



Application for taught degree awarding powers: Rose Bruford College

Scrutiny team report

September 2016

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About this report

This report reflects the findings of a team appointed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) to conduct a detailed scrutiny of an application from Rose Bruford College for the power to award taught degrees.

The application was considered under criteria approved by Government in 2004. In advising on applications, QAA is guided by the relevant criteria and the associated evidence requirements. QAA's work in this area is overseen by its Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP), a subcommittee of the QAA Board.

ACDAP's initial consideration of applications establishes whether an applicant has made a case to proceed to detailed scrutiny of the application and the evidence on which it is based. If satisfied on this matter, ACDAP agrees that a team may be appointed to conduct the scrutiny and prepare a report, enabling ACDAP to determine the nature of the recommendation it will make to the QAA Board.

Scrutiny teams produce reports following each of the engagements undertaken. The final report reflects the team's findings and is structured around the four main criteria contained in the 2004 TDAP criteria,¹ namely:

- governance and academic management
- academic standards and quality assurance
- scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff
- the environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes.

Subject to the approval of the Board, QAA's advice is communicated to the appropriate minister. This advice is provided in confidence. The minister determines whether it should be disclosed to the applicant. A final decision on an application, and the notification of that decision, is a matter for the Privy Council.

¹ The TDAP criteria are available in Appendix 1 of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' Applications for the Grant of Taught Degree Awarding Powers, Research Degree Awarding Powers and University Title: Guidance for Applicant Organisations in England and Wales (August 2004), available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32388/11-781-applications-for-degree-awarding-powers-guidance.pdf (PDF, 304KB).

Executive summary

Governance and academic management

Governance and academic management arrangements at Rose Bruford College (the College) are well understood by Governors, staff and student representatives and are clearly explained in the annually updated Committee Handbook. Formal meetings of Governors, committees, managers and academics, and management meetings, are effectively managed through a combination of inclusive and informed chairing, well prepared papers and detailed action lists, which are subject to regular careful monitoring and reporting. Academic developments and the approach to risk are set within the context of the Strategic Plan, which is regularly monitored by Governors and the Academic Board. A very detailed risk register is monitored by the senior management team and Audit Committee on a quarterly basis. The College takes careful account of legislative changes and guidance, developments in the higher education and relevant industrial sectors, and of regular and informed student feedback. The College's TDAP Steering Group and the TDAP Transitional Working Party regularly advise and make recommendations to Governors and the Academic Board regarding the progress of the TDAP application, and the development of regulations, procedures and documentation necessary for the implementation of TDAP. The College's application for TDAP is well supported by the University of Manchester (the University), which has had a validation partnership with the College since 1995.

Academic standards and quality assurance

The University has confirmed that, under its mature validation partnership arrangement, its regulatory framework has been implemented by the College fully, consistently and with professional rigour and self-criticality. The College is at an advanced stage in developing its own draft academic regulations, through a process in which Governors and senior managers are critically engaged. Policies, regulations and procedures are made available to staff and students in an effective Handbook of Academic Policies and Procedures. Quality assurance and enhancement processes have been informed by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) and mapped against it. Programmes take appropriate account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. The College is accredited by Drama UK (which has recently reviewed it) and meet the requirements of comparable bodies in other countries. Programme approval, review and monitoring mechanisms are consistently robust, comprehensive and detailed, and students and support staff make significant contributions to them. There is a transparent process for the allocation of resources to programmes. The Enhancing Learning and Teaching Strategy 2014-17 sets out the College's strategic approach to learning and teaching, and to enhancement. Progress on each of the Strategy's themes is monitored regularly. Study abroad arrangements are carefully structured and managed. External examiners are currently nominated by the College and approved by the University, but the College has developed its own External Examiner Policy and Procedure for use if TDAP were to be granted. The Academic Enhancement Manager has a proactive, College-wide role in the development, implementation and evaluation of the College's enhancement policies and strategies.

Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff

The College emphasises the interplay of practice-based research and scholarship and learning and teaching. Almost all academic staff are active in their field, engaging in creative work, consultancy or professional practice, which feeds directly into the educational experience of their students. Nine academic staff have PhDs, and 31 out of 51 staff report research and scholarship activity, including the production of research and scholarly publications and other academic outputs. The College's five research centres, promoted through the Theatre Futures website, provide the environment for research and scholarly

activity and collaboration, and offer research seminars, conferences and workshops. A recently developed research partnership with the University of East London enables staff to engage in research partnerships and research funding applications, in addition to providing research degree provision. All staff, academic, visiting and administrative, are able to apply for internal funding to support their research, scholarly activity, and vocational or professional practice. Through a full range of events, committees and discussions at programme, school and College levels, relevant staff have appropriate opportunities to engage in curriculum development and assessment design. External practitioners are widely involved in the delivery of programmes, ensuring that students and staff benefit from current industry expertise.

The environment supporting the delivery of higher education programmes

The development of policy and practice for learning and teaching is guided by the College's Enhancing Learning and Teaching Strategy, and there are well-developed mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of its learning and teaching activities. The Assessment Policy and Procedure and assessment guidance, which are also available in the Student Handbook, set out how students are assessed, including expectations and targets for assessment feedback. The College is aware of issues relating to the timeliness of assessment feedback and is taking appropriate steps to monitor and improve student experience in this regard. Students speak highly of the support they receive on academic matters, including assessment feedback, as part of their everyday learning experience. Student representatives make effective contributions to quality assurance through institutional, school and Programme Committees. Student feedback surveys are used effectively. There are pressures on space and the IT infrastructure, but these are being addressed appropriately at governance and senior management levels, and learning resources are generally adequate to support student learning. Sound policies and procedures are in place to deal with student appeals and complaints. Students are generally satisfied with the information they receive before and after entry to the College.

Privy Council's decision

The Privy Council's decision is to grant Rose Bruford College indefinite taught degree awarding powers from 31 January 2017.

Introduction

This report provides a summary of the work and findings of the scrutiny team (the team) appointed by QAA to review in detail the evidence submitted in support of an application for taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) by Rose Bruford College (the College).

The application was considered by QAA's Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP) in May 2015, when the Committee agreed to proceed to the detailed scrutiny of the application. The team appointed to conduct the detailed scrutiny comprised Professor Peter Bush, Professor Geoffrey Channon, Professor Kristyan Spelman Miller (scrutiny team members) and Ms Kathryn Powell (secretary). The detailed scrutiny was managed on behalf of QAA by Mr Alan Hunt, Assistant Director.

The detailed scrutiny began in June 2015, culminating in a report to ACDAP in November 2016. In the course of the scrutiny, the team read a wide range of documents presented in support of the application. The team also spoke to a range of stakeholders and observed meetings and events pertinent to the application.

Key information about Rose Bruford College

The College was opened in 1951 as Rose Bruford Training College for Speech and Drama. Its present full name is Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance. It was founded as a unique drama school whose curriculum would unify theatre practice and drama education, and aimed initially to train 'actors who could teach and teachers who could act'. It has subsequently added undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes in performance and technical arts, and creative industries more generally. The College's taught degrees have been awarded by the University of Manchester (the University) since 1995.

The College's mission, which retains Rose Bruford's pioneering philosophy and vision, is 'to contribute to, and shape, the theatre and performance arts and industries through education, training, research and industry engagement'. It aims to 'provide the highest quality undergraduate and postgraduate degree-level education that focuses on all aspects of theatre and performance. The College equips graduates with the attitudes, skills and knowledge to become leaders in their fields, shaping the future of the theatre, entertainment and allied arts and industries as well as research into theatrical theory and technical practice.'

The College's provision is organised in two schools: the School of Design, Management and Technical Arts; and the School of Performance. It offers the following awards validated by the University.

School of Design, Management and Technical Arts:

- BA (Hons) Costume Production
- BA (Hons) Creative Lighting Control
- BA (Hons) Lighting Design
- BA (Hons) Performance Sound
- BA (Hons) Scenic Arts
- BA (Hons) Stage Management
- BA (Hons) Theatre Design
- Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (Theatre and Performing Arts).

School of Performance:

- BA (Hons) Acting
- BA (Hons) Actor Musicianship
- BA (Hons) American Theatre Arts
- BA (Hons) European Theatre Arts
- BA (Hons) Opera Studies (Online Learning)
- BA (Hons) Theatre Studies (Online Learning)
- MA Ensemble Theatre
- MA Theatre for Young Audiences.

The College also offers two foundation programmes: an International Foundation Course in Theatre Craft, and an Acting Foundation Course.

The College had 789 registered students in 2015-16. Eighty-five per cent of these were from the UK, six per cent from other European Union countries, and nine per cent were classed as international.

The College has 51 full, part-time and associate academic staff, and 40 visiting tutors, with 53 administrative, and 12 technical and manual staff.

QAA carried out a Higher Education Review of the College in November 2014.² The review team's judgements were as follows.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisation 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.

² Higher Education Review: Rose Bruford College, November 2014, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10005523.

Detailed scrutiny against taught degree awarding powers criteria

A Governance and academic management

Criterion A1

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers is governed, managed and administered effectively, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. Its financial management is sound and a clear relationship exists between its financial policy and the safeguarding of the quality and standards of its higher education provision. In the case of an organisation that is not primarily a higher education institution, its principal activities are compatible with the provision of higher education programmes and awards.

Financial planning, quality assurance, and resource allocation policies are coherent and relate to the organisation's higher education mission, aims and objectives

1 The College's oversight of its current and future strategic plans is described in paragraphs 13-18. Its financial planning and monitoring, resource allocation policies, and quality assurance arrangements are driven by the College's mission and the key objectives of the current plan against which all new developments are assessed.

2 Operational oversight of financial matters rests with the Director of Finance (DoF), who, reporting directly to the Principal, is a member of the Senior Management Committee (SMC), and in attendance at the Board of Governors, Finance and General Purposes Committee (FGP) and Audit Committee (AC). The FGP advises the Board of Governors on finance, staffing and employment, estates usage, student recruitment, risk, and the design and execution of the Strategic Plan. The Board agreed in March 2016 to establish a Strategic Estates Committee (SEC), although the FGP retained responsibility for advising on estates expenditure monitoring and budget requirements, with financial oversight of new estates developments. The SEC met for the first time in June 2016. The FGP advises the Board on budget proposals, expenditure monitoring, short and medium term financial forecasts and overall financial strategy. The FGP largely discharges the Board's responsibilities for financial matters, although the latter receives the financial strategy, proposed budget and management accounts in full. The AC's membership is independent of FGP membership, although the DoF attends most meetings of the AC in an advisory capacity. The AC is responsible for appointing and monitoring the performance of the College's external and internal auditors, who attend AC meetings regularly, overseeing internal and external audit work, and reviewing arrangements for the management of risk. It prepares an annual report to the Board of Governors, advising it as to the reliability of internal risk management systems and the College's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The AC also receives reports from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) relevant to the College's business, and monitors the progress of the implementation of audit recommendations. The SMC's wide remit includes preparing for FGP annual and longer-term budget proposals in line with the College's Strategic Plan, sustainability and external factors.

3 The College, through the SMC and FGP, regularly reviews its financial performance and projections. While an external report commissioned by the College in 2010-11 noted that the College's financial surplus was in line with the higher education sector average, with relatively low borrowing levels, it noted that the infrastructure could be a sign of

weakness. The College had limited assets, with the main campus being on a long lease from the local authority. As a small specialist institution, it has limited on-campus expansion capacity. It acquired a substantial property nearby in 2013 and, with the support of a recently appointed Head of Development charged with developing income-generation activities, has recently developed an Estates Strategy on the instruction of the SEC. From a range of options, ESG's preferred proposal is to engage in an ongoing developing and refurbishment strategy, working as appropriate with the local authority in the possible development of additional accommodation. The SMC and FGP engage in detailed, commercially sensitive discussions on the development of the estate as an element in the development of the Strategic Plan 2017-20. The proactive and positive nature of the College's approach to financial planning is further illustrated by its reaction to HEFCE's decision to award only transitional institution-specific funding. Contingency strategies highlighted in the 2013-16 financial forecast included the development of new income streams; strenuous efforts to recruit to home/EU targets and to increase the numbers of international students; controlling pay costs and seeking further efficiency improvements; and the development of industry-sensitive new programmes in a post-TDAP era. The SMC considered these afresh in May 2016, particularly in light of HEFCE's decision to withdraw institution-specific funding, an outcome that the SMC viewed as an opportunity to expand targeted international partnership operations and to embed income-generating short courses based on its innovative summer 2016 programme.

4 In terms of financial control, the College follows the principles of clear definitions of responsibilities and delegated authority to budget holders, and medium and short-term budget planning processes. These are supported by detailed annual income, expenditure, capital and cash flow budgets, regular reviews of key performance indicators and business risks (see paragraphs 47-49). There are formalised requirements for the approval and control of expenditure, comprehensive financial regulations and controls, and a professional internal audit team linked to the AC and Board of Governors, which additionally offers financial and risk training opportunities to staff.

5 The annual budget setting process commences normally in the spring on notification from HEFCE of provisional grants for the financial year commencing the following August. The current resource allocation model is based on taught hours per programme per student group, which is readily understood by programme directors. The heads of school and DoF are reviewing the detail of the model to develop it further. Although the model has been refined to take account of space requirements, its further development has been put on hold pending the outcome of implementation decisions following agreement of the College's estates strategy. Resources are allocated according to academic and space priorities, as determined by the SMC in light of the Strategic Plan's objectives following submissions from budget holders to the DoF. Estates priorities of the current financial strategy were the building of student accommodation at nearby Christopher Court, which opened in January 2016, internal refurbishment in Lamorbey House, refurbishment of the Barn Theatre, and achieving the maximum use of existing accommodation and land. Following further consultation with budget holders, the SMC's final version of the full College budget is submitted to the FGP for formal approval by the Board. Budget holders are advised of preliminary allocations in mid-July and, subject to student number achievements in the autumn and any further revisions determined by the SMC, receive final allocations in November.

6 Observing SMC meetings, the scrutiny team noted its strategic role in considering revisions to the Strategic Plan, capital investment, estates strategies, staffing restructuring and the financial sustainability of the College. It is suitably strategic in that it is the main driver of the revisions to the Strategic Plan (incorporating input from the Board of Governors and subcommittee meetings), dealing with capital investment strategy and estates strategies. It prepares proposals for the FGP and Board of Governors, responds to their

comments and requests, and takes account of resource observations made at the Academic Board. The scrutiny team further noted the careful consideration given to the SMC proposals at both the FGP and Board of Governors, and the detailed questioning of the Principal and the DoF on all financial matters presented for their consideration. Additionally, the AC, with the College's internal and external auditors in attendance, gives further, full scrutiny to the financial monitoring and forecasts.

