurance Committee has responsibility for external examiner reports and students are aware of this. The external examiner requirements of the University are articulated in the Academy's Quality Handbook and is made clear and available to staff, students, governors and examiners.

2.92   The Academy responds to external examiner reports through the appropriate Curriculum Team meeting, and then they are monitored by the Quality Assurance Committee, recommendations from the reports feed into the annual programme review process. The Student Advisor sits on the Quality Assurance Committee.

2.93   External examiner reports are available to staff and students on the staff and student portal. Following consideration of the external examiner reports, action plans arising from the annual self-evaluation for each programme are updated.

2.94   The Academy consults external examiners when proposing changes to existing programmes and when developing new provision. External examiners were consulted as part of the revalidation process for the BA Acting.

2.95   The review team concludes that Expectation B7 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the processes and practices at the Academy for all aspects of dealing with external examiners is clear and fit for purpose.

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

2.96   The Academy follows its awarding body's processes for programme monitoring and review which are articulated in the SMU Collaborative Handbook. These processes are both formal and informal and overseen by the Teaching and Learning Committee on behalf of the Senior Management Team.

2.97   The Academy prepares and submits an Annual Statement of Programme Evaluation & Review (ASPER) to SMU as part of the annual monitoring process. This report provides an analysis of recruitment statistics and trends, student attainment, course pass and progression rates allowing an appraisal of the programme. The report is discussed at the Senior Management Team and lead tutors and course leaders are asked to provide feedback prior to submission to SMU.

2.98   The evaluation and monitoring of other key areas are discussed and monitored on an ongoing basis. These include any proposed curriculum changes, new developments in teaching and learning strategies, student support and guidance, and staffing and resource issues. These discussions take place at Senior Management Team meetings, team meetings and the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Development Meeting, both of which have full student representation. The completed reports progress to the Teaching and Learning Committee before presentation to the Trustees. Thereafter, the Academy sends the final report to SMU for consideration.

2.99   The Trinity diploma is externally assessed and forms part of the ASPER. The Vice-Principal (Operations & Student Experience) shares the level 6 performance feedback with course leaders, Vice-Principal (C&QA) and Principal to maintain strategic oversight of the quality of acting, directing and scenography within the live performances. Trinity diploma students are assessed alongside SMU students and the Trinity assessor is provided with photographs to identify the appropriate students.

2.100   The Academy's internal processes for programme monitoring and review are to be revised and implemented before September 2017.

2.101   The policies and procedures of the Academy allow Expectation B8 to be met in principle.

2.102   The review team considered policies and procedures for the Academy, SMU and Trinity College, the ASPER and a wide range of documentation supporting the implementation of the monitoring and review of academic provision in the Academy. The review team also met with staff and students to gain a better understanding of the processes.

2.103   At the review visit, the team was presented with an updated Governance Structure, which describes the new internal arrangements now in place for the monitoring and review of the Academy's provision.

2.104   Internal procedures are in place to support programme monitoring and review of programmes. The newly constituted Quality Assurance Committee now takes responsibility

for the development and review of processes for annual review of courses and programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level and the management of the outcomes of these processes.

2.105   The new annual monitoring process was approved in August 2017 and takes the form of two parts. The first requires programme-level information to include strengths and weaknesses of the programme and any major changes made during the year, issues raised by students and external examiners, identification of good practice and actions for the forthcoming year, as well as a commentary on student outcomes, progression and retention, which is submitted to the Teaching and Learning Committee. The second part is completed using all programme monitoring, and additional information and data to form institutional-level monitoring. This new process does not replace the ASPER, but serves to inform it.

2.106   Staff are aware of, and engage with, the new process, despite it being in its infancy and students met by the team confirmed that there is student consultation on programme monitoring and review.

2.107   The review team concludes that Expectation B8 is met. The associated risk is low because the Academy is committed to continuous monitoring and review of its academic provision and the student learning environment has appropriate procedures in place.

