



REPORT

**Institutional quality
enhancement review**

**Royal Welsh College of
Music and Drama**

Cardiff, United Kingdom

November 2021

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Introduction

The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD) was originally founded in 1949 as the Cardiff College of Music. It is a well-established institution within the UK higher education conservatoire sector that provides higher, and pre-higher education in musical and dramatic arts. The College has a long-standing strategic alliance with the University of South Wales (USW) dating back to 2007. As such, it operates as a wholly owned subsidiary of the USW. The College shares academic infrastructure and procedures with the USW whilst maintaining a degree of autonomy and a distinct brand identity as the “*Royal Conservatoire*” in Wales. Professor Helena Gaunt was appointed as Principal in 2018 and is leading the strategic direction of the institution which is articulated within the College’s Strategic Plan.

The College operates seventeen courses at higher education level (excluding ERASMUS) along with a substantial raft of activity at pre- higher education level. Current higher education provision is at Bachelors and Masters levels and it is intended to extend this to Doctoral level as soon as it is feasible. The College is in a period of expansion with new higher education courses in Scenic Construction and Musical Theatre launched in 2021; there are plans for further course additions with an overall increase in student numbers. Alongside the expansion, the College intends to apply for Taught Degree Awarding Powers and to evaluate the dynamics of full institutional autonomy.

Context of the Review

The institutional review of the RWCMD by MusiQuE is seen by the College as an important step towards achieving goals stated within the Strategic Plan, in particular, those relating to future autonomy, self-validation and doctoral provision. The MusiQuE procedure is a focused review of the College in the context of its place within the larger USW, Cardiff, and the broader regional, national and international contexts. In order to facilitate the review and to ensure that its effectiveness is maximized within the UK context, there has been a series of contacts between MusiQuE and the QAA. It is hoped that the contents of this MusiQuE report will serve to provide the QAA and other interested parties with a fair and objective view of the RWCMD¹. A separate review of the USW will be carried out by the QAA in 2022 and the RWCMD will be incorporated into this as one of the constituent bodies of the university.

The review process

The review follows a three stage process.

- 1) The institution presents a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) to the international review team for analysis in advance of the site-visit. For this review, the SER was put together by the RWCMD Course Leaders Group. This group is chaired by the Principal and consists of senior academic and support staff and students; external input was called upon where the group considered it appropriate. The SER was drafted using the MusiQuE standards for review. Once received and analysed, the review team met in order to identify the focus of the site-visit and to agree the lines of enquiry of the review.
- 2) The site-visit consisted of six meetings with representative stakeholders (both internal and external) as follows:
 - Meeting 1* with the Senior Management Team (SMT)
 - Meeting 2* with senior administrative staff and representatives from the quality assurance department
 - Meeting 3* with teachers/lecturers
 - Meeting 4* with students
 - Meeting 5* with the members of the Academic Board
 - Meeting 6* with alumni and representatives of the professionAdditional site-visit activities included a tour of the facilities, observational visits to classes and learning activities and attendance at a formal concert performance. A series of private meeting review team meetings was incorporated into the schedule of the site-visit so as to facilitate reflection and planning. The site-visit

¹ SER, p.3-5

culminated in a final feedback session to the institution at which the review team presented a summary of its findings.

- 3) A report structured on the MusiQuE Standards for Institutional Review has been produced by the review team. The institution is invited to give initial comments and comments on accuracy to the draft report following which, the report will be signed off and issued formally by the Board of MusiQuE. At the end of the process the Report is published on the website of MusiQuE.

The review team consisted of:

Christopher Caine (review team member and Secretary), Lecturer - Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, London (UK)

Broderic Chow (review team member), Reader and Director of Learning, Teaching and Inclusion - Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London (UK)

Helen McVey (review team member), Director of Business Development and Interim Head of Drama - Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow (UK)

Siri Storheim (review team member), Masters Student - Norwegian Academy of Music, Oslo (Norway)

Mist Thorkelsdottir (Chair of the review team), Senior Advisor for International Relations, University of Southern California – Thornton School of Music, Los Angeles (USA)

Marlon Titre (review team member), Head of the Classical Music Department, Royal Conservatoire, The Hague (The Netherlands)