7 The College's quality assurance arrangements are discussed in paragraphs 50-53, and at greater length in Section B. In line with the 2013-16 Strategic Plan, these are designed to comply with the requirements of the collaborative agreement with the University, including agreed delegated areas of authority to the College's Academic Board, and to prepare the College for responsibilities if it were to be granted TDAP. With regard to the latter, the Transitional Working Party oversees the development of quality assurance arrangements, which either mirror or amend the current operating processes (paragraphs 54-55).

8 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 1-7, the scrutiny team concludes that the College's financial planning, quality assurance, and resource allocation policies are coherent and relate to its higher education mission, aims and objectives.

Higher education activities take full account of relevant legislation, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and associated guidance

9 The Secretary/Registrar advises the Board of Governors and SMC on regulatory and legal matters such as ensuring the College retains highly trusted status and remains compliant with immigration, freedom of information and data protection requirements. The College has devoted particular attention recently to developing its response, via the Academic Board, and following discussions within school boards, to the Government's Prevent Agenda and the guidance from the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). The Board reviewed progress in this area and agreed to provide appropriate training for members on the Prevent Agenda. The Health and Safety Committee, which reports direct to the SMC and is chaired by the Facilities Manager, oversees the College's Health and Safety Policy, which outlines the responsibilities of committees and individuals. The Equality and Diversity Committee, which includes two independent Governors, reports to the SMC, and also to the Academic Board and Learning, Quality and Standards Committee (LQSC), acting as a forum to consider equal opportunities and disability issues relating to the College, its staff and students. It is tasked to review and refine equal opportunities and disability procedures, guidelines, codes of practice and 'make recommendations for changes based on operational experience and to ensure compliance with current legislation'. The Academic Board receives the full minutes of the Equality and Diversity Committee, together with a report from the Committee Chair. The College's statutory online staff training programmes cover health and safety, equality and diversity, data protection and anti-bribery.

10 The scrutiny team noted that the SMC and Academic Board monitor developments in the higher education sector, participate in sector-wide consultations, note legislative changes, and takes seriously sector-wide briefings from HEFCE, QAA, the Higher Education Academy (HEA), GuildHE, UK Visas and Immigration, and the Universities and Colleges Employers Association. Information is disseminated as appropriate to the Board of Governors and relevant subcommittees, and to school boards through the heads of school. The Head of Quality, through the Vice-Principal, has responsibility for alerting the SMC and the College more generally to developments in the quality agenda, particularly in relation to the Quality Code. The Quality Office conducts regular reviews of its mapping against the Quality Code, and the 2014 QAA Higher Education Review (HER) report confirmed that the College's quality assurance processes are informed by the Quality Code, the mapping of which is regularly monitored by the LQSC (see also paragraphs 70-74). The team observed

detailed discussions at the AC, LQSC and Academic Board on the 2015 QAA master's degree characteristics and doctoral degree characteristics statements, and on the *Dance, Drama and Performance Subject Benchmark Statement*. The revised Subject Benchmark Statement was remitted to the relevant head of school for discussion with programme directors, and was also discussed by the Theatre Studies Programme Committee. Programme approval and review documentation, observations at programme approval events, and meetings with academic staff demonstrated the College's awareness and application of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and relevant qualification and Subject Benchmark Statements, as noted in the 2014 HER report, in addition to, more generally, a comprehensive understanding of the issues relating to course approval and review.

11 The scrutiny team's observations of meetings of the College's SMC, Board of Governors, FGP, and AC reflected a thorough understanding of the English higher education environment and related legislation; the policies, requirements and working of HEFCE; and appropriate higher education reference points, including the Quality Code. The SMC was particularly conscious of the funding policies of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and HEFCE, and their related financial consequences, and reviewed options for sustaining financial stability, especially in light of previous years' recruitment and retention patterns, HEFCE's own financial forecasts, and the consequences of HEFCE's decision on institution-specific funding. The Board is additionally informed on sector-wide higher education issues through the engagement of its Chair and other senior members in discussions with external organisations, and through the Principal's oral and written reports. In terms of its own practice, the Board of Governors is advised by its Governance Committee of issues arising from the revised Committee of University Chairs' Higher Education Code of Governance, and is currently reviewing options to satisfy itself that it has appropriate oversight of academic issues.

12 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 9-11, the scrutiny team concludes that the College's higher education activities take full account of relevant legislation, the Quality Code, and associated guidance.

Higher education mission and associated policies and systems are understood and applied consistently both by those connected with the delivery of the organisation's higher education programmes and, where appropriate, by students

13 The College's 2013-16 Strategic Plan, 'A Sustainable Future', approved on the recommendation of the Academic Board by the Board of Governors in July 2013, clearly articulates the College's mission, its overall aims of securing stability as a higher education institution (HEI) with measured growth, and achieving TDAP. The Strategic Plan was developed following a full consultation process involving Governors, staff, students, HEFCE, BIS, industry, finance experts, mission groups and consultants. The Academic Board considered an implementation plan in 2014 that identified a number of key performance indicators established to measure performance against the College's five objectives relating to the mission, distinctiveness, management goals, and development and growth of the College, and its aim of achieving TDAP.

14 The plan is reviewed and monitored regularly by the Board of Governors, Academic Board and SMC, and is used to judge proposals for new activities. For example, school boards and the Academic Development Committee measure new programme proposals against the objectives of the plan, and personal progress and development reviews (PPDRs) are framed around it, with the Staff Development Committee assessing proposals for staff development funding bids against the plan's objectives. In addition to receiving, discussing and monitoring School Plans, the Academic Board receives annual operating plans from the Learning Resources Centre (LRC), the Registry, recruitment and

admissions, and other central services, which relate specifically to the 'management' objective of the Strategic Plan.

15 The scrutiny team met groups of students and staff who were clearly aware of the main elements of the current Strategic Plan and that existing and new activities would be judged against the priorities it articulates. They acknowledged that the plan was framed around the key objective of a successful outcome to the TDAP application (about which they were well informed and strongly supportive) and that all new developments were judged against the Plan's objectives. The team observed that operational policies that underpin the Strategic Plan and the College's quality standards and enhancement arrangements were applied consistently at all levels in accordance with the Handbook of Academic Policies and Procedures (HAPP) and the Committee Handbook.

16 Students are represented at the Board of Governors and Academic Board and its subcommittees, school boards, and Programme Committees, with the College and the Students' Union working in partnership to maintain strong and effective representation at these forums. Students are encouraged to contribute to discussions, and play key roles in the deliberative processes, especially at the Programme Committees, the Student Experience Committee, the LQSC, and at the Academic Board, each of which has a designated student matters agenda item.

17 The College is currently nearing the completion of a new Strategic Plan for 2017-22. In principle, approval is to be sought from the Board of Governors in autumn 2016 and formal approval in November 2016, for implementation, as planned, from January 2017. Detailed discussions have been held with students, staff and Governors in a variety of forums, and were continued at a Governors' Away Day in June 2016 and at the Academic Board in the same month. Governors considered a partial draft at the July meeting and, following detailed discussion, required a more robust version for its September 2016 meeting, with a small group of Governors assisting the SMC in the final drafting. A further round of consultations with students and staff is planned for the early autumn 2016, with the expectation that discussion is likely to focus on matters of detail, the broad steer of the future strategy having already been agreed in outline. The underlying mission of the College remains unchanged, with emphases on curriculum review, international partnerships and estates development being central to the new plan.

18 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 13-17, the scrutiny team concludes that the College's higher education mission and associated policies and systems are understood and applied consistently, both by those connected with the delivery of the organisation's higher education programmes and, where appropriate, by students.

There is a clarity of function and responsibility at all levels in the organisation in relation to its governance structures and systems for managing its higher education provision

19 There are three interrelated governance and management systems in the College: the Board of Governors and its subcommittees, the 'management stem', and the 'academic stem'. The terms of reference of the individual committee components of each of these are clearly and comprehensively recorded and easily accessible in the Committee Handbook, which records dates of the last review of the terms of reference and membership of each committee. The Committee Handbook also contains a particularly useful diagrammatic digest of the roles of all its committees.

20 The Articles of Association determine the composition, periods of office and roles of Governors and the governing body corporate, including arrangements for the appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair. The prime duties of the Board of Governors are the determination of the educational character and oversight of the College; oversight of the effective and efficient

use of resources; solvency and safeguarding of the College; annual estimates of income and expenditure; appointment, pay and conditions of senior staff (defined as the Principal, Vice-Principal, secretary and other post holders determined by the Board); and the arrangements for the grading, pay and appointment of other staff. The Board, which currently comprises 18 members, including the Principal, two staff and two student members, undertook a self-evaluation in 2013 and sought to increase its expertise through a proactive search for new members, with seven new Governors, a number of whom have senior level higher education experience, joining in spring 2014, the current Chair being appointed following a national search in mid-2015. The Board has established a number of subcommittees: the FGP, AC, Remuneration Committee, the Governance Committee, and the Fellowship and Awards Committee. On the recommendation of the Governance Committee the Board of Governors established the SEC (paragraph 3) in March 2016, although it retained the 'working group' status of the Development Group.

21 The SMC, which is chaired by and advisory to the Principal, additionally comprises the Vice-Principal, the Secretary/Registrar (who is additionally Clerk to the Board), the DoF and the two heads of school. The SMC is at the apex of the management stem, with overall responsibility for operational management, planning, institutional monitoring and resource allocation. Through the Principal, the SMC advises the Board and its subcommittees on all matters within its remit and is in turn advised by the Health and Safety Committee, the Equality and Diversity Committee, the Environment and Sustainability, Staff Development and the Marketing, Communications and Student Recruitment Committee, with relevant officers attending the SMC as appropriate. The SMC routinely receives and considers detailed information on student recruitment, budgets, estates, quality issues, student satisfaction and the outcome of staff surveys; staff with responsibilities in these areas attend the SMC for discussion on relevant agenda items. The SMC additionally receives operating templates from service heads who are required to complete annual summaries of progress against the previous year's objectives with proposals for future enhancements.

22 The Articles of Association lay out the requirement for, role and composition of the Academic Board, chaired by the Principal, with a membership agreed by the Board. The Academic Board is the 'senior academic committee' of the College and, with a membership of senior staff, six elected staff and two students, advises 'the Principal and the Board on a range of matters relating to the academic activities of the College'. The key academic subcommittees reporting to it are the Academic Development Committee, the LQSC, the Student Experience Committee, the Research Committee, and the two school boards. Also reporting to the Academic Board are the Examination Boards, the Mitigating Circumstances Committee, the Examinations Appeals Board, and the Bursaries and Student Support Committee. The purpose, reporting lines, terms of reference and composition of all the committees are clearly laid out in the Committee Handbook. In turn, Programme Committees, established as forums for the discussion, effective delivery and monitoring of the programme, report to one of the two school boards, which advise the Head of School and report to the AC and LQSC on learning, teaching and scholarship, and assuring and enhancing the quality of the school's programmes.

23 The management and academic stems are linked through the membership of the Principal, Vice-Principal, Secretary/Registrar, and the two heads of school as members of both the SMC and Academic Board. The heads of school have clear management reporting lines to the Principal and SMC, and responsibility to the Academic Board, directly and through its main academic subcommittees (see paragraph 22), for the planning, delivery and support of programmes. There is consistency in the management structures of the two schools, with programme directors reporting to the appropriate Head of School, who is a member of the SMC; Module Year Coordinators report to the relevant programme director, processes that were well understood at Programme Committees.

24 The team observed a number of meetings of the Board of Governors and its FGP, AC, and Governance Committee subcommittees. Each meeting was very professionally chaired, with the Chair having a comprehensive grasp of the agenda and background to the items discussed; these were presented via carefully structured papers, mostly circulated to members in good time. The meetings were professionally clerked and minutes were accurate and comprehensive. Meeting agendas reflected the wide range of terms of references of these committees, and the minutes comprehensively recorded agreements on actions, which were closely monitored at subsequent meetings until individual actions had been completed. The general atmosphere of the meetings was professional and collegial and decisions were reached through consensus. Independent members and students contributed significantly to discussions, with the Chair encouraging contributions from students and elected staff members. The Principal and SMC colleagues, particularly the Vice-Principal and DoF, introduced appropriate papers and were challenged by the Board on both strategy and detail. Committees regularly questioned executive summaries and often sought more information on performance measures and targets, taking seriously the various reports and observations made by the College's auditors. The Board of Governors both held the executive to account and clearly appreciated the distinction between governance and management, while SMC members were aware of their roles in reporting to and advising the Board of Governors and its subcommittees. Governors undertook a full-scale review of their operations, discussing in depth the outcomes of a detailed survey of members' views. The Governance Committee acted scrupulously and timeously in advising the Board on its membership and that of its committees, and on upcoming vacancies. The Secretary/Registrar was clearly aware of a potential conflict of interest in the dual role of Clerk to the Governors and College Registrar, an awareness shared by the Chair of Governors and the Principal, but the scrutiny team concluded that the arrangement was effective and all parties were aware of the boundaries required.

25 The team noted similarly effective chairing at academic committees: knowledgeable, widely informed on most issues, participatory and inclusive, although rather more relaxed and understated than at the Board committees. The agendas of the academic stem committees reflected their particular terms of reference, and, as with the governing body subcommittees, the comprehensive minutes recorded agreed action points with identified responsibilities, which were tracked at subsequent meetings. Agenda management was facilitated by the inclusion of 'starred items' for information only, although any of these items could be discussed following a request from a committee member. The minutes of Academic Board subcommittees, including school boards, were presented at the Board for information, together with a summary report from the relevant chair. These minutes and the reports from the relevant Chair confirmed the very detailed consideration of items by the relevant Academic Board subcommittees observed by the scrutiny team. The chairs of the Academic Board and its subcommittees ensured that student members had every opportunity to contribute to discussions, a key feature of the Academic Board, LQSC, Student Experience Committee and school boards being a 'student issues' item near the beginning of each agenda. Indeed, the Programme Committees, with the key role of monitoring programmes and considering action plans, were led largely through student input under the guidance of the Chair. All committees considered their terms of reference and membership at the first meeting of the academic session and reviewed their performance annually.