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

2.108   The Academy's process for handling academic appeals and complaints is contained within SMU Academic Regulations in line with its partnership arrangement. The complaints process is overseen by the Academy's Vice-Principal Operations and Student Experience.

2.109   The Academy deals with the resolution of complaints through an informal process in the first instance. This can then be escalated to a student's Head of Year or Principal. If a complaint is still not resolved students can then lodge a formal complaint with a member of senior staff. If the complaint is made against the entirety of the senior staff team this will be handled by the Trustee Board.

2.110   Any discrepancies in academic administration will be referred to the Programme Board in the first instance. If a student believes that there has been a procedural error in the decision of the Programme Board, they can write to the Chair of Trustees for further investigation. After a decision is made, a student may make a further academic appeal which is forwarded to an external assessor who will liaise with SMU.

2.111   The details of how to make a complaint or academic appeal is made available to students through their induction activity and the quality handbook. Once a student has exhausted routes for an academic appeal they may take the matter up with the OIA.

2.112   Trinity College checks the availability of appeals documentation during its validation visits to ensure that the Academy is discharging its responsibilities for appeals effectively to students studying for a Level 5 or Level 6 Diploma in Professional Acting.

2.113   The policies and procedure of the Academy allow Expectation B9 to be met in principle.

2.114   The review team tested the evidence through scrutiny of documentation which outlines the Academy's processes for appeals and complaints, and examination of information made available to students. The review team also met with students and staff to gain a further understanding of how effectively these processes work in practice.

2.115   The Academy places an emphasis on resolving complaints quickly and informally where possible in addition to the formal procedures. Students reported that staff were willing to listen to issues they raised while the Student Liaison Officer acts as a first point of contact for many students to raise informal issues.

2.116   Students play an emerging role in supporting other students through appeals and complaints. As well as the already established Equality and Diversity Group including Academy alumni, the Student Council also provides some support with complaints.

2.117   There is an ongoing dialogue with students on the quality of their time at the Academy. The formal process for appeals and complaints is additionally made available to students through the VLE and discussed during student induction.

2.118   The review team concludes that Expectation B9 is met. The associated risk is low because there are procedures in place for considering academic appeals and complaints.

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

2.119   This Expectation is not applicable as the Academy does not have arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with others.

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

2.120   This Expectation is not applicable as the Academy does not offer research degree programmes.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.121   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.

2.122   All applicable Expectations have been met and the risk is judged low.

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

3   Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1   The Academy produces a variety of information relating to learning opportunities and publicises this through a number of means including the Academy website, the internal VLE, and printed materials including the Academy prospectus and programme and student handbooks.

3.2   The Academy's marketing strategy outlines its approach to the dissemination of public information. The strategy outlines the process through which materials are approved, how the Academy's branding should be used and sets out a timeline for the publication of marketing materials throughout the year.

3.3   The Academy is responsible, under its collaborative agreement with its awarding body, SMU, for the promotion and marketing of programmes. Prospective students can access information about the Academy through its website and prospectus. These contain a range of information on programmes, fees, entry requirements, and admission processes including appeals on admissions.

3.4   There are processes in place for the approval and dissemination of public information. The Principal approves all changes to publicity material, which is managed through a data management system, with the support of the Head of Quality and Academic Standards. The oversight of public information is further supported by the Marketing Manager who joins the Senior Management Team meeting for items related to the publication of information.

3.5   On arrival, students receive a range of information about their programme and life at the Academy. This includes a quality handbook, a curriculum handbook and a student handbook which are supplemented by programme briefs. The handbooks provide students with information about their programme, details about policy and processes at the Academy, a guide to academic governance, and general information about studying at the Academy. Students can access these materials through the Academy's VLE. The purpose of each of these handbooks is explained during student induction.

3.6   The policies and procedures of the Academy allow Expectation C to be met in principle.

3.7   The review team tested the evidence through scrutiny of information made available to students and the public, and by examining the processes for the creation, approval, and audit of such information. The review team also met with students and staff to gain a better understanding of the validity, reliability, and accessibility of information.