Key data on RWCMD

Name of the institution	Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama
Legal status	Public higher education institution within the University of South Wales
Date of creation	1949 as College of Music; 1970 As College of Music and Drama
Website address	Home Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama (rwcmd.ac.uk)
Departments	Music and Drama
Programmes/modes of study offered	<u>HE:</u> BA (Hons) Acting (67 students) BA (Hons) Design for Performance (53 students) BA (Hons) Stage Management & Technical Theatre (63 students) BMus (Hons) Music (372 students) BMus Jazz (39 students) MA Advanced Opera Performance (16 students) MA Jazz (7 students) MA Opera Directing (4 students) MA Arts Management (22 students) MMus Music Intensive Mode (9 students) MMus Music Two Year Mode (93 students) Master of Arts: Acting - Stage, Screen & Radio (11 students) Master of Arts: Design for Performance (19 students) Master of Arts: Musical Theatre (16 students)

	Master of Arts: Stage & Event Management (14 students) PG DIP MUS Two Year Mode (1 student) PG DIP Music Intensive Mode (1 student) ERASMUS (2 students) <u>Pre-HE:</u> Junior Conservatoire Young Actors' Studio
Number of students	809
Number of teachers	

1. Institutional mission, vision and context

Standard 1: the institutional mission and vision are clearly stated.

The RWCMD Strategic Plan articulates a very clear set of institutional statements. The Vision of the College is to *“inspire and change lives, connect and transform communities through the arts”*. The Mission is: *“To offer pioneering, immersive, professional education in music and drama, which empowers the next generation of outstanding practitioners, and nurtures an inclusive and international artistic community”*.

Below these headline statements are five strategic pillars which can be summarised as: the provision of future focussed and industry-led training; a pioneering performance programme; a global position as the national conservatoire of Wales; integrated research and enterprise; and a sustainable and flourishing organisation. The institutional values of *“expert and inclusive, contemporary and collaborative, resourceful and responsible”* give a foundation to all dimensions of the Strategic Plan².

The Strategic Plan is supported by a raft of support plans which include the Investment Plan, the Academic Strategy and associated Research Strategy, the Draft Environmental and Sustainability Policy, , the Strategic Equality Plan and the People Plan. Data related to the strategic operation of the College was made available to the review team which included National Student Survey results, student degree classifications, progression and completion rates, student recruitment, student numbers and student profiles (ethnicity, gender, nationality).

The Academic Strategy supports key academic priorities set out in the Strategic Plan. Priorities of the Academic Strategy include the development of a future focussed and sustainable curriculum, developing strategic approaches to quality assurance, enhancing the emphasis on the student experience within the College community, research and knowledge exchange, digital initiatives, and embedding collaboration as a core value³.

Recent global events

The recent major global events of the pandemic and Black Lives Matter have particular resonance for this review and the review team was keen to hear of the College’s response. The review team was informed that the financial, estate and educational issues caused by the pandemic had caused acute problems requiring urgent action. In order to keep the provision going, immediate changes were made to the delivery of courses and the operation of the estate. The SMT informed the review team that the overall effect of the pandemic had been to strengthen the commitment to the Strategic Plan. It has produced an urgent resolve to strengthen the position of art in society and maximise the potential of digital technologies and blended learning. Similarly, the Black Lives Matter movement has been a positive catalyst for change in areas. As a result, changes are continuing to be made to the curriculum and syllabus, the performance repertoire, creative programming and planning, the academic staff profile (including external visiting staff lists) and the inner-working of the College as a whole⁴.

Another significant external factor has been Brexit. Brexit has had major implications for the international profile of student cohort and has resulted in a significant drop in European student numbers. The discontinuation of the UK ERASMUS scheme has resulted in a change to the international opportunities for students and staff and the review team heard that partnerships and exchanges would have to be put into place to compensate for the loss⁵.

Collaboration

The SER highlights the importance of collaboration as a strategic driver in various domains of the institution’s work. External institutional collaboration takes place nationally and internationally with other educational and professional

² Strategic Plan, SER p.7

³ SER p.11-13

⁴ Meeting 1 with the Senior Management Team

⁵ Meeting 1 with the Senior Management Team

agencies and organisations⁶. Internally, the institution is committed to maximising the advantages of its profile as a music and dance institution with a commitment to furthering multi-disciplinary collaboration in its courses and creative output⁷.