26 The SMC reflected its executive role, in contrast to the Board of Governors and Academic Board committees observed by the team. The SMC operated at both strategic and detailed levels, and functioned in chief officer, rather than committee, mode. Discussions were comprehensive and members, together with attendees for specific items, contributed significantly to areas for which they did not have lead responsibility matters, particularly risk, resources and quality issues. The SMC was clearly aware of the levels of

delegation it received from the Board, and took careful note of Academic Board decisions. It was informed by recommendations from the Academic Development Committee in terms of resource requirements and possible priorities resulting from its consideration of new programme proposals.

27 Staff and students whom the scrutiny team met were generally well aware of the College's governance structures and systems, and felt these generally worked well. Staff were also familiar with the various roles of staff in the IT, quality assurance and enhancement, learner support and human resources functions and knew where to seek guidance as necessary from these sources.

28 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 19-27, the scrutiny team concludes that there is clarity of function and responsibility at all levels of the College in relation to its governance structures and systems for managing its higher education provision.

There is depth and strength of academic leadership across the whole of the organisation's higher education provision

29 The College has a full complement of 51 academic staff (44 full-time equivalent) teaching on higher education provision; 42 of the 51 staff are located within the two academic schools. Within the SMC (see paragraph 21) are the Principal, appointed in 2009, who is the Chief Executive Officer and, as the senior academic, is Chair of the Academic Board; the Vice-Principal, with key responsibilities for the oversight of the academic activities of the College, line managing senior academic roles, and with oversight of TDAP process; and the heads of school, who are responsible for the academic activities within their school and for the line management of the programme directors. The Secretary/Registrar and the DoF are also SMC members and offer considerable experience in higher education management issues in terms of governance, legislative issues and higher education finance. Four members of the SMC have previously held senior management posts in universities that have TDAP. The Vice-Principal has, through the Director of Learning, Teaching and Curriculum Development, the Academic Enhancement Manager (who is Clerk to the Academic Board), the Director of Research, and the Head of Quality, strategic and leadership responsibility for the development and enhancing of learning and teaching, research and scholarship, and quality assurance. There is considerable experience within the four academic members of SMC, three of whom have doctorates, have published, are members of the relevant professional bodies, have been involved in external examining, are mostly involved in professional practice, and are HEA Fellows.

30 The two heads of school report to the Vice-Principal and have leadership responsibilities for the academic programmes and staff in their school, and in establishing, through the Academic Board following strategic agreement at SMC, an integrated vision of the academic offering of the College. These heads provide leadership in academic and artistic matters, are key budget holders and planners, and oversee the adequacy of resources in the schools. As chairs of the school boards they act as a key quality assurance link between Programme Committees and the LQSC and report direct to the Academic Board.

31 There is a clear strength of academic leadership within the SMC. Agendas are wide ranging, involving strategic, resourcing and financial issues as well as setting academic priorities in terms of both curriculum and programme needs. Considerable professional and academic expertise informs detailed and well-informed discussions, and the SMC engages fully with key areas of debate within the higher education sector, advising the Academic Board and its academic subcommittees on such matters.

32 Programme directors are responsible for providing direction and leadership to academic staff and students on named programmes. With colleagues, they oversee and are involved with the development of innovative and relevant learning, teaching and assessment, and encourage curriculum development, research, consultancy and collaborative activities within and beyond the College. They are, in effect, the custodian of their programme, ensuring that it reflects College and school strategies, is well managed and is responsive to both student and industry aspirations. Programme directors oversee the appointment and contributions of part-time staff, and are invariably the first contact point with students. Their role is especially pivotal given the significant number of teaching staff on part-time and fractional contracts. While the College has extremely positive relationships with its students, and student contributions are invited and welcomed at the Academic Board and its main academic subcommittees (for example, the Academic Development Committee and LQSC) student inputs form a significant element of the business conducted at Programme Committees, chaired by programme directors. Up to six students (two representatives from each level) attend Programme Committees; early agenda items request contributions from each level representatives and the students lead the spring meetings when the actions resulting from the previous year's monitoring report are tracked and discussed, with written inputs from students on each module. Programme directors, supported in some cases by Module Year Coordinators, are clearly the link between students and staff at this level and need to balance effectively their role of chairs of these committees, with their academic leadership, curriculum manager and usually personal/academic tutor.

33 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 29-32, the scrutiny team concludes that there is depth and strength of academic leadership across the whole of the College's higher education provision.

The organisation develops, implements and communicates its academic policies and systems in collaboration with those responsible for the delivery of its higher education programmes, and with relevant stakeholders

34 This report has already discussed (paragraphs 13-18) how the College's mission, policies and systems are understood and operated by those delivering its programmes and by its students. This section explores how the College, with the University as appropriate, develops, implements and communicates these internally and to external stakeholders.

35 The College notes that while academic policy is driven by a wide variety of institutional and external factors, not least responses to the financial educational environment in which it operates, significant factors in recent years have been the requirements of the University and the application of the Quality Code. Academic policies are determined by the Academic Board, operating within the current agreement with the University, which requires the College to meet the requirements of the University, to ensure alignment with relevant external reference points, and to involve staff at all levels in the management and maintenance of academic standards. The College specifically operates the quality assurance and enhancement processes that relate to programme approval and modification; periodic review and annual monitoring of programmes; external examiner nomination and reporting's Programme Committees; student surveys; and arrangements for and chairing of Examination Boards.

36 School and programme staff representatives, student representatives and senior professional service delivery staff, in addition to the Head of Quality and most members of the SMC, including the heads of school, are members of the Academic Board and its main academic subcommittees, namely the Academic Development Committee, LQSC, Research Committee and Student Experience Committee, and are very much party to the development and approval of its academic policies and systems. Programme directors, reporting to the

heads of school, are responsible for ensuring that their programmes reflect College strategy, approaches to learning, teaching, assessment and innovation, and for ensuring that part-time and fractional staff are appropriately briefed regarding both their teaching roles and relevant College procedures. Communication with students is initially at induction, through student membership of key committees, and especially at Programme Committees, which include within their membership normally two students from each level of the programme. Students contribute significantly to the monitoring of programmes and refer to their student colleagues matters of information arising at the committees.

37 The main routes through which staff as a whole are made aware of the College's policies and systems are through the HAPP, staff development activities, and briefings from heads of school and programme directors. The HAPP, an e-handbook with downloadable PDF versions of most of its content, is revised annually. In summary, it contains: the academic regulations; detailed arrangements for programme development, annual monitoring and periodic review; the learning and teaching strategy and student support and guidance; student retention; employability strategies; placement arrangements; assessment arrangements; and external examining. Staff whom the scrutiny team met appeared well aware of the College's academic policies and systems and felt able to consult with colleagues in the Quality Office if more information was required. Staff reported the valuable role of the school board in communication and explaining College policies and systems, and noted that informal communication among the relatively small staff complement itself contributed to the effective dissemination of these. Staff also confirmed the benefit of staff development programmes, particularly those relating to quality assurance and enhancement and the use of external reference points.

38 Nevertheless, in February 2016, the Academic Board sought to enhance the consistency of its communications with students and staff by approving a revised dissemination policy whereby all new/revised policies and processes would be communicated to students via email and to programme directors through heads of school for further dissemination to programme staff. They would appear formally on the agenda of school boards and loaded onto the College's Document Resource and Information System (DoRIS) by the Quality Office. The Board of Governors recently discussed a strategy for enhancing communications within the College, including a review of the recently established Issues Management Group, and taking account of periodic staff surveys, the outcomes of which are analysed at SMC, and the introduction of a student and staff suggestion box.

39 The College has close links with those in the relevant industries and professional practice, a number of whom are employed on fractional contracts. Employers whom the scrutiny team met, some of whom had also been involved in the professional accreditation of programmes, confirmed their close involvement with the programme team and students, their appreciation of the College's mission and objectives, and their understanding of the programmes with which they were involved.

40 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 34-39, the scrutiny team concludes that the College develops, implements and communicates its academic policies and systems in collaboration with those responsible for the delivery of its higher education programmes, and with relevant stakeholders.

Academic policies, systems and activities are monitored and reviewed, and appropriate and timely action is taken when deficiencies are identified

41 Academic policies are determined by the Academic Board, operating within the current agreement with the University, which requires the College to meet the requirements of the University, to ensure alignment with relevant external reference points, and to involve staff at all levels in the management and maintenance of academic standards. The College

specifically operates the quality assurance and enhancement processes that relate to: programme approval and modification; periodic review and annual monitoring of programmes; external examiner nomination and reporting; Programme Committees; student surveys; and arrangements for and chairing of Examination Boards. The advent of the Quality Code, and external organisations such as Drama UK, GuildHE, HEA, HEFCE and JISC has led to internal longitudinal benchmarking exercises, which have in turn influenced academic policy and systems.

42 The College reviews academic policies, systems and activities as part of its broad approach to enhancement. Reviews of academic policies are scheduled to take place as part of the work of the relevant committee, with review dates routinely identified at the point of policy approval, although factors listed in paragraphs 13-17 may lead to an earlier review. The roles of the Head of Quality, the Academic Enhancement Manager, the annual programme monitoring process, and the College's committees, especially the LQSC, are central to policy and process review, and to enhancement of the curriculum and of learning and teaching.

43 Committee terms of reference and composition are presented for discussion at their first meetings of an academic year. The team noted, for example, the reporting of changes to the membership of the Academic Board and procedural enhancements to LQSC business. In considering the appropriateness of its committee structures ahead of its TDAP submission, the College introduced an Academic Development Committee in September 2013 and a Student Experience Committee in September 2014, having concluded that the volume of business of the then LQSC was too large. The College took the view that programme development should be considered separately from quality assurance issues and that student matters, although continuing to be considered understanding agenda items at all academic committees, warranted a specialist forum. The Committee Handbook is reviewed annually, the 2016-17 version updating the details in the version submitted with the CSA.

44 The HAPP includes current versions of policies, procedures, flowcharts and relevant appendices. The 'document control box' at the end of each entry lists the policy owner, lead contact, approving body and implementation date, and the dates of the previous and next scheduled policy review. The team noted the consideration of revised policies and procedures at the Academic Board in February 2016 on mitigating circumstances, student attendance and external speakers, as well as revised draft academic regulations for use in a post-TDAP environment. As an element of the College's review of enhancement activities in 2014-15, the LQSC received in the autumn of 2015 a comprehensive report on new and revised policies prepared by the Director of Learning, Teaching and Curriculum Development, the Student Services Manager and the Academic Enhancement Manager.

45 The College's processes for the approval, monitoring and review of programmes are discussed in paragraphs 77-82.

46 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 41-15, the scrutiny team concludes that the College's academic policies, systems and activities are monitored and reviewed, and appropriate and timely action is taken when deficiencies are identified.

Academic risk and change management strategies are effective

47 The College maintains a detailed risk register, which relates directly to the key components of the 2013-16 Strategic Plan and which is monitored regularly by the SMC and AC, and is presented to the Academic Board. Formally known as the Strategic Risk Report (SRR), the purpose of the risk register is to provide a comprehensive method for the effective and focused management of the principal risks to achieving the College's strategic objectives, as well as providing the basis for the preparation of a fair and representative

annual governance statement. The SRR adopts a risk scoring methodology based on a five-point impact scale from 'insignificant' to 'critical' assessed on another five-point likelihood scale from 'rare' to 'almost certain'. It was thoroughly revised in 2014, and presents a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the key risks associated with the delivery of each of the College five strategic aims (mission, distinctiveness, management goals, development and growth, and successful application for TDAP) articulated in the 2013-16 Strategic Plan. The SRR, running to some 20 pages, identifies in chart form the description of each risk, the risk owner or responsible committee, cause and effects, the risk score (as described above), mitigation, assurance/evidence, the refined residual risk score and planned action and progress. It colour codes the levels of risk, red clearly showing the major risks. In February 2016, for example, the SRR identified student employability levels falling below those of competitor institutions as presenting the most serious risk. It suggested possible causes and likely effects, mitigations or controls, further evidence, planned actions and a progress report. The Risk Register was further updated in July 2016 in light of significant risks following the withdrawal of HEFCE's institution-specific funding and the outcome of the EU Referendum. The scrutiny team was advised that the College would, in autumn 2016, be constructing a new Risk Register mapping the risks associated with each of the key aims articulated in the new Strategic Plan.

48 The Risk Register, which is maintained and updated by the Vice-Principal, is considered and monitored by the SMC and Board, through the AC, and is regularly updated. Discussions at the SMC and AC demonstrated a very clear understanding of the methodology adopted, and detailed consideration of the actions planned and taken. The Register discussed in the spring 2016 meetings reflected quarterly amendments in 2015 and additional revisions in December 2015 and January 2016. More local risks are considered at the programme level through the annual monitoring process, with proposed mitigation activities, and then reported to school boards and to the Academic Board. Programme committees, at their autumn meetings, consider an annual monitoring report, external examiner reports, student comments, enhancement, good practice, marketing and student placements, and identify action points to rectify or enhance issues raised; the report also contains an action plan agreed at the previous spring meeting and a clear indication of progress.

49 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 47-48, the scrutiny team concludes that the College's academic risk and change management strategies are effective.

Robust mechanisms are in place to ensure that the academic standards of the organisation's higher education awards are not put at risk

50 The College's arrangements to ensure that academic standards are not placed at risk are based on robust systems for the design, approval, monitoring and review of programmes, within broad guidelines required by the University, which the College has adapted, under delegation, to meet its own needs. The programmes operate within an appropriate academic and regulatory framework, which incorporates arrangements for the admission, assessment and progression of students, with robust and externally monitored assessment processes to secure the standards of the University's awards.

51 The College's validation partnership with the University has been in place since 1995 and is governed by a formal agreement, which was last renewed in 2013. The outcomes of this review reflected an earlier decision that year whereby the University agreed that the College could undertake its own programme periodic programme review processes with University representation on the review panels. The 2009 QAA Institutional Audit Report noted the 'measure of devolved responsibility' granted by the University to the College, while the 2014 QAA HER reported that the College 'articulates its responsibilities

effectively using thorough recording and review mechanisms' with staff aware of the College's responsibilities and willing 'to take ownership and develop' its 'evaluative procedures where possible'. The College's quality assurance arrangements for a post-TDAP environment build closely on its current University-approved processes, developed in light of experience particularly with regard to pre-validation procedures, programme modification approval processes, external examiner nomination processes, and annual monitoring procedures (see also paragraphs 52 and 79-88).