3.8   At the visit the review team was informed that the Academy has implemented a new process for signing off public information from October 2017. All public information is now signed off by the Chair of the Academy's Quality Assurance Committee to maintain greater oversight of information. This reflects the Academy's ongoing efforts to embed a formal sign-off process for published material.

3.9   The Academy ensures that students have a wide range of information made available to them throughout their programme. Students are kept up to date with developments at the Academy through effective communication by staff. This occurs in conjunction with the formal dissemination of information through student representative meetings, a 'You Said, We Did' feedback mechanism and through student representation on the Academy's committee structure.

3.10   The 2014 QAA Review report included an advisable recommendation 'that the Academy formalises the process for maintaining the accuracy and currency of information'. The Academy has established a formal process in place for maintaining the accuracy and currency of information. However, the review team found some published information is out of date.

3.11   The Academy's prospectus, on its website, includes the Foundation Degree in Stage Management and Technical Theatre which the Academy has closed for new entrants in 2017. It was explained that the prospectus was the 2015-16 version and had intended to be a generic prospectus that would not change annually. It was an oversight of the Academy that this version had not been archived and removed from the website and an investigation will now take place to ascertain why this happened. The Foundation Degree has been replaced with the Academy's own Foundation Programme in Stage Management and Technical Theatre which does not carry any qualification. However, the Fees and Funding page for this new programme contains erroneous information as it refers to the programme as a degree. Similarly, the application form refers to the programme as a degree. The link to government information on fees is broken. The Academy acknowledges that its audit of information is not working effectively and requires improvement. Its new audit and approval process, from October 2017, aims to improve its checking and reliability of accurate information.

3.12   The Academy is in the process of producing a new prospectus and the Academy's cycle of business now includes an audit of information. The creation of a new Quality Assurance Committee is designed to help ensure the accuracy and reliability of information provided for potential applicants and students although it is too soon to measure its effectiveness. The review team therefore **recommends** that, by January 2018, an audit of all published information be undertaken to ensure that it is accurate, fit for purpose, accessible, and trustworthy.

3.13   The review team concludes that Expectation C is met. The associated risk is moderate because, although its procedures are broadly adequate, they have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied and the problems are confined to a small part of the provision.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

3.15   The Expectation is met and the risk is moderate and there is one recommendation.

3.16   The recommendation arising from the Expectation indicates that an audit of all public information be undertaken to ensure that it is accurate, fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.17   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the Academy **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 Academy articulates its strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities in its Strategic Document. The Academy treats students as partners in shaping their education, through engagement at all levels by involving them in decision-making and by means of feedback mechanisms. These include a school-wide course evaluation scheme for undergraduate and postgraduate courses aimed at enhancing student engagement and achievement. The Academy encourages and supports a strong student representation structure, student societies and a vibrant campus life.

4.2 The Senior Management Team maintains final oversight of enhancement but has partially devolved the responsibility to the termly Development Meeting which aims to develop an organisational identification, support and dissemination of enrichment activities across the Academy.

4.3 The Academy collates qualitative and quantitative feedback from students on the academic content and delivery of the provision and the wider student experience. The Vice-Principal (C&QA) and the Head of Quality and Standards undertake an initial desk-based analysis. The Principal then approves a proposed action list and the Vice-Principal (C&QA) creates a 'You Said We Did' letter. This is circulated by email to student representatives who then attend a meeting with the Head of Quality and Academic Standards and the Principal to approve the responses gathered from their year cohorts.

4.4 The impact of any changes is monitored in an interim meeting in the second half of term to consolidate the actions taken by the Senior Management Team. Confidential matters relating to the action plan are overseen by the Vice-Principal (C&QA) until final sign off.