In a meeting with teachers, the review team received a very positive response to the collaborative agenda. The review team heard that collaboration is taking place both informally at student initiated level and more formally within the curriculum and Creative Programme. Collaboration is already a strong integral component of some of the courses as exemplified by the BMus⁸. Students gave examples of both student initiated and programme initiated collaborative performance. However, they considered the current timetable as less than optimal for the purposes of collaboration⁹. The review team was informed that the timetable is being re-structured so as to remove barriers which currently inhibit systematic collaboration within the College's courses and creative output¹⁰.

People, Values and Culture

People, Values and Cultures is an important element of the Strategic Plan, is addressed operationally through the People Plan and encapsulates the important driver of diversity. The College makes a strong commitment to offering an "equal, safe and respectful" environment underpinned by values of equality, diversity and inclusivity in all its operations. Institutional plans and policies designed to underpin these aspirations include the Respect Statement, the development of the People Plan, the Recruitment Strategy, the Strategic Equality Plan with its accompanying Equality Action Plan, and the Anti-Racism Plan¹¹. The College considers staff training to be another important element of this strategic priority. In support of strategic planning in this area there have been a number of reorganisations across the College particularly in the areas of academic administration, production and most latterly, the junior conservatoires¹².

The review team was informed that the BA Acting course is an example of how revalidation can contribute to embedding diversity and inclusivity into the curriculum. Similarly, in a meeting with senior administrative staff and the QA office the review team was informed that targets are now in place to ensure more diverse output of the Creative Programme¹³. This was confirmed by students who gave an example of the recent collaborations with the Chineke Orchestra¹⁴. Other initiatives to promote diversity include engagement between the Principal and hourly paid lecturers (HPLs)¹⁵, and the College's clear mechanisms for "calling out" incidents of racism and discrimination. Students informed the review team of their keen awareness and sensitivity to all aspects of diversity and inclusivity and were very affirmative of the attitude of the institution to these priorities¹⁶.

Widening Participation

Widening participation, engagement and access to professional training is another priority within the strategic planning process. In this arena, the Junior Conservatoire and Young Actors Studio (both pre-HE level) are considered to be important vehicles for promoting access and engagement. The Creative Programme is considered to be another important facilitator which has the potential to engage with new audiences and to extend the reach of the College. The College intends to appoint a new Communities Partnership Manager with the aim of extending reach through working with external agencies. The College considers that the new Student Recruitment

⁶ SER p.11

⁷ SER p.12

⁸ Meeting 3 with teachers

⁹ Meeting 4 with students

¹⁰ Meeting 3 with teachers

¹¹ SER p.12

¹² SER p.12

¹³ Meeting 2 with senior administrative staff and the QA office

¹⁴ Meeting 1 with the Senior Management Team

¹⁵ Meeting 3 with teachers

¹⁶ Meeting 4 with students

Strategy is a central plank in the enhancement of widening participation. The strategy aims to facilitate the recruitment of the widest range of applicants and to balance disciplines and diversity¹⁷. The review team learnt that being the national conservatoire of Wales, the College has a significant commitment to widening access and prioritising student recruitment targets relating specifically to Wales¹⁸. Students were very positive about outreach activities organised by the College which they considered to have beneficial effects on widening participation and community engagement¹⁹.

Expansion of student numbers

The review team noted the College's intention to expand student numbers²⁰. The Strategic Plan identifies the new courses that will contribute to the expansion. Alongside this there will be a modest increase and rebalancing of numbers in some existing courses. The review team heard that the expansion of student numbers is an important means of ensuring financial security and sustainability. The review team was given the example of how the MA Arts Management is preparing for expansion by the creation of a specific business plan in which widening access is identified as one of the drivers²¹. Other measures to enhance sustainability include the development of new income sources such as short courses and summer schools, increasing philanthropic revenue and engaging further with the Higher Education Funding Council of Wales²².

The review team was impressed by the content and clarity of the Strategic Plan which articulates a strong set of statements about the identity, values and future plans for the RWCMD. The Strategic Plan tells a cogent story in an open, accessible and engaging manner. The review team was impressed by the sub-strategies, policies and plans that have been devised to support the operation of the Strategic Plan. It considers the sub-strategies to be effective in range and scope and taken as a whole, the review team considers the strategic planning process, the intended direction of travel and the prioritisation of objectives to be coherent and convincing.

The College is clearly going through a continual process of self-examination and reflection. It is using a range of management information to understand its position in regional, national and international contexts and to develop grounded and realistic measures for enacting its strategies.