52 These arrangements are comprehensively explained in the College's Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Overview, other sections of the HAPP, and the Committee Handbook. The policies and processes for validation, annual review and periodic review, although subject ultimately to continuing approval by the University, are kept under review by the LQSC, which advises the Academic Board on their continuing appropriateness. The College operates comprehensive arrangements, approved by the University, for the nomination and deployment of external examiners, and for responding to and acting upon external examiners' reports. Staff whom the scrutiny team met appeared fully aware of the College's quality assurance arrangements, and cited the additional support readily available from the professionally staffed Quality Office, reporting directly to the Vice-Principal, which has operational oversight of the arrangements and their implementation by programme teams, schools and the College.

53 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 50-52, the scrutiny team concludes that robust mechanisms are in place to ensure that the academic standards of the College's higher education awards are not put at risk.

The organisation has the capability of managing successfully the additional responsibilities vested in it were taught degree awarding powers granted

54 On the advice of the Board of Governors, the College established a TDAP working party (which became the TDAP Steering Group) chaired by the Vice-Principal and including the Chair of the Board and an external consultant, in spring 2013 to assess its readiness for a TDAP application. This in turn established four working groups, each covering one of the four TDAP criteria. The outcome was a composite TDAP report to the Academic Board in October 2013 on which basis the Board agreed that the College should proceed with its application. The College's internal auditors concluded a commissioned report in autumn 2014 confirming that the College had 'undertaken sufficient groundwork' to develop the CSA, which was submitted in 2015. The scrutiny team met various groups of Governors, teaching and support staff, students, and employers, as well as SMC members, all of whom confirmed that there had been wide consultation and detailed explanations of TDAP during the preparation of the case. They were all extremely supportive of the application on the basis of the College's reputation with the industry and employers, the greater curriculum flexibility afforded by TDAP, and their belief in the College's ability to implement and manage those powers effectively. University representatives endorsed these views and confirmed that the University had delegated more authority to the College in recent years in light of the College's ability to manage key quality assurance processes and to provide it with greater experience in its preparation for TDAP. This view was endorsed in the 2014 HER report. The positive reports from external examiners provided the College with additional confidence. The College received a letter from the President and Vice-Chancellor of the University fully supporting the College's intention to seek a grant of TDAP.

55 The College produced an initial TDAP action plan in the autumn of 2013. This has been monitored, revised and implemented as necessary since then through the oversight of the TDAP Steering Group, reporting to the SMC and Academic Board through the LQSC, and the Board of Governors. Staff and students continue to be regularly informed of progress through these routes, and through posters, staff development activities, the Student

Experience Committee, Programme Committees, and regular communications from the Principal. The TDAP Steering Group has continued to meet monthly, reporting progress on the scrutiny process to the Board of Governors, SMC, Academic Board and LQSC. However, the Group additionally meets as a separate TDAP Transitional Working Party, charged with considering all College processes and procedures and to recommend any changes to these to ensure the College has the capability of managing successfully the additional requirements vested in it if TDAP were granted.

56 These groups are chaired by the Vice-Principal and include a member of the Board of Governors, the Academic Enhancement Manager, the Head of Quality, the Senior Programme Administrator, the Student Services Manager, the Marketing Manager and members of the SMC. The Transitional Working Party took as its starting point and guide the College's draft migration framework, has monitored this and commissioned amendments to the framework, and the drafting of amended/new College policies and procedures as necessary. For example, in February 2016 the Academic Board approved, on the advice of the LQSC, draft Transitional Academic Regulations, post-TDAP Academic Regulations, new Programme Approval documentation (NPP1 and NPP2), and policies on programme modifications, suspension and withdrawal.

57 The College has produced a detailed TDAP Migration Strategy, which outlines the differences between the University and proposed RDC arrangements relating to academic regulations; accreditation of prior experiential learning; programme approval, review, amendments and monitoring; approval and deployment of external examiners; student registrations; assessment and Examination Boards; appeals and complaints procedures; the awarding of qualifications; marketing arrangements; and collaborative activities. There are clearly allocated responsibilities for the implementation of TDAP-consequent changes, and two clearly defined timelines reflecting different dates for the award of TDAP. Should the TDAP application be successful, the College aims to exercise its new powers responsibly, confining its activities to the sphere of theatre and performing arts. It intends to exercise these responsibilities immediately, conferring awards on the first students graduating after the successful award of TDAP, subject to the agreement of each student individually. The College has no immediate plans to enter into validating or franchising arrangements, although it has developed a collaboration handbook for adoption in the quality assurance of any academic organisation with which it is and could be working in the future. The College noted that it had already provided adequate resources to strengthen key functions in the Quality Office and Registry. Senior staff and Governors confirmed that the College's committee structure continues to be appropriate for a post-TDAP environment, although the Board of Governors is considering how best it might effectively carry out its increased role for oversight of academic activities in light of likely governance developments in higher education in England.

58 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 54-57, the scrutiny team concludes that the College has the capability of managing successfully the additional responsibilities vested in it were taught degree awarding powers granted.

B Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers has in place an appropriate regulatory framework to govern the award of its higher education qualifications.

The regulatory framework governing the organisation's higher education provision (covering, for example, student admissions, progress, assessment, appeals and complaints) is appropriate to its current status and is implemented fully and consistently

59 Under the College's long-standing relationship with the University of Manchester, the University has the final authority and responsibility for setting and maintaining academic standards, and conferring academic awards, which it discharges through a comprehensive set of regulations for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes, with faculty adaptations. The College reports to the University's School of Arts, Languages and Culture, and also to the School of Environment, Education and Development in respect of the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGCLTHE). The College's quality assurance arrangements, and their relationship to the requirements of the University, are discussed in paragraphs 50-53.

60 While the College is subject to the University's regulatory framework, it has a degree of delegated autonomy for managing its own academic standards and quality and enhancement of provision, which it discharges through the Academic Board and its subcommittees. The College undertakes programme approval and modification; periodic review; annual review of programmes; annual monitoring and evaluation; programme modification; external examiner nomination and reporting; and the chairing of boards of examiners.

61 The approach of the College to regulation is monitored by the University through its course approval and periodic review processes, as well as annual monitoring reports and the nomination, for University approval, of external examiners. The University representatives, whom the team met, advised that the regulatory framework is implemented fully, consistently and with professional rigour.

62 The College has in place its own committee structure (paragraphs 22, 25 and 43). This has been reviewed and modified to enhance its effectiveness. Two comparatively recent innovations are of particular note. The Academic Development Committee was set up in September 2013 to focus on strategic academic matters, including the introduction of new courses. The Student Experience Committee was established in September 2014 to address a perceived gap in the deliberative arrangements; that is, capturing the student experience beyond the immediate learning and teaching environment (paragraph 43). The College has experience of academic appeals procedures and also has its own complaints procedure (paragraphs 202-205).

63 The scrutiny team endorsed the very positive findings in the 2014 QAA HER report about effectiveness, rigour, ownership, and a willingness to develop further the College's own evaluative procedures 'where possible'.

64 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 59-63, the scrutiny team concludes that the College's regulatory framework governing its higher education provision is appropriate to its current status and is implemented fully and consistently.

A regulatory framework appropriate for the granting of the organisation's own higher education awards is in prospect

65 The College's relationship with the University is described as a mature one, in which the College, as noted above, has a measure of devolved responsibility. The team learned that the College's experience of preparing for and operating these delegated responsibilities is central to its confidence about its readiness for TDAP. This confidence is shared by the University.

66 In anticipation of a successful application for TDAP, the Transitional Working Party (see paragraph 7) is undertaking a critical examination review of the College's policies, procedures and regulations to ensure that they are appropriate and to develop a set of regulations. A mapping in 2013-14 of processes and procedures against the Quality Code, and a very detailed scrutiny of existing responsibilities, revealed the gaps that would require further development in readiness for the post-TDAP period. The College is at an advanced stage in developing its own draft academic regulations. Historical student achievement data have been used to evaluate draft assessment regulations. The team found evidence that the Governors, executive and senior managers are engaged in a critical interchange about the changes, timescales and migration strategies that are required. There is a regular dialogue between the executive and the Students' Union Executive about the options that would be available to students if the College were to be granted TDAP.

67 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 65-66, the scrutiny team concludes that a regulatory framework appropriate for the granting of the College's own higher education awards is in prospect.

Criterion B2

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for defining and securing the academic standards of its higher education provision.

Higher education awards are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)

68 The team found comprehensive evidence that the College's programmes of study and award are referenced to the FHEQ and checked during programme development and review. A number of mechanisms are used to secure the standards of awards. These include the regulatory framework and procedures for monitoring and evaluation, the professional judgement of external examiners and the participation of the academic staff in activities within the profession and other academic institutions. External examiners confirm that the awards are made at appropriate levels.

69 On the basis of this evidence the scrutiny team concludes that higher education awards are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ.

Management of higher education provision takes appropriate account of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, national guidance on programme specifications, and the requirements of any relevant professional and statutory bodies

70 The review and accreditation activities by QAA, the HEA, the University, external examiners, and professional bodies have all confirmed alignment with the Quality Code.

The College has undertaken a full review and mapping exercise against the Quality Code and has an action plan, reviewed regularly through annual monitoring, to ensure alignment.

71 The College has taken account of Subject Benchmark Statements through its programme design and approval processes (paragraphs 10 and 109). It also has substantial experience of meeting the requirements of its professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB), namely Drama UK, which accredits vocational drama schools that offer a conservatoire level of training. The College was the first drama conservatoire to be reaccredited under a new system, which accredits drama schools rather than individual courses. Accreditation was granted in 2014 and lasts for five years. The accreditation process is based on a documentary review and a two-day visit. Drama UK expressed its confidence in the College's management of standards.

72 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 70-71, the scrutiny team concludes that the College's management of higher education provision takes appropriate account of the Quality Code, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, national guidance on programme specifications, and the requirements of any relevant professional and statutory bodies.

In establishing, and then maintaining, comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level programmes, the organisation explicitly seeks advice from external peers and, where appropriate, professional and statutory bodies

73 As noted in paragraph 71, there is a process of formal scrutiny and accreditation by Drama UK, involving external peers and open dialogue, which Drama UK reinforces through 'rolling visits'. External academic peers are involved in a number of ways, including: membership of programme approval panels, the periodic review of programmes and module development. This is strongly reinforced through institutional and personal links with other specialist colleges, other HEIs in the UK and abroad, and with national representative bodies.

74 External examiners moderate the setting and achievement of assessment standards in relation to similar provision made by other providers. Their reports are discussed in academic committees and make a significant contribution to the annual monitoring process. A formal response is made to each report, and the LQSC and Academic Board consider a digest of external examiners' comments.

75 Students are fully aware of the PSRB requirements of their courses. As many students are international, the College also meets the requirements of comparable bodies in other countries.

76 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 73-75, the scrutiny team concludes that in establishing, and then maintaining, comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level programmes, the College explicitly seeks advice from external peers and, where appropriate, professional and statutory bodies.

Programme approval, monitoring and review arrangements are robust, applied consistently, have at all levels a broadly based external dimension and take appropriate account of the specific requirements of different levels of award and different modes of delivery

77 The College has a long history of programme design, which demonstrates sensitivity to the requirements and expectations of employers, PSRBs and external reference points. The College has been subject to a recent Drama UK review; an institutional review by the University in 2013; and a QAA HER in 2014. Each of these reviews was successful.

78 The HAPP sets out clearly the internal and external processes and criteria for course validation and the annual monitoring of programmes. All awards are approved through a two-stage process: the first includes consideration of programmes at appropriate College committees, the second is an external validation process with the University. The team found that resource issues are fully integrated in the process. As part of its preparations for TDAP, the College has designed its own programme approval process, and in June 2016 it carried out its first approval event, independently of the University. The documentation for this event includes a programme specification that fully articulates programme aims, objectives, outcomes, and teaching, learning and assessment strategies. The report on this approval event confirms that the College has set in place an appropriately robust process for considering the design of the proposed programme, and for specifying conditions of approval and recommendations. The College and the University review all validated programmes at prescribed intervals through the processes of periodic and institutional review. The team considered that the programme approval and review mechanisms are detailed and thorough, and are subjected to detailed research and analysis.

79 The programme annual monitoring process takes place in two stages. The autumn Programme Committees consider the draft monitoring statement prepared by programme directors. This includes information on the external examiners' reports, student contributions, innovation, programme modifications and resource matters, in addition to an action enhancement plan, with dates and responsibilities clearly articulated. The plan is carefully monitored at the school boards' spring meetings with significant student inputs. The minutes of the monitoring reports and accompanying action plans are considered at the relevant school board.

80 The process of annual monitoring of programmes uses a standard template and is applied to all taught programmes. In September 2014 annual monitoring of the College's theatre productions, modelled on the existing monitoring process, was introduced to capture the collaborative nature of the curriculum. The Director of Productions draws on contributions from visiting professional directors, technical and academic staff, and students.

81 The monitoring template incorporates data from various sources, which include student feedback, student engagement with the programme, the National Student Survey (NSS) and other internal surveys, progression data, external examiner reports, and programme director reports. The programme team is also required to confirm the accuracy of published information about the programme, including programme specifications. The populated template is confirmed by the Programme Committee, after which it is forwarded to the external examiner. Action plans arising from programme monitoring are considered at school boards and reviewed regularly by Programme Committees. Common and recurring issues across a school are reported to the LQSC, Academic Board and finally to the University, also using a standard template. The team found the monitoring process to be very comprehensive, analytical, focused and action-orientated.

82 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 77-81, the scrutiny team concludes that programme approval, monitoring and review arrangements are robust, applied consistently, have at all levels a broadly based external dimension and take appropriate account of the specific requirements of different levels of award and different modes of delivery.

There is an explicit and close relationship between academic planning and decisions on resource allocation

83 The planning and resource allocation system is designed to ensure that the allocation of resources supports the achievement of the College's Strategic Plan. It is a transparent process that appears to be understood by College staff.

84 There is a process of annual budgeting, which commences in March, is finalised in June and implemented in September. The process is managed through the Finance Director, who meets all the budget holders to agree a model for next year. The current resource allocation model for teaching, which is based on the total hours taught and does not account for variations in the sizes of groups sizes, is under review. The executive and Board of Governors are planning a new, more sophisticated two-year budget cycle. The generation of new income streams is a College priority.

85 Resource requirements are identified in the programme approval process and vigorously interrogated in the SMC. Operational resourcing requirements are identified through the committee reporting system. The College Principal, who acts in accordance with the annual budget approved by the Board, and confirmed by the FGP, makes final decisions on allocations, including staff posts.