4.5 The lead student representatives serve as full members of the Teaching and Learning Committee and thereby contribute strategically to courses and programme proposals, modifications, academic and physical resource evaluation supporting or relating to the curriculum, such as the Academy's continuing professional development (CPD) activities. Student representatives are also members of the Student Council and Development Committee. This role serves to ensure that students are partners in the governance of the Academy at the most senior level committees.

4.6 Staff are expected to undertake fellowship of the HEA and the Academy currently holds partner status. CPD is overseen by the Vice-Principal (C&QA). Individual CPD is proposed by course leaders and lead tutors and considered as part of the appraisal scheme that operates annually.

4.7 Tutor observation is conducted in the first term of the academic year, where possible, by all lead tutors and course leaders and reported to the Head of Academic Quality and Standards. Using information from observations and appraisal, CPD choices are allocated by the Leadership Team. The Vice-Principal (C&QA) collates all information on appraisal and observations and reports to the Trustees on an annual basis.

4.8 The policies and procedures of the Academy allow the Enhancement Expectation to be met in principle.

4.9   The review team examined a range of documentation, including policies relating to the Academy's enhancement strategy and their effectiveness in application. The team also met staff and students to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of the oversight and implementation of the Enhancement Strategy and associated initiatives.

4.10   At the review visit, the team was presented with an updated Governance Structure, which explains that the Development Committee has been disbanded and its responsibilities for the oversight of enhancement at the Academy has now passed to the Senior Leadership Team.

4.11   The Academy clusters its enhancement initiatives around three themes: its admissions process, which allows access for talented individuals through engagement with a widening participation agenda; systematic engagement in 'observation and extension of personal research', characterised as scholarship; and working in partnership with the student body and student representatives to enhance extracurricular activities. This is described as a 'three-pronged strategic approach to enhancement', as articulated in its Strategic Document.

4.12   Staff and students attested to the effectiveness of the admissions process in attracting a diverse student body. Students welcomed the supportive community fostered by the Academy.

4.13   A pilot research department, instituted last year to develop scholarly activity, acts as a mechanism for developing theoretical and practical information that might impact upon the curriculum, the student experience and teaching practice across the Academy. Research activity is identified as taking place at three levels – external, institutional and departmental. Research initiatives are submitted online and shortlisted by the Principal and Vice-Principals. Lead student representatives are also involved in the shortlisting. The strategic aims of the selected research initiatives are documented in a policy on the VLE. An annual report of research activity is presented the Trustees. To date three submissions have been received and two grants awarded.

4.14   In the academic year 2016-17, 14 members of staff prepared for Associate, Fellow, Senior and Principal Fellowship through the direct route of the HEA. An individual's CPD is proposed by course leaders and lead tutors and considered as part of the appraisal scheme that operates annually.

4.15   Examples of the Academy working in partnership with students to enhance student experience include opportunities for students to take a performance to the Edinburgh International Festival during the summer break, and the recent partnership with an external showcase company, involving a bi-termly activity on both campuses involving two guest judges feeding back on student performances of monologues. The external showcase company also offers the Academy the opportunity to engage potential employers or routes to employment for students.

4.16   A number of other enhancement initiatives fall outside the three identified themes. These include the Academy's recent subscription to the Royal Court Theatre Script Scheme and the securing of access for students to the Theatre, Dance and Performance Training Journal to support the Contextual Studies Course. The Academy is engaging in new software across the entire school from September 2017, which will allow learners to exchange digital submissions and access to any research tutors want to share on the VLE. The Academy maintains a professional agency on site to provide advice around agent contracts, engagement in theatre and performance contracts.

4.17   There are initiatives supporting the transition of students into the industry and engagement with the three strands identified in the Academy's Enhancement Strategy but staff do not always recognise these activities as constituting the Academy's published Enhancement Strategy.

4.18   The review team concludes that the Enhancement Expectation is met. The associated risk is low because the quality and range of enhancement activities within the Academy is extensive allowing the enhancement of student learning.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.19   In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.20   The Expectation in this area is met.

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

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Distance learning
A programme 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 programme of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)
An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such resources as programme 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.