There is one area that the review team considers could be further strengthened. Pillar "1a" of the Strategic Plan states: "*Sharpen the curriculum framework and pedagogies (including through digital technologies) to fully embody RWCMD's values and strategic direction, and catalyse industry-ready, resilient graduates who seek to make a difference.*" This is an academic objective and there could therefore be specific supporting statements within the Academic Strategy about how learning and teaching should respond to strategic drivers such as diversity and inclusion, collaboration and shared learning across the disciplines. Moreover, the review team considers that the use of statistical data for strategic priorities could be strengthened further particularly in the area of diversity.

The review team was impressed by the way in which the College has responded to the Pandemic and to the Black Lives Matter movement. It commends the way in which the College made agile changes in order to continue the educational provision and the way in which it has learnt from both issues. In terms of the academic provision, the review team considers that there is an appropriate move to diversification and inclusivity within the curriculum of courses and the Creative Programme to provide a more balanced and inclusive student experience. Similarly, the College has been quick to develop digital learning priorities and to include this in its strategic planning. The College is taking the opportunity to review its use of space following the changes in staff

¹⁷ SER p. 13

¹⁸ Meeting 1 with the Senior Management Team

¹⁹ Meeting 4 with students

²⁰ SER p.9, Strategic Plan

²¹ Meeting 3 with teachers

²² Meeting 1 with the Senior Management Team

working practices such as working from home. The review team was impressed by the apt re-designation of office space for use in learning and teaching activities during a tour of the facilities.

During meetings with stakeholders within the institution, the review team heard evidence that the strategic priorities are understood at various levels of the institution and it considers that this is an important dimension in managing the change and evolution of the College. This work is never complete and the review team encourages the SMT and managers of courses and departments to continue the process of dissemination using the available channels, sub-strategies and communications (to be discussed in Standard 6) so as to achieve the desired strategic objectives.

The review team was impressed by the College's strong commitment to collaboration, particularly within its degree courses and creative output. It perceived a real desire to provide cross-disciplinary learning and experiences for the student body as articulated in the Academic Strategy. The review team considers that if this becomes fully embedded within the College's provision, the institution will attain a highly unique profile within the sector. The review team therefore encourages the institution to continue on the pathway of collaboration with vigour.

The review team concludes that the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is fully compliant with Standard 1.

2. Educational processes

2.1 The programmes and their methods of delivery

Course design and approval

The College's mechanisms for design and approval of higher education courses sit within the structures and processes of the USW. The College's Academic Board delegates powers to the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) for the validation and re-validation of current and new courses. The QAC reports to the College's Academic Board and is overseen by the USW quality assurance committee²³.

The USW's principles for course design and approval are set out in the University Curriculum Design Guide. These state that courses should be sustainable, coherent, progressive, inclusive, informed and responsive to feedback²⁴.

The review team was given access to a sample of course materials including online handbooks and module guides. The handbooks give clear definitions of the learning aims of the discipline, learning outcomes and level of study in relation to the national framework; these in turn correspond to the Association of European Conservatoires (AEC) Polifonia Dublin Descriptors and the AEC Learning Outcomes²⁵. In both Music and Drama there are course progression routes from Bachelors to Masters (e.g. BA Acting – MA Acting) alongside free standing courses such as the MA Arts Management.

The College has more autonomy in the design and approval of pre-HE courses which are not award bearing. The College has scheduled a review of its pre-HE curriculum to take place in 21/22 and it is intended that these courses should be aligned more closely with the strategic direction and mission of the institution. Preliminary work has already begun on this project²⁶.

As stated above in Standard 1, the Academic Strategy as a supporting strategy of the Strategic Plan, plays a major role in guiding the College's courses and aligning them with institutional priorities. Institutional priorities within the Academic Strategy include: developing a future focussed and industry-led curriculum, developing digital and creative technologies, equality, diversity and inclusivity, accessibility, collaboration and creating courses that promote specialisation alongside individual pathways. In addition to the College's provision of learning pathways from pre-HE to HE, the strategy articulates the intention to develop a range of short courses, summer schools and continuing professional development courses so as to further diversify its educational offer²⁷.

The SER states that individualisation of study pathways is achieved by mechanisms such as optional modules and placements. The review team noted that the BMus course offers students a choice of alternative credit weightings and options so as to maximise individual pathways²⁸. The review team was given several practical examples of how students had been able to pursue areas of individual interest within their courses. These examples included an individual vocational project within a 40 credit module and a new BMus orchestral strand. Music students were very appreciative of the way in which their one-to-one teachers are able to cater for their individual needs and interests²⁹.