86 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 83-85, the scrutiny team concludes that there is an explicit and close relationship between academic planning and decisions on resource allocation at the College.

Criterion B3

The education provision of an organisation granted taught degree awarding powers consistently meets its stated learning objectives and achieves its intended outcomes.

Strategies for learning and assessment are consistent with stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes

87 The College has a strategic approach to learning and teaching. The Enhancing Learning and Teaching Strategy 2014-17 was launched in July 2014 with the explicit purpose of seeking to support an increasingly diverse student body. The Strategy, which defines the College's aims for teaching, learning and assessment, is organised under seven themes, and accompanied by an action plan, which is reviewed annually, with measurable milestones. Its delivery and implications for quality assurance and enhancement systems are monitored through the LQSC. It is made available to staff and students on the College's VLE.

88 The College has an Assessment Policy and Procedure, the latest version of which was reviewed by LQSC in July 2014. The Policy was developed with reference to the Quality Code and to practice in other HEIs. It is designed to inform assessment practices, processes and procedures across the College, and the rights and responsibilities of students in relation to the assessment of their work.

89 Learning outcomes are aligned to the FHEQ, the Subject Benchmark Statement and relevant PSRB requirements and kept under review through the College's approval, monitoring and review arrangements, with appropriate external involvement. A curriculum map is provided for each programme that indicates in which module specific learning outcomes are assessed. All students are assessed against learning outcomes as detailed in the programme and module specifications, ensuring that all programme outcomes are considered at the appropriate level in the programme

90 The scrutiny team found that in establishing its objectives and programme learning outcomes, the College makes appropriate use of external reference points. These include the Quality Code, the FHEQ and relevant PSRB requirements. These are considered through the College's approval, monitoring and reviewing processes, which have relevant external involvement, and evidence from external examiner reports provides confirmation

that outcomes are matched with external reference points. Students and staff who met the team were clear about assessment practice and requirements.

91 The College's teaching, learning and assessment methodology for all full-time programmes is appropriate to the orientation of the College. The methodology is practice-based and assessed in practical application. Practical application covers a wide spectrum, including the creation of designs, production books, artefacts, scores, scripts and scenario, visual and aural materials, and performance. Modes of assessment include the continuous assessment of practical work, practical presentation, reflective journal, portfolio, written assignments, seminar presentation, and research project. The emphasis within this range varies, appropriately, between the two schools.

92 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 87-91, the scrutiny team concludes that strategies for learning and assessment are consistent with stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes.

Responsibility for amending or improving new programme proposals is clearly assigned and subsequent action is carefully monitored

93 The Academic Development Committee has delegated authority from the Academic Board to approve new programmes, to monitor academic provision within the sector and 'engender discussions and actions about new and revised initiatives'. It does so currently under authority delegated to it by the University. Programme and module amendments require final approval from the University. The University is represented on all award boards.

94 The team noted that College has made a number of changes in its portfolio to deliver priorities in the Strategic Plan, including the formal closure of six programmes and the development of five new programmes, which reflect various developments in the performing arts industries, changing patterns of demand and alterations in validation partnerships.

95 Policies, regulations and procedures are described in the HAPP, which is made available for staff and students through the VLE. The processes are described in flowcharts and identify opportunities for the review and revision of documentation and the assignment of responsibilities. In addition, committee minutes, programme documents, module specifications, annual monitoring reports and external examiner reports are available through the DoRIS.

96 The operational responsibility for quality and standards lies with the Quality Office, which provides direction, advice and support to senior management and College staff. The team found that academic policy developments are regularly communicated, debated and discussed at academic committee meetings, staff development events and also, as appropriate, at school team meetings. Meetings with staff involved with programme design, monitoring and review confirmed that the processes are clear, well understood and effective. Staff are confident in their roles and have a good working understanding of the regulatory framework. Communication across the College is excellent, whether through formal or informal channels.

97 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 93-96, the scrutiny team concludes that responsibility for amending or improving new programme proposals is clearly assigned and subsequent action is carefully monitored.

Coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained

98 The coherence of programmes is initially affirmed through formal validation. This includes the specific requirements of the PSRBs, employers and other stakeholders.

99 The School of Design, Management and Technical Arts has modules common to all of this school's undergraduate programmes. These level 4 and 5 modules, which focus on the 'practitioner in context', were first introduced in 2011. The report of the periodic review conducted in 2013 recommended that the school should revisit these contextual modules to ensure that students identified with the curriculum and that the modules aligned with the individual programme curricula. A review in April 2014, which included external panel members, considered and made recommendations about the fitness for purpose of the modules. The proposed final adjustments were signed off by the LQSC in March 2016. The changes, to be implemented in 2016-17, are intended to ensure that the module specifications fully articulate the current approach to this area of work, as well as to streamline assessment, and to simplify the modular structure. The Academic Development Committee has considered a possible suite of taught postgraduate programmes with shared modules.

100 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 98-99, the scrutiny team concludes that coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained.

Close links are maintained between learning support services and the organisation's programme planning, approval, monitoring and review arrangements

101 The College offers a wide range of student support services. The scrutiny team found that information about learning support services is integral to the College's academic planning, approval and review processes. Academic committees include support staff, and the team found strong evidence that they provide well-researched, knowledgeable and respected advice and guidance. Appropriate support staff are represented in committees in both the 'academic' and 'management' stems. They therefore play an active part in the decision-making process, including representation on the TDAP Steering Group and Transitional Working Party.

102 On the basis of this evidence, the scrutiny team concludes that close links are maintained between learning support services and the organisation's programme planning, approval, monitoring and review arrangements.

Robust arrangements exist for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to those students that may be studying at a distance from the organisation are adequate

103 The College delivers two of its part-time undergraduate programmes online - the BA (Hons) Theatre Studies and the BA (Hons) Opera Studies - and one postgraduate programme by blended learning and online, the PGCLTHE in Theatre and Performing Arts. External examiners expressed satisfaction with the approaches used and the outcomes. The team found that the programme team had carefully considered the range of teaching and learning methods and assessment that are appropriate to distance learning, and were engaged in a constructive debate about the relative merits of online and blended learning. Students have access to appropriate learning materials on the VLE. There is good communication with and between these students and teaching and support staff.

104 These programmes are subjected to the same quality assurance processes as on-campus delivery but with appropriate adjustments to the manner in which these are delivered in matters such as student feedback and the management of Programme

Committee meetings. The team was reassured that the University of London's computer centre offered robust support in the event of technical problems.

105 One programme is offered entirely off-campus in the UK. The MA in Ensemble Theatre is located in rented accommodation in Dalston, East London, which is some 15 miles away by road from the main campus in Sidcup. The external examiner, who had visited Dalston, confirmed that the venue and location harmonise well with the aims and objectives of this professional programme, offering an independent, enriching professional environment with excellent access to other venues, cultures and employment opportunities. The team found that the College had responded to students' concerns about access to online technology (see paragraph 189) and had sought to mitigate the effects of separation from the main campus by ensuring that students are aware of campus facilities and events, and resources, such as the library. The programme is subject to the College's full quality assurance arrangements.

106 The College collaborates with international partners to create opportunities for students to learn in diverse educational environments. Signed agreements are in place with American partner institutions and other partners. In March 2015 some 16 per cent of the College's undergraduate students are engaged in Erasmus activity at some stage during their studies. All international collaborations are embedded within programmes and as such are subject to the College's standard approval, monitoring and reviewing processes. The Secretary/Registrar's department manages the formal relationship with the partner institution. The College follows a careful due diligence and risk assessment process in the approval of new agreements. The team was told that any prospective relationship requires preliminary staff visits to ensure that there is an alignment in educational missions and a suitable learning environment. A collaboration handbook has been developed to regulate and guide future partnership developments (paragraph 57). The Academic Development Committee monitors implementation as part of its annual review of programmes; school action plans arising from that process include a study abroad category. Students are given detailed briefings and Study Abroad Guides are provided by the Student Services department. Tuition is in English, except in one case where students are required to learn Spanish to level 4 before starting the placement in an institution where the programme is delivered in Spanish. The team learned that Student Services maintain contact with students while they are abroad, as do teaching staff, and complete questionnaires on their return, which duly contribute to annual monitoring. Students are assessed and earn credit when they return to the College, thus ensuring that the College maintains its oversight over standards. The team concludes that the College exercises a comprehensive oversight of the initiation, implementation, monitoring, and review of its overseas partnerships.

107 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 103-106, the scrutiny team concludes that robust arrangements exist for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to those students that may be studying at a distance from the College are adequate.

Through its planning, approval, review and assessment practices, the organisation defines, monitors, reviews and maintains its academic standards

108 The College has demonstrated a strong strategic commitment to the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards through its committee structure (paragraphs 22, 25, 43 and 62). It has been given substantial delegated authority in several key areas by the University (paragraphs 41 and 59). Quality assurance arrangements are overseen by the LQSC, chaired by the Vice-Principal, on behalf of the Academic Board, and with professional advice and support from the Quality Office, which also ensures that staff use appropriate external reference points in the development, approval, monitoring and review of the College's programmes. Discussions with senior staff, teaching staff and professional support

staff revealed a very clear understanding of, and commitment to, the quality assurance arrangements. Students met by the team were generally aware of their opportunities to contribute to quality enhancement. The team's observations of the Academic Board, LQSC, school boards and Programme Committees provided clear evidence of the effectiveness of the College's quality assurance policies, and the opportunities for students to be involved with them. There are effective processes to capture and disseminate good practice, such as the completion by programme directors of an annual monitoring report derived from a range of sources, with measurable and accountable actions based on stakeholder feedback; and an annual staff development event, which reviews assessment parity.

109 Each programme has a curriculum map with programme specifications that are aligned to Subject Benchmark Statements. Intended learning outcomes are specified at the module level, and assessment is mapped at programme level. External examiners' reports have confirmed alignments between standards and attainment in relation to awarding criteria, Subject Benchmark Statements, the FHEQ and the programme specifications.

110 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 108-109, the scrutiny team concludes that, through its planning, approval, review and assessment practices, the College defines, monitors, reviews and maintains its academic standards.

Assessment criteria and practices are communicated clearly to students and staff

111 Assessment regulations, criteria and practice are made available to students and staff through a College-wide, generic handbook and programme handbooks, which are specific to the requirements and expectations of individual programmes. The handbooks are available in hard copy and online through the VLE. The grade descriptors specific to the school and the programme are detailed therein, by level, as are the arrangements for marking: that is whether there is single, second or double-blind marking and the arrangements for the return of assessments and feedback. Students confirmed that they were aware of these criteria and arrangements. The team found that the students and staff they met understood the assessment criteria, which are introduced at induction and clearly documented in handbooks.

112 On the basis of this evidence the scrutiny team concludes that assessment criteria and practices are communicated clearly to students and staff.

Assessment practices fully cover all declared learning objectives, learning outcomes and modes of delivery

113 As previously noted (see paragraph 89) all students are assessed against the learning objectives and learning outcomes, which are described in the programme specification, benchmarked to the FHEQ, and aligned to the appropriate Subject Benchmark Statement. A curriculum map is provided within the programme specification. This identifies in which module specific learning outcomes are assessed. All modules, in addition, have a separate assessment brief that details assignments, the intended learning outcomes that are examined through each assessment task, and the criteria used to grade student performance. All assessments are standardised and moderated internally, and approved by external examiners, thus assuring consistency with learning outcomes. The external examiner report form asks examiners to verify that they agree the assessment briefs that contribute to the degree classification. The team was able to verify from a variety of sources and meetings that these practices are secure, understood and embedded in the College's culture.

114 On the basis of this evidence the scrutiny team concludes that assessment practices fully cover all declared learning objectives, learning outcomes and modes of delivery.

Appropriately qualified external peers are engaged in the organisation's assessment processes and consistency is maintained between internal and external examiners' marking

115 External examiners are currently nominated by the College and approved by the University. The College has developed its own External Examiner Policy and Procedure. The administrative relationship with external examiners is managed through the College's Quality Office. The College briefs externals, provides relevant documentation, and receives and responds to their reports. Externals attend College Examination Boards. In 2015, the College ran for the first time a full-day briefing and induction seminar for newly appointed external examiners, to which all external examiners are invited.

116 The College considers external examiners' reports in detail at Programme Committees and prepares a response that is included in programme annual monitoring and action plans. The LQSC sees a summary of external examiners' comments and action plans, and monitors the latter. The Academic Board considers a summary of actions. External examiners are provided with an update of actions. External examiner reports are submitted to the University and are accessible to staff and students.

117 All Examination Boards follow a set agenda with defined terms of reference. At observed boards (and in reports generally) the external examiners confirmed that the marking was consistent and standards comparable to other institutions. In some cases a student was elevated beyond the award indicated by the average mark. This was done with great care within the scope of agreed guidelines for the exercise of discretion. The awarding University representative stated that the process followed, and decisions made, accorded with University regulations and practice.

118 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 115-117, the scrutiny team concludes that appropriately qualified external peers are engaged in the College's assessment processes and consistency is maintained between internal and external examiners' marking.

The reliability and validity of the organisation's assessment procedures are monitored and its assessment outcomes inform future programme and student planning

119 External examiners' reports are considered and responded to at different levels in the College, starting with Programme Committees at their autumn term annual monitoring meetings. The response, signed off by the LQSC on behalf of the Academic Board, is included in the programme annual monitoring template and action plan, copies of which are then sent to all external examiners for the programme. An update of the action plan is considered by LQSC towards the end of the academic year and external examiners are provided with an update regarding actions arising from their reports.

120 Before meetings of Examination Boards (paragraph 120), internal preparatory boards are held in which all marks, student profiles and mitigating circumstances are considered. All these boards follow assessment regulations and board procedures scrupulously. The team observed careful, criteria-based discussion of borderline cases and of mitigating circumstances, which ensured that, while the boards were attentive to particular situations, no student was advantaged or disadvantaged, and academic standards were upheld.

121 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 119-120, the scrutiny team concludes that the reliability and validity of the College's assessment procedures are monitored and its assessment outcomes inform future programme and student planning.

Clear mechanisms are in place for use when a decision is taken to close a programme or programme element, and in doing so, students' interests are safeguarded

122 The University approves the formal withdrawal of programmes. Since 2009 the College has closed six programmes. The College has a programme suspension or withdrawal flow chart, which is described in the HAPP. This shows that any decisions are considered at all levels in the College's committee structure, both academic and management.