On a related theme, the review team was interested to learn about the notion of "makers in society" and how it applies to students' courses of study. This is defined in the SER as bringing craft discipline into dialogue with societal responsibility³⁰. Students produce and perform work as collaborative artists and creators of the art; this

²³ SER p.15

²⁴ SER p.15

²⁵ SER p.15, BA Musical Theatre Programme Handbook

²⁶ SER p.15

²⁷ Academic Strategy

²⁸ SER p.17

²⁹ Meeting 3 with students

³⁰ SER p.9

self-led work will have an increasing presence within courses in the future³¹. This vision was affirmed by students with statements such as “I prefer to call myself a creative rather than an instrumentalist”; “my responsibility is to get people involved – outreach”³². The review team was informed that the revalidated MMus will use the concept of makers in society as a key plank in its curriculum. It will be a major module that will focus on students’ exploration of their role within society and the profession³³.

The review team was able to identify many opportunities for students to present their individual creative work including the following: courses require the presentation of creative work for examination; the Creative Programme of the College offers numerous participatory opportunities, sometimes across courses; and students are encouraged to initiate and collaborate with each other on independent creative projects³⁴.

Course handbooks made available to the review team demonstrate that a wide-range of learning and teaching methods is employed within and across courses. For example, learning and teaching methods for the BA Musical Theatre include public performance events, dance classes, acting workshops, ensemble tuition, tutorials and collaborative working³⁵. This diversity of learning and teaching methods is mirrored in modules of the BMus. In both courses, performance is a major component and the College’s Creative Programme provides a significant interface between degree course curriculum and the public facing creative output to internal and external stakeholders.

Section three of the Academic Strategy highlights the importance of critical thinking and reflection as a learning strategy within the College’s courses. In a sample of the College’s courses, the review team was able to identify numerous instances where critical thinking is an intrinsic feature of the course³⁶.

The SER states that student support for learning is available in Music and Drama departments and is offered in different modes depending upon the department and course. In the Drama Department, students have access to a course member of staff who is designated as the year tutor. In the Music Department, the head of the instrumental discipline acts as the tutor for students studying in that field. Students in both departments may also call upon a wider range of senior academic staff such as course leaders for support and advice on matters such as careers³⁷. In a meeting with students the review team was informed that students felt well supported by their teachers, course teams and the support staff³⁸.

Research

The fourth pillar of the Strategic Plan is “integrated research and enterprise innovation for the arts”. This is explored further within the supporting Academic Strategy. The Academic Strategy prioritises the development of research and innovation as a core and sustainable constituent of conservatoire training. This includes the development of a clear identity for the College’s research and innovation, working with the USW to develop a doctoral course and engaging with the Research Excellence Framework. Research in creative practice is articulated as an important defining element of the College’s research profile and identity³⁹.

The review team was informed that discussions on the infrastructure for staff research are in the relatively early stages⁴⁰ and it was interested to note the current status of research within the College and its relevance for the development of research-informed-teaching (RIT) (see also Standard 4.1). The review team was informed that

³¹ Meeting 1 with the Senior Management Team

³² Meeting 4 with students

³³ Meeting 3 with teachers

³⁴ Meeting 3 with students, Course Handbooks, the Creative Programme

³⁵ BA Musical Theatre Handbook

³⁶ MA Musical Theatre, MA Opera Direction, BA Stage Management and Technical Theatre, BMus Jazz

³⁷ SER p.19

³⁸ Meeting 3 with students

³⁹ Strategic Plan & Academic Strategy

⁴⁰ Meeting 1 with the Senior Management Team

members of the teaching staff who carry out research externally are increasingly bringing the results into their teaching and to course development. The new BMus was given as an example of an exciting new space that would enable staff research and knowledge to permeate the curriculum⁴¹.

The review team saw evidence that research is an integral element of courses, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The extent to which research is formally articulated within learning outcomes varies across the courses. The BMus year four Extended Essay module articulates a research requirement explicitly; students pursue topics of interest through supported self-directed learning to consolidate research skills and develop a foundation for postgraduate study⁴². Similarly, the Contextual and Advanced Professional Studies module of the MA in Musical Theatre itemises advanced skills of research in its learning outcomes⁴³. Less explicit manifestations of research are visible in courses such as the BA Musical Theatre and the MA Acting for Screen Stage and Radio⁴⁴. In these courses, research is characterised less formally as an investigative process rather than as research per se.

The review team was impressed by many aspects of the courses and the way in which they are delivered. It considers that the process for the design and approval of courses is very thorough and that it aligns with the strategic priorities of the College. The course handbooks and module descriptions demonstrate a wide range of relevant curricular elements which respond effectively to the demands of the contemporary industries and disciplines. Courses are securely structured and well referenced against national and international statements of subject benchmarks and learning outcomes. There is clearly a strong commitment to building on, and enhancing the industry-led curriculum. This includes the continuing development of the strategic priority for collaboration within the curriculum and courses which was discussed extensively under Standard 1 (above).

The review team was impressed by the college's flexible approach to facilitating individual pathways of study. Students commented very positively on their individual experience of the courses. It was clear to the review team that individual pathways are built into the curriculum formally within the Academic Strategy and course learning outcomes. These aim to prepare students for very diverse career outcomes alongside a rigorously specialised curriculum within the discipline. Each student's journey is valued and respected by the College and there is no one definition of success.

The review team commends the institution for its approach to shared educational values at all levels of study (Pre-He to HE). The review of pre-higher education courses gives the College the opportunity for further unified alignment with strategic priorities and for a stronger institution profile. This in turn has the potential to impact favourably on reputation, brand and ultimately, student recruitment.

The review team noted with interest the continuing discussions relating to research. The College acknowledges that it is in the early stages of establishing sustainable structures for a flourishing research culture. The review team suggests that for research to be fully embedded into courses, and to maximise research-informed-teaching, there needs to be a more developed research presence led by the teaching staff. The review team acknowledges that the College's courses contain research elements. However, the degree to which research features is variable. The review team considers that there are strong arguments for the initiation of an audit of research outcomes across its higher education courses. This would enable the College to make a judgement as to whether research needs to be further strengthened within the curriculum.

The review team acknowledges that the College's emergent stage of research is perhaps indicative of institutions that have not hitherto run research degree programmes. The review team suggests that the support

⁴¹ Meeting 3 with teachers

⁴² BMus Extended Essay online Module Handbook

⁴³ Contextual and Advanced Professional Studies Module MA Musical Theatre

⁴⁴ BA Musical Theatre Handbook, MA for Screen Stage and Radio online module handbooks

structures and infrastructure for research need to be substantially strengthened before a doctoral course is established and to strengthen research-informed-teaching at Bachelor's and Master's levels. That stated, the review team acknowledges that the institutional relationship with the USW may offer more expedient short-term possibilities for staff to enhance their research profile whilst the College builds up an institutional independent research culture and infrastructure. The review team considers that the College is compliant within this standard in the context of an institution that does not run a research degree programme. However, the direction of travel across the sector is for a more developed structure of research within programme offers and staff profiles and the review team encourages the College to prioritise developments and raise the threshold in this area.

The review team concludes that the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is substantially compliant with Standard 2.1.

2.2 International perspectives

Standard: the institution offers a range of opportunities for students to gain an international perspective.

The College's international priorities are defined within the third pillar of the Strategic Plan as follows:

“Establish an international partnership network and platforms to underpin creative excellence, enhance student and staff experience, create professional opportunities, enable cultural exchange, and embody Wales' ability to lead through culture⁴⁵”

The review team heard that the College considers its place as a Welsh conservatoire within a global environment as an important aspect to its international profile. It is consequently committed to further development of its international reach and profile⁴⁶. The review team noted two separate collaborative agreements involving the RWCMD and the European String Teachers Association (ESTA) and the Aureus Conservatory in Singapore. The proposals with ESTA revolve around mutual credit recognition and working together on developing programme activities. In partnership with the Aureus Conservatory in Singapore, the College will be providing consultancy, support, advice and practical assistance in the development of music education services to children and young people⁴⁷.

The development of international partnerships, mobility and pedagogies is a priority within the Academic Strategy⁴⁸. Additionally, the College is in the process of formulating an international strategy aiming to create an international learning and teaching experience within all courses, which will be appropriate for the creative industries. Priorities will include establishing a diverse international mix of staff and visiting performers and establishing a calendar of major international events. In order to facilitate this, the College aims to grow its international exchange and placement opportunities for staff⁴⁹.