123 To date, closed programmes have been taught out until all students have completed. Such programmes continue to have annual monitoring and external examiners until all students have completed. Progression routes are planned and clearly mapped so that current students can make an informed decision whether to continue on current or transfer.

124 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 122-123, the scrutiny team concludes that clear mechanisms are in place for use when a decision is taken to close a programme or programme element, and in doing so, students' interests are safeguarded.

Criterion B4

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers takes effective action to promote strengths and respond to identified limitations.

Critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the organisation's higher education provision and action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review

125 The College is a small specialist institution that has taken many steps to engage with external professional and educational organisations and individuals to mitigate the risks of insularity. The team found that the College makes extensive use of data sets to analyse and inform actions in both the management and academic spines. The data are organised into programme, school and production annual templates, and action plans are monitored at Programme Committee and school board levels, with oversight by the LQSC. To give some externality for annual monitoring, in 2014-15 a member of staff from the school not under consideration was added to the memberships of school boards.

126 The team saw very strong evidence of the College's analytical professionalism and self-confidence during the scrutiny period, and a manifest willingness to holding a mirror up to itself. This is demonstrated, for example, through the College's response to: external scrutiny; the reports of external examiners; the monitoring of student progress; the response to student feedback; and the commissioning of and response to internal and external surveys. The critical self-analysis amply demonstrates the College's capacity for critical self-assessment. The new post of Academic Enhancement Manager is intended to support critical self-awareness.

127 The team endorsed the College's judgement that recent engagements with external institutional and periodic reviews had positive outcomes, and noted the good progress made in the implementation of recommendations.

128 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 125-127, the scrutiny team concludes that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the College's higher education provision, and action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review.

Clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny, monitoring and review of agreed learning objectives and intended outcomes

129 Regular monitoring and reviewing of learning objectives and intended outcomes, and the assignment of responsibilities for action, are embedded in the College's processes of periodic review and annual monitoring and review, and integral to the way in which the College manages its programmes (see paragraphs 24, 25, 48, 68, 119 and 125). Programme Committees, at their autumn meetings, consider an annual monitoring report and external examiner reports, and identify action points to rectify or enhance issues raised; the report also contains an action plan agreed at the previous spring meeting and a clear indication of progress.

130 On the basis of this evidence the scrutiny team concludes that clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny, monitoring and review of agreed learning objectives and intended outcomes.

Ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation (for example on programme design and development, on teaching and on student learning and assessment) are drawn into its arrangements for programme design, approval and review

131 The College has a very high profile in the professional and employment sectors, is responsive to their needs, and is also active in pedagogic developments. The College's courses are recognised by the relevant professional body. Members of staff play an active part in developing drama education in all its aspects. There is external input to periodic review; to the reaccreditation of the College by Drama UK; and to programme approvals and major revisions of provision (such as the School of Design, Management and Technical Arts Shared Modules Review, 2014). Part of the core curriculum of the PGCLTHE, on which a number of College staff have been or are students, requires involvement in programme design and development. Moreover, such involvement is one of the evidence requirements for staff seeking fellowship through the College's HEA-accredited continuing professional development (CPD) scheme. Students are involved in the programme design and approval procedure at Programme Committees and membership of College boards, and through membership of approval and review panels. All proposals involve external consultation at the planning stage. The Director of Learning, Teaching and Curriculum Development has a strategic brief for the design and development of innovative curricula and pedagogy, including assessment mechanisms and is supported by the Academic Enhancement Manager, in collaboration with the heads of school and programme teams. The team found evidence that, through these and other channels, there was a high level of awareness and a proactive response to changes and opportunities in the external environment (such as the Teaching Excellence Framework).

132 On the basis of this evidence the scrutiny team concludes that ideas and expertise from within and outside the College (for example, on programme design and development, on teaching, and on student learning and assessment) are drawn into its arrangements for programme design, approval and review.

Effective means exist for encouraging the continuous improvement of quality of provision and student achievement

133 The 2014 HER stated that the College 'takes a strategic approach to enhancement using deliberative committee and meeting structures, established policies and opportunities to share good practice and through the use of student feedback'. The College uses a variety of means, some routine, others exceptional, to enhance the quality of provision and enhance student learning. Its seven institutional enhancement themes, set out in the Enhancing Learning and Teaching Strategy, focus upon the strategic enhancement of learning and

teaching. Annual milestones, with performance indicators for each theme, are monitored by the LQSC twice a year. The Strategy is mapped against the aims of the College Strategic Plan.

134 The annual monitoring process (paragraphs 79-81), which is thorough, analytical and effective, is a source of information about good practice and thus informs enhancement. The Academic Enhancement Manager has a proactive, College-wide role in the development, implementation and evaluation of the College's enhancement policies and strategies, which, the team learned, he pursues with colleagues through being 'informed and informing'. A current case in point is this Manager's development of a revised Student Charter, with student input, which is intended to become a 'statement of partnership' between the College and the students.

135 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 133-134, the scrutiny team concludes that the College has effective means for encouraging the continuous improvement of quality of provision and student achievement.

C Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff

Criterion C1

The staff of an organisation granted powers to award taught degrees will be competent to teach, facilitate learning and undertake assessment to the level of the qualifications being awarded.

All teaching staff engaged with the delivery of higher education programmes have relevant academic and/or professional expertise

136 The current Strategic Plan 2013-16 demonstrates a clear strategic commitment to 'contribute to and shape the theatre and performance arts and industries through education, training, research and industry engagement'. The College reflects its mission as 'a world-class, practice-based, professional conservatoire' by emphasising the centrality of staff expertise as teachers and practitioners with a close understanding of current developments in research, scholarship and professional practice, able to contribute to new insights in theatre and performance, and to offer sector-leading education that is industry-focused.

137 Through the development of its new Strategic Plan, which is scheduled for sign-off by Governors in November 2016, the strategic direction of the College will continue to emphasise the interplay of practice-based research and scholarship, and learning and teaching.

138 The CSA reported that in 2013-14 there were 53 academic staff, four senior post holders, 44 visiting tutors, five technical staff, three manual staff and 41 administrative staff. In July 2016, there were 51 academics, of whom 30 were full time, 15 part time/fractional and six associate/visiting lecturers. Job descriptions of all senior staff, programme directors and Module Year Coordinators outline the knowledge, experience, qualifications, and other attributes required for these positions. The scrutiny team received information about the academic qualifications of academic leaders and other teaching staff, and their engagement with current research and advanced scholarship, and with pedagogic development of their disciplines (see paragraphs 140-151). The College draws on the contribution of practitioners acting as visiting tutors, and in expert roles directing or supervising productions, providing master class or workshop input, and in some cases contributing to the development of new and existing degree programmes. This level of engagement ensures that students and staff benefit from current industry expertise.

139 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 136-138, the scrutiny team concludes that teaching staff have relevant academic and/or professional expertise.

All teaching staff engaged with the delivery of higher education programmes have relevant engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline (through, for example, membership of subject associations, learned societies and professional bodies)

140 The CSA and the College's Enhancing Learning and Teaching Strategy set out the level and nature of professional and pedagogic engagement of academic staff through HEA recognition, membership of professional bodies, and participation in professional development through the PGCLTHE. As of June 2016, 38 members of staff have HEA recognition at Associate Fellow, Fellow, or Senior Fellow levels, and one Principal

Fellowship of the HEA has recently been awarded. There is no evidence of engagement with the Institute for Learning/Society for Education and Training.

141 Some staff in both schools are members of relevant professional bodies and subject associations. In both schools all staff but one are engaged in creative work, consultancy or professional practice. Staff also engage with the sector accrediting body Drama UK, the Society of British Theatre Designers, and professional associations such as the Standing Conference for University Drama Departments, and the US-based Association for Theatre in Higher Education.

142 The Staff Development Committee receives updates of those staff enrolled on the College's PGCLTHE, and those achieving recognition as HEA Fellows through direct application or through CPD, in the form of the College's Professional Recognition Scheme for the Performing Arts (PReSPA). These include full and part-time staff from both schools. The Staff Development Committee is charged with apportioning funds for staff development and reviewing the College's staff development activities to ensure an appropriate programme. Evidence from these meetings is that both administrative and academic staff, including visiting tutors, have access to support for staff development activity, including the PGCLTHE. The total annual budget is split between the academic and administrative strands, and evidence points to full spending on both strands.

143 The team noted individual examples of pedagogic research initiatives including HEA-funded projects related to student learning and teaching, JISC/HEA funding to develop an Open Educational Resource for the sector, and evidence of recently published work, of which some focuses on pedagogy. The College's annual symposium gives an opportunity to share accomplishments across disciplines, and the continuing success of this event is noted. In addition, other such events scheduled throughout the year are reported on through the committee structure.

144 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 140-143, the scrutiny team concludes that staff engaged with programme delivery have relevant engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline.

All higher education teaching staff have relevant knowledge and understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline area and such knowledge and understanding directly inform and enhance their teaching

145 The current Strategic Plan states the College's aim to 'create new insights in the area of theatre and performance through distinctive approaches to research into and through practice'. This is to be achieved through 'A. Maintaining and growing the College's research culture by ensuring that staff and students are fully supported in carrying out research. B. Promoting research that develops the academic discipline and professional arts practices as well as informing teaching. C. Achieving recognition of our growing worth as a research institution through engagement with the REF 2014.' The College demonstrates the integration of research and advanced scholarship with teaching and learning through accounts of research and scholarship activities and the range of academic staff outputs produced relevant to their discipline. Staff are engaged in a range of external activities at subject level, including serving on editorial boards and acting as peer reviewers for publications and publishers. In addition, staff engage actively with professional practice, for example in laboratory/workshop events, and both external and College-based symposia.

146 Nine academic staff have PhDs, and a majority produce research and scholarly publications, including articles, book chapters, books and other relevant outputs. The College's approach to research reflects its identity as a small specialist provider of higher education in theatre and performance, with practice research as its underlying principle. Research objectives include the production of internationally recognised research

outputs. The College made a submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 exercise through the Unit of Assessment for Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts, and 49 per cent of research was assessed at 3* and 4*. The College has five research centres, promoted through the Theatre Futures website, which provide the environment for research and scholarly activity and collaboration. Under the auspices of the research centres, events and development opportunities such as research seminars, conferences and workshops are hosted.

147 The Director of Research has a College-wide remit to promote research activity. Through the Research Committee, which the Director of Research chairs, and the Staff Development Committee, the College has oversight of the range of research and scholarship activities staff undertake. A research strategy is being drawn up. Although originally due to come to the Academic Board in June 2016, the date for submission of a draft to the Research Committee was extended to July 2016; a final version is expected to be taken to the Academic Board's first meeting of 2016-17, and thence to the Board of Governors for approval. This strategy will span a five-year period in order to incorporate a strategy for the REF. Various committees throughout the year have charted the progress of drafting the research strategy. Its development has been underpinned by discussion of issues such as planning for the REF in light of previous performance, the embedding of research in the curriculum, the significance of archives and collections, and the contribution of research centres and hubs. On the basis of its discussions with senior staff and Governors, the team considered that the College was taking a strategic approach to research development and that the research culture was maturing. However, the deployment of staff to enable more substantial engagements with research remained under discussion. Staff deployment in relation to research and scholarly activity was taken up by a Research and Scholarly Activity Working Party and addressed by line managers with individuals through PPDR meetings. From another angle, the deployment of staff in relation to the balance of time spent on assessment and feedback was being addressed through the Feedback Working Party. In its draft recommendations this group has identified a number of measures, including streamlining of assessment practices and ensuring that assessment feedback is reflected within staff deployment. Although not directly concerned with research and scholarly activity, this group's discussions relate more generally to staff resourcing and, therefore, to the College's aims with regard to research growth.

148 The development of criteria and procedures for the appointment of professors, associate professors, visiting professors and emerita/emeritus professors, and of a Code of Practice for Research Ethics, are further demonstrations of the College's deliberate intentions to develop its research culture.

149 The College has recently developed a research partnership, with the University of East London, which enables staff to engage in research partnerships and research funding applications in addition to providing research degree provision. After the approval event for the collaboration held in November 2015, staff could be proposed for the supervision of research students. The College has identified a need for the provision of training for staff who may be new to doctoral supervision or require refresher training. Although these are early days for the relationship with the University of East London, staff and Governors acknowledge the value of such a partnership.

150 The steps taken by the College to develop a research strategy encompassing these various objectives reflect its strong commitment to build on existing research strength and ambition and to grow its profile in research, scholarship and professional practice. The activity of the College's five research centres provides further evidence of a structure designed to enable and encourage research and scholarship across the institution and with external partners. Activities include interdisciplinary projects, research seminars and lectures, workshops and study events.

151 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 145-150, the scrutiny team concludes that all teaching staff have relevant knowledge and understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline area, and such knowledge and understanding directly inform and enhance their teaching.

All teaching staff engaged with the delivery of higher education programmes have relevant staff development and appraisal opportunities aimed at enabling them to develop and enhance their professional competence and scholarship

152 The Strategic Plan sets out the aim to 'provide academic staff with the stimulation, support, mentoring and resources to continually develop as teachers and practitioners, ensuring that staff maintain a close understanding of current developments in research, scholarship and professional practice in their subjects'. The report from the 2014 HER identifies as good practice the support given to staff in developing reflection and scholarship in their academic practice. The Staff Development Policy indicates the scope, responsibilities and range of opportunities available to staff, including the PReSPA CPD scheme, which provides a route to HEA Fellowship.

153 Evidence from the Staff Survey 2014 indicates that 95 per cent of staff have had a PPDR in the last 12 months and 45 per cent view this as having been useful. PPDR forms are in place for both academic and administrative employees, and are discussed with the line manager on an annual basis following completion of the probationary period. The Staff Development Committee receives a summary of training needs compiled by the Vice-Principal from the PPDR forms completed by academic staff, and this informs the College's staff development programme, including institutional annual staff development events in July and September. The Committee also receives feedback from schools concerning the staff development sessions held at the beginning of the academic year. In response to the staff survey a number of actions were taken during 2015-16, including the insertion of a section in the PPDR form enabling suggestions to be made regarding local or institutional change.

154 A report on the peer observation of teaching is discussed at the Staff Development Committee. Peer observation applies to any member of staff whose teaching input has significant assessment component, but in practice includes all full-time and fractional permanent teaching staff. Hourly or fee-based visiting lecturers are encouraged by the College to participate but this is voluntary. In 2014-15 of 35 staff eligible for participation, 33 staff completed all stages (27 full-time and fractional staff and six fee-paid tutors).

155 The scrutiny team found evidence that the College takes a proactive and positive approach to supporting staff to engage in their professional development. Funding is available through the Staff Development Committee to support staff development training or CPD needs. The Staff Development Committee receives up-to-date reports on staff development expenditure and allocation of funding from both academic and administration budgets. Staff are able to apply for internal funding to support their research, scholarly activity or vocational practice, and the Research Committee receives and approves such bids and manages the College's research budget and symposium budget. Articulation of research planning and staff development needs is enabled through cross-membership of the Staff Development Committee and Research Committee, and the team found evidence of the disbursement of funding to support a range of academic and professional development needs. Notwithstanding some staff concerns about the workload allocation in respect of time for research and scholarship, there is evidence that the College has a strong strategic commitment to supporting the personal and professional development of staff across the institution.

156 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 152-155, the scrutiny team concludes that staff have relevant development and appraisal opportunities aimed at enabling them to develop and enhance their professional competence and scholarship.

Staff with key programme management responsibilities have relevant experience of curriculum development and assessment design

157 Programme directors play a key role in curriculum development and innovation in learning, teaching and assessment methods. Working with Heads of School and other academic members of the programme team, programme directors lead on the management and development of their programmes, as evidenced through internal processes such as annual programme monitoring, periodic reviews, and approval processes. Strategic support and leadership, including the implementation of programme annual monitoring action plans and evaluation is provided through the role of Academic Enhancement Manager.

158 Student feedback data, including student surveys and module evaluations, is discussed at a variety of levels, including programme, school and College committees (the Academic Board, LQSC, Student Experience Committee, school boards and Programme Committees. Through cross-membership of committees at these levels, staff engage with consideration of areas for enhancement. Sharing of practice across programmes and schools, for example where practice and outcomes differ, occurs through: College-level committees; staff development events such as the assessment parity exercise; involvement in the School of Design, Management and Technical Arts' review of shared modules; and participation in approval discussions and events. In June 2016 the College conducted an approval event for a prospective MA in Advanced Acting (paragraph 78). This event, with an internal chair, two external panel members and a student member, was deemed by senior staff involved to have been a valuable experience.

159 On the basis of this evidence discussed in paragraphs 157-158, the scrutiny team concludes that, through a full range of events, committees and discussions at programme, school and College levels, staff with key programme management responsibilities have relevant opportunities to engage in curriculum development and assessment design.

Staff with key programme management responsibilities have relevant engagement with the activities of providers of higher education in other organisations (through, for example, involvement as external examiners, validation panel members, or external reviewers)

160 A number of academic staff are engaged in external examining, and participate in external validations, periodic reviews, and other types of external development events. Updated data on staff external activity is considered by the Academic Board, which reports that, as of February 2016, 10 staff examine at 12 institutions in the UK and Europe. The PPDR process provides an opportunity for academics to indicate external professional involvement undertaken during the previous year, and this information is overseen by the Vice-Principal. The team found evidence that the College draws positively on the experience of colleagues' external activity in discussions at various levels within the College.

161 On the basis of this evidence the scrutiny team concludes that staff with key programme management responsibilities have relevant engagement with the activities of other providers of higher education through involvement as external examiners, validation panel members, and in other external capacities within the sector.

D The environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes

Criterion D1

The teaching and learning infrastructure of an organisation granted taught degree awarding powers, including its student support and administrative support arrangements, is effective and monitored.

The effectiveness of learning and teaching activities is monitored in relation to stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes

162 The College has well-developed mechanisms for monitoring the effectiveness of its learning and teaching activities in meeting intended academic objectives and outcomes. While under the oversight of the University, the College has gained experience of operating its own quality assurance and enhancement processes for programme approval and modification, periodic review, annual review, external examiner nomination, Programme Committees, student surveys and Examination Boards. Monitoring of programme design also takes place through the Drama UK reaccreditation process. The College has produced its own specifications for each programme, which align with relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ. With regard to programme approval, the College runs its own internal validation process, using specially devised New Programme Proposal (NPP) forms. The Academic Development Committee has responsibility for the consideration of new programme proposals prior to submission to the University as the validating body. During 2016-17 the College prepared for, and ran, its own programme approval event, independently of the University (paragraphs 78 and 158). This validation event resulted in conditions and recommendations concerning, among other issues, the structure of the proposed programme and its learning outcomes.

163 The College conducts its own periodic reviews, with representation from the University. The annual monitoring process at programme level entails reflection on the effectiveness of the learning and teaching in relation to academic objectives and intended learning outcomes. Reports are given full consideration at Programme Committees, with updates during the year. Annual monitoring draws on external examiner reports, which comment on the achievement of the relevant learning outcomes through appropriate assessment methods. In addition, evaluation of the effectiveness of learning and teaching in the College's provision draws on evidence from module evaluations and student surveys, including the FIS and NSS. Other mechanisms for ensuring the quality of learning and teaching include peer observation of teaching overseen by the LQSC and Staff Development Committee.

164 Issues from this monitoring process feed upwards through schools, as evidenced in discussion at school boards, and thence to the LQSC. There is evidence that the College takes responsibility for overseeing issues arising from student feedback at its highest committees, the Academic Board, and also at the Board of Governors. The team noted that the SMC engaged with student feedback more informally through the report on the Suggestion Box.

165 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 162-164, the scrutiny team concludes that the effectiveness of learning and teaching activities is monitored in relation to stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes.

Students are informed of the outcomes of assessments in a timely manner

166 The College Assessment Policy and Procedure sets out how students are assessed, including the role of feedback. The Policy is that all assessment feedback to students is normally provided within 20 working days. Assessment guidance is given in the HAPP. Students whom the team met confirmed that they were aware of the mechanisms for receiving feedback from programme and module specifications. Feedback came in different ways: feedback related to practical work was usually given very quickly, but on written work it could be less prompt.

167 NSS data on assessment feedback are considered through the programme and school boards and reported through College committees. NSS 2014 scores for promptness of feedback showed an overall improvement to 58 per cent but were below national benchmarks. For the School of Performance the score was 66 per cent, and for the School of Design, Management and Technical Arts 43 per cent (both benchmarks are 67 per cent). The College has considered these issues through its Programme Committees and school boards. Discussion of the manageability of the 20-day return of feedback took place during 2014-15, and a decision was taken to set up a Feedback Working Group, chaired by the Associate Director of Research, to address concerns about assessment feedback. Meanwhile, the NSS 2015 results indicated a slight improvement in ratings for timeliness of feedback. The digest of NSS 2015 results at programme level presented at the Academic Board refers to the work of the Feedback Working Group and ongoing monitoring of student satisfaction concerning assessment.

168 The work of the Feedback Working Group has led to the presentation of an interim report and first draft recommendations to the Academic Board in June 2016 and LQSC in July 2016. This report indicated a range of likely recommendations, including: consideration of a longer-term restructuring of the curriculum; addressing assessment time within staff deployment; exploring innovative ways to deliver feedback, including through technology; and improving the efficiency of feedback processes. The Academic Board has agreed that these draft recommendations would be further considered during the September 2016 staff development sessions. If adopted, some of the recommendations would require amendment to the Assessment Policy, and this would therefore be reviewed in October 2016. The scrutiny team heard confirmation from senior staff that some of the recommended changes to assessment practices (such as second-marking arrangements) to address pressures on the timely return of student work did not have a direct impact on the students' assessment, and could therefore be implemented within a year, whereas others such as curriculum change would take longer to implement.

169 Other sources of feedback from undergraduate students, such as the level 5 survey and module evaluation forms, invite comment on the assessment process, but not explicitly regarding promptness of feedback. While the Postgraduate Experience Survey elicits student response on timeliness of feedback, numbers completing this survey are small. Nonetheless, some actions had been taken by the Programme Director for master's programmes to ensure feedback on practical work is given after each practical project. The Assessment Policy, which is referenced in the Student Handbook, indicates the College's commitment to timely and appropriate feedback, based on a number of principles. It also notes that feedback is delivered in a variety of ways as part of the learning experience and may be 'both verbal or written and part of the continuous assessment of practical work'. In view of recurrent issues in survey responses concerning timeliness of feedback and the time taken to implement significant curricular changes to assessment and feedback, the College may wish to strengthen its approach to monitoring student perception of feedback and their satisfaction with timeliness, and reinforce its message about the variety of types of feedback (both formative and summative, individual and group, written or oral) that is given to students.

170 The scrutiny team considers that the work of the Feedback Working Party, although not yet complete, is appropriately addressing at an institutional level concerns about pressure points that affect the prompt return of work to students. On this basis, and that of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 166-169, the team concludes that the College is aware of issues relating to the timeliness of assessment feedback and is taking appropriate steps to monitor and improve student experience in this regard.

Constructive and developmental feedback is given to students on their performance

171 All students are assessed against learning outcomes which are set out in programme and module specifications. A curriculum map indicates where learning outcomes are assessed, and students indicated that they were aware of these. Level 5 survey results 2015-16 confirmed that students generally understood how they would be assessed; this echoed an improvement in satisfaction recorded by the NSS in 2015. An annual assessment parity event acts as a standardisation exercise to enhance assessment practice. An action arising from the latest HER 2015 report was to develop new grading descriptors for the School of Design, Management and Technical Arts. The final version was considered and approved through the LQSC and Academic Board before presentation in the HAPP.

172 The College's Assessment Policy and Procedure, and assessment guidance, are available in the Student Handbook, which defines formative and summative assessment types and what students can expect in terms of feedback. External examiners have an opportunity to comment on the quality of assessment feedback in their reports. In the reports for 2014-15 that it reviewed, and the annual digest of reports produced for LQSC, the scrutiny team noted numerous positive comments. In addition, some reports included constructively critical comments about the quality of feedback to students, the timings of assessment, and assessment of seminar presentations.

173 The 2014 NSS indicated differences between schools in the two questions that address the helpfulness and level of detail assessment of feedback. The School of Performance was above the national benchmark for both but had declined from 2013, while the School of Design, Management and Technical Arts was below benchmark in both but showed improvement from 2013. NSS 2015 data showed improvements in both aspects.

174 Students whom the team met spoke highly of the support they received on academic matters as part of their everyday learning experience. They also felt that tutors were readily available for further advice on their progress and performance on assignments. They commented that they were receiving detailed and helpful assessment feedback in a timely fashion, and that there were ample opportunities for face-to-face feedback with tutors, visiting practitioners and placement tutors.

175 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 171-174, the scrutiny team concludes that students have appropriate access to constructive and developmental feedback on their performance through both face-to-face and written means.

Feedback from students, staff and (where possible) employers and other institutional stakeholders is obtained and evaluated, and clear mechanisms exist to provide feedback to all such constituencies

176 Student feedback is sought through a variety of means, both formal and informal. A number of surveys, including the FIS, NSS and the level 5 survey, form part of the data drawn on in the annual monitoring reports, which are analysed and discussed at all levels of the institutional committee structure. Outcomes of the NSS, and actions in response to these, are discussed at institutional level, including the LQSC, Academic Board, SMC and Board of Governors. Feedback is also derived from module evaluation forms completed by student representatives during student feedback sessions. The HER 2014 report affirmed

the piloting of anonymous module evaluation (rather than collectively in a cohort meeting or through social media), although students met by the scrutiny team reported that their feedback was collected through group discussion. However, the team heard that the use of an anonymous module evaluation form was being trialled, albeit with a low response rate, until the end of July 2016. A report was to be presented to the LQSC early in the academic year 2016-17, with a recommendation that students should be encouraged to engage with the module evaluation process.

177 The team saw evidence of active student involvement through representation on committees at all levels, periodic reviews and the institutional review. Student representatives are key contributors to Programme Committees, which discuss the effective delivery and monitoring of programmes. The scrutiny team's observations of Programme Committee meetings, school boards, and College committees such as the Student Experience Committee, confirmed that they provide formal opportunities for reporting of student issues and feedback on related actions. The Vice-Principal also holds a forum for student representatives, including online and master's students, three times a year.

178 The College's periodic Staff Survey provides one mechanism for staff to feedback on their experience. A Staff Survey Focus Group was established, and an action plan was drawn up and addressed at a number of levels, including the SMC. In response to comments relating to internal communications, various actions including the introduction of an Issues Management Group tasked with picking up issues from the Suggestions Box, were noted. Cross-membership of staff on committees and the introduction of more cross-school meetings was intended to improve lines of communication within the College. An issue concerning staff deployment, identified in the Staff Survey, was being addressed through a number of routes, including the Research Committee and school boards.

179 Input from external agencies, such as employers, is actively sought and responded to through participation in the programme approval process and through their involvement in productions. The HER 2014 report indicated strong relationships with external professionals at programme level, which enabled staff and students to benefit from current, relevant professional expertise. Meetings with employers confirmed that the views of practitioners, employers and the wider industry contributed to programme developments, through informal communications, opportunities to act as visiting tutors, placement providers and guest lecturers, and memberships of review panels and recruitment panels. The scrutiny team considered that communication between stakeholders within and beyond the institution is positive and constructive. External feedback is openly invited and contributed to enhancement of the student experience.

180 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 176-179, the scrutiny team concludes that feedback from students, staff and (where possible) employers and other institutional stakeholders is obtained and evaluated, and clear mechanisms exist to provide feedback to all such constituencies.

Students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way, and account is taken of different students' needs

181 Students have access to information about the College and its provision through the College website and prospectus. In meetings with the scrutiny team, students discussed their decisions to study at the College, and noted in particular its international reputation within the industry. The FIS provides detailed programme specific information about student choices in applying to the course, their satisfaction with the information provided and the application process, as well as experiences of College life during their first year. Feedback from this survey, as with other student surveys, informs action planning at programme and school level, and is reported to the LQSC.

182 The recruitment process is set out in the Admissions Policy and Procedure, and meetings with students confirmed that the process had run smoothly, including the process for recruiting students in the United States. It is College policy to invite all applicants wherever possible to interview, and audition where appropriate, and programme-specific arrangements are clearly set out in the Admissions Policy. Interviews may, where appropriate, be conducted via an online video link. Applicants to the online programmes have a discussion with the programme director.

183 Reasonable adjustments are made for students invited to interview/audition on the basis of the Equality and Diversity Policy, whose procedures and guidelines are overseen by the Equality and Diversity Committee. These adjustments are clearly laid out in the Admissions Policy.

184 The induction programme provides an opportunity to ensure that students have access to information about programme, academic and student support, policies and procedures. This information is also available in the comprehensive Student Handbook. The FIS indicates good levels of satisfaction with the interview/audition process, and students whom the panel met confirmed that their induction experience had been positive.

185 As the 2014 HER report notes, 'programmes offer a range of opportunities and arrangements for students to engage in professional practice through industry links. All students have personal tutors and access to the range of student support provided through the Student Services team'. Students met by the scrutiny team spoke highly of the personal tutorial support available to them; this covered personal and academic development and was felt to be very valuable. Excellent support is provided for students with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia (see also paragraph 220). Learning agreements are put in place where appropriate.

186 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 181-185, the scrutiny team concludes that students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way, and account is taken of different student needs.

Available learning support materials are adequate to support students in the achievement of the stated purposes of their study programmes

187 Students have access to a range of services, both academic and non-academic, including the LRC and Student Services. The library resources within the LRC support academic needs and the ICT Helpdesk offers technical support. The Student Handbook provides students with information about resources and support. Through membership of committees such as the LQSC, Student Experience Committee and Academic Board, the College has oversight of the provision of the support provided through Student Services, the LRC, and in ICT.

188 The College places a strong emphasis on effective technology to support learning and teaching. Following involvement in an HEA Change Academy project in 2010-11, the College has taken steps to develop its use of technology, including the development of a VLE strategy and operational plan, and setting up a working party on Technologies in Learning and Teaching. The team found evidence of engagement with sector-standard learning technologies through school board discussion and annual monitoring.

189 While there was evidence from Programme Committees and meetings with students that online support is used and is helpful, there is also comment in Programme Committees, annual monitoring reports, and school boards' discussion of limitations in the IT infrastructure. In the case of the MA Theatre Ensemble programme delivered at Dalston, students referred to issues ('moments') regarding the use of technology, including access to key software and availability of wireless computer access throughout the building.

This experience was confirmed in the report of the site visit to Dalston, which was part of the validation of the proposed MA Advanced Acting, although students in the Programme Committee also confirmed that there had been relevant contact between the College and students at Dalston concerning the VLE and the library. The updated 2015-16 action plan for the School of Performance indicates some improvement in embedding the MA Ensemble Theatre programme at Dalston within the IT/VLE/library systems of the College, and noted that work on this would continue.

190 Student satisfaction with learning resources provided through the library dipped slightly to 80 per cent in NSS 2014, despite an overall improvement year on year with academic support (above the national benchmark) and access to general IT and specialist equipment. The NSS 2015 results indicated an increase in satisfaction with library resources, but a slight fall in satisfaction with access to general IT resources. Meetings with students commented positively on resources, although in some cases there were some localised issues about availability of texts and borrowing equipment. A review of the LRC with an updated action plan was reported to the LQSC in December 2015, identifying actions to improve the layout and functionality of the LRC. The level 5 survey 2015-16 indicated generally positive ratings for LRC and IT facilities. The 2015 FIS results similarly reflected these responses.

191 Space has been a recurrent theme in student feedback, including the level 5 survey and the NSS, and in external examiners' reports and Programme Committee discussions. NSS 2015 satisfaction levels with access to specialised equipment, facilities or rooms had fallen from 83 per cent to 71 per cent. Programme and school-level documents indicate an ongoing concern with the sufficiency of rehearsal and teaching space and the complexities of space use. Responses to student feedback concerning space are evidenced through annual monitoring action plans and the NSS digest of responses by programmes; actions cited include the use of additional spaces outside the campus for rehearsals, and local storage solutions for instruments and equipment.

192 These and other estates issues are actively considered by the SMC and College-level committees. For example, the LQSC receives the College Productions Annual Monitoring Report 2014-15, and the SMC also receives updates on storage space and production venue issues. Through the Estates Committee, which reports to the FGP, the College is defining its new Estates Strategy. Schools report on issues relating to space and facilities through their boards and action plans. The team also saw evidence that programme proposals pay attention to issues of space, and through the work of the Academic Development Committee the College considers the availability of resources and potential impact of new provision.

193 The scrutiny team considers that the College is engaging appropriately with short and long-term estates and space issues, and through its new Estates Strategy is preparing to ensure the effectiveness of its existing and potential assets. Although pressures on space and the IT infrastructure remain live issues, learning resources are generally adequate to support students in the achievement of their programme outcomes. On this basis, and that of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 187-192, the scrutiny team concludes that the College has appropriate mechanisms in place to monitor the suitability and effectiveness of available learning support materials.

The effectiveness of any student and staff advisory counselling services is monitored, and any resource needs arising are considered

194 In light of an analysis of best practice in student support, the College established a new Student Services team within the Registry in 2014. This provision covers health and counselling, financial advice, accommodation, disability, study abroad and guidance for

international and exchange students. A Students' Union Participation Coordinator also works with the Student Services team. In addition, a Student Experience Committee has been in operation since 2014-15. Its membership includes Students' Union officers *ex officio*, elected students, and members of staff in student-support roles including the Student Services Manager, Academic Enhancement Manager, Specialist Support and Equality Officer, librarian, and ICT Support Officer. The work of the committee, reporting to the Academic Board, includes monitoring the demand for counselling services.

195 Counselling services are provided by experienced external counsellors. With a significant number of students accessing the service (about 20 per cent of the student population in 2014-15, and approximately 10 per cent when the CSA was produced in 2015) provision of the service has been limited to a maximum of 12 sessions for individual students. Evidence of the increased uptake of referrals to the counselling service over the last two years is noted at the Student Experience Committee, Equality and Diversity Committee, and SMC. Relevant actions in response to supporting student mental health issues include the British Association for Performing Arts Medicine, and workshops and other initiatives with the mental health charity MIND. The Counselling Survey indicates that services are perceived as effective in supporting student retention.

196 The Staff Survey 2014 included questions about stress at work, harassment and bullying, and preparation for and coping with change. While there is no explicit reference to access to counselling services, there is an above-benchmark response to stress and the need for preparation for change. The subsequent Staff Survey action plan has addressed these issues largely in the area of internal communication about change. Staff counselling is arranged through the human resources department.

197 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 194-196, the scrutiny team concludes that the capacity and effectiveness of student and staff advisory counselling services are monitored, and any resource needs arising are actively considered.

Administrative support systems are able to monitor student progression and performance accurately, and provide timely and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs

198 The College's student record system tracks students' marks and progress following registration. Students' performance is considered at Programme Assessment Boards, which precede the Examination Boards. Evidence from the observation of Examination Boards indicated effective processes and procedures followed in considering student performance, and paperwork in good order. The Migration Strategy (paragraph 57) defines the arrangements to be made for Examination Boards if the College were to be granted TDAP. Current arrangements with respect to membership and chairing will operate, and guidelines will be developed to include information about recording of marks, reporting of mitigating circumstances, and key responsibilities.

199 A report on the outcomes of Examination Boards is received at the Academic Board, with an analysis of award classifications across the various programmes, comparator analysis, and recommendations for enhancing the process. Progression statistics are presented as part of the data packs for programme annual monitoring, which are reported at school boards. Furthermore, the team noted SMC consideration of progression and retention issues. Survey data relating to the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education are considered at the LQSC and Academic Board. The survey is undertaken by an external agency.

200 Administrative support for programme and school boards is in place. Action with regard to sufficiency of administration to support programmes is noted in the annual monitoring report.

201 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 198-200, the scrutiny team concludes that administrative support systems are able to monitor student progression and performance accurately, and provide timely and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs.

Effective and confidential mechanisms are in place to deal with all complaints regarding academic and non-academic matters

202 The College has delegated powers to handle academic appeals as set out in its Academic Appeals Policy. The Policy and accompanying flowchart, which are provided in the HAPP, and available to students on the VLE, indicate relevant information concerning responsibilities and timeframes. As stipulated in the Policy, if College procedures have been exhausted, an appellant may make a further appeal to the University as the awarding body. Should the appellant remain dissatisfied with the decision, the option to appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) is made clear in the Policy. There is also an Applicant Appeals procedure, which is referred to in the Admissions Policy.

203 The College's Complaints Policy is also available in the HAPP, with an accompanying complaints flowchart and a complaints form, although this latter is not available in the Student Handbook. The Policy makes clear the process for handling complaints, and confirms that if internal College processes are exhausted, students have a right to contact the University and ultimately the OIA. The 2014 HER found that students understood the process for accessing relevant information concerning complaints via the VLE. OIA annual letters indicate that no 'completion of procedures' letters were received in 2012; four were received in 2013, and six in 2014. No complaints have been made to the OIA.

204 A policy and procedure document on academic misconduct is available for staff and students. A guidance leaflet for students directs them to College policy available on the VLE, and links to these are also provided in the Student Handbook. In addition, policies on student conduct such as anti-bullying and anti-harassment, drugs and alcohol, and disciplinary action are also referred to in the HAPP.

205 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 202-204, the scrutiny team concludes that effective and confidential mechanisms are in place to deal with all complaints regarding academic and non-academic matters.

Staff involved with supporting the delivery of the organisation's higher education provision are given adequate opportunities for professional development

206 As noted above (paragraph 152), the College makes a clear commitment in its Strategic Plan to 'provide academic staff with the stimulation, support, mentoring and resources to continually develop as teachers and practitioners, ensuring that staff maintain a close understanding of current developments in research, scholarship and professional practice in their subjects'.

207 The Staff Development Policy sets out the range of opportunities, responsibilities and expectations for permanent and fixed-term employees including statutory conferences, and workshops/conferences, access to the CPD scheme (PReSPA) and funding opportunities to enhance professional skills and knowledge. Although the Policy excludes 'casual workers and self-employed professionals providing services on a fee basis', fractional staff on contracts have access to the same PPDR process and can apply for staff development funding (see also paragraphs 157-158).

208 The Staff Development Committee, reporting to the SMC, reviews priorities for training, allocation of funds, and the range of activities available to staff. Peer observation of

teaching is in place and a report of this activity is discussed at the Staff Development Committee. Peer observation applies to any member of staff whose teaching input has a significant assessment component, but in practice includes all full-time and fractional permanent teaching staff (paragraph 159). Outcomes of peer review feed in to the College's annual staff development events. The team saw evidence that funding to support staff development training or CPD was available, and allocated, across both academic and professional strands.

209 The scrutiny team considers that the College takes a positive approach to supporting staff engagement in their own professional development, and notes particularly the range of staff development opportunities available. On this basis, and that of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 206-208, the team concludes that staff involved with supporting the delivery of the College's higher education provision are given adequate opportunities for professional development.

Information that the organisation produces concerning its higher education provision is accurate and complete

210 The HER 2014 report noted that the College produces a wide range of information made available through various mediums to all stakeholders. Published information is available in hard copy or on the College website. More specific course information, and policies and procedures, are available on the VLE. The Student Handbook, Student Charter, and programme information are given to students at registration and are available on the VLE. The College has taken particular care to inform students, staff and other stakeholders about the intention and rationale for seeking degree awarding powers.

211 Responsibilities for the accuracy of information are specified in the Published Information Policy. The Marketing Communications and Student Recruitment Committee, which reports to SMC, has responsibility for overseeing all marketing materials in compliance with Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision and in relation to CMA guidance.

212 Students met by the scrutiny team generally confirmed that that they had received appropriate information prior to arrival and at induction. They were well informed about the College's mission, which was a key factor in their choosing it. Other comments, backed up by the information in the FIS, suggested that recruitment was often based on reputation and recommendation rather than website presence. Some students mentioned that they had 'stumbled across the course'. Information received through the prospectus and website is 'useful' or 'very useful' (80 per cent and 89 per cent respectively) according to the FIS. Some areas of the College have expressed the need to improve the marketing and promotion of courses especially for online and masters programmes. The College website contains relevant course information, including reference to delivery of the MA Ensemble Theatre at a 'London venue'. Although the team heard an account of lack of awareness of the precise location of the course from a student recruited overseas, other students on the course reported being aware of the location and of its facilities before joining the course.

213 All students receive a transcript of their studies from the College, and the University issues degree certificates where applicable.

214 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 210-213, the scrutiny team concludes that information produced by the College concerning its higher education provision is accurate and complete.

Equality of opportunity is sought and achieved in the organisation's activities

215 The Equality and Diversity Committee considers equality of opportunity for staff and students. This Committee reports to the Academic Board, LQSC and SMC, and includes two Governors in its membership. Its remit includes a requirement to review equal opportunities and disability procedures, guidelines and codes of practice, and to monitor compliance with appropriate legislation and good practice.

216 The team noted evidence from Equality and Diversity Committee documents of attention to a range of student and staff-facing issues and activities, including: support available to students; access to software in the LRC; the consideration of counselling needs; seminars from the British Association for Performing Arts Medicine to support mental wellbeing; and discussion of a potential bid to Stonewall Workplace Equality Index. The Committee also notes the College's work to promote diversity in the sector through involvement of College graduates in the celebration of Black Theatre, and the Rose Bruford Teaching Fellowship in Accessible Practice in partnership with the Graeae Theatre Company, which champions accessibility and deaf and disabled talent. The Equality and Diversity Committee received the results of the FIS, level 5 survey and NSS, and takes forward issues of access and representation.

217 The College has a commitment to supporting widening participation and promote diversity, working with young people from low socio-economic groups, those living in low-participation neighbourhoods, those who are the first generation to attend higher education, from black or minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds, and those with disability or from a care background. In relation to its Access to HE agreement, the College reports improvement in the percentage of BME students, students from lower socio-economic groups, and the proportion of students from state schools. There is a continued rise in the number of students declaring a disability. The work of the College to improve in key areas of under-representation is monitored through the Equality and Diversity Committee.

218 The Accessibility Audit undertaken across the College indicates, for each programme, where reasonable adjustments would be necessary for students with a variety of disabilities.

219 The Staff Survey carried out in 2014 provided a staff perspective on the College's commitment to equality and diversity. Areas of satisfaction highlighted by this survey include equality and diversity, and feeling supported and valued.

220 The Student Handbook includes information about support for disabled and dyslexic students. A Specialist Support and Equality Officer provides advice from pre-application to graduation for students declaring a disability, including long term health conditions, and specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. Advice is available on specialist dyslexia support and general study support. The team saw evidence of appropriate policy with respect to student disability, and considered that the College had in place appropriate learning agreements, and that reasonable adjustments were made at interview.

221 On the basis of the evidence discussed in paragraphs 215-220, the scrutiny team concludes that equality of opportunity is sought and achieved in the College's activities.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick reference guide to key terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers.

Academic standards

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

Award

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

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

Distance learning

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

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.

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.

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

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