The College has an established list of International Chairs that interface with students through the delivery of elements of the curriculum (coaching, classes etc.). International Chairs are normally in post for a three year period. This formal mechanism is supplemented by a long-running, ad hoc system whereby international connections have been made opportunistically through teaching staff links and project-based exchanges. The College's teachers who are active on the international stage may often bring in their international experience and perspectives as part of their teaching⁵⁰. Students spoke very positively about the digital potential for internationalisation. They

⁴⁵ Strategic Plan: Pillar No.3

⁴⁶ Meeting 2 with senior administrative staff/QA office, Meeting 1 with the Senior Management Team

⁴⁷ ESTA proposal March 2019, Aureus/RWCMD proposal February 2019

⁴⁸ Academic Strategy Domain 3

⁴⁹ SER p.21

⁵⁰ SER p.21

considered that the increasing use of online teaching has extended the College's international reach and that it is now possible to bring in artists from around the world⁵¹.

As a result of Brexit, participation in ERASMUS is to be discontinued and the College is keen to take advantage of the Welsh government's efforts to initiate a replacement. The College will work with the Welsh government and the Association of European Conservatoires to establish the scheme and to be an active participant in its exchanges and activities⁵². With regard to the current position, data provided to the review team indicates that student participation in the ERASMUS exchange scheme has been modest in recent years and it did not hear evidence from students or staff who had participated in international exchange⁵³. The SER outlines a range of support mechanisms for exchange students including access to academic and support staff, an international handbook and guidance on the College's website.

The review team considers that the College has well considered and coherent strategies for building its international reach as an institution and for embedding this further within the student experience of its courses. These are articulated in the Strategic Plan and the Academic Strategy, and they will be expanded upon within the emergent International Strategy. The review team considers that the post Brexit plans for an expansion in international partnerships and relationships is a well-judged strategy and that the recent appointment of the Director of External Affairs has the potential to underpin and energise the realisation of international strategic priorities.

Whilst the effects of international partnerships on the College's courses and student/staff mobility is in some respects emergent, internationalisation is more developed within the curriculum and in particular, the Creative Programme; the performance of music and drama both feed intrinsically on international perspectives. The review team is impressed by the system of International Chairs which strengthens international perspectives within the curriculum and has the potential to give real weight to the educational and creative experience of the students. The creation of International Chairs makes a strong statement about the values of global expertise within the College.

In summary, the review team strongly suggests the College to continue to engage with agencies to facilitate international activities such as staff and student exchanges, and to strengthen the visibility of international elements of the curriculum within course documents and the student experience of the curriculum so as to further embed internationalisation.

The Review team concludes that the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is fully compliant with Standard 2.2.

2.3 Assessment

Standard: assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.

Assessment methods for the College's courses are stated for each course and module. The College's virtual learning environment (VLE) gives students access to all requirements for each module including learning outcomes, assessment requirements and assessment/marking criteria. The review team was given access to the VLE and it noted a wide range of assessment tasks within individual courses and across the courses. Assessment varies according to the discipline and includes practical, creative and performance assessments, written work, presentations, reflective writing, and technical and analytical tasks⁵⁴.

⁵¹ Meeting 4 with students

⁵² SER p.22

⁵³ DATA source: Student number totals by year and course

⁵⁴ RWCMD virtual learning environment - Moodle

Assessments are designed to assess the achievement of learning outcomes and they are devised and approved within the validation and review process overseen by the USW. Assessment marking criteria are set out alongside the learning outcomes and assessment requirements. The USW sets out broad parameters and guidance for assessment design in the University Assessment for Learning Policy. Guidance includes a University Assessment Tariff which is designed to ensure continuity across all courses on matters such as credit weightings and word counts for essays. Adjustments can be made to assessment during the period of the courses' validation and the mechanisms for this are set out in the USW Quality Manual. All formal summative assessments are carried out by more than one examiner and there are mechanisms for further moderation. Some specialist assessments may be carried out with the input of external specialist examiners in both music and drama. The College has a policy for feeding back to students on their assessed work within twenty working days⁵⁵.

The College considers that assessment is part of the learning process and is not an interruption to it. Students are therefore encouraged to have on-going dialogue with their tutors as part of the assessment process. Alongside this, formative assessment is described as being at the heart of learning within all courses⁵⁶.

The College uses various data sets in order to monitor the effectiveness of assessment and for planning, both at course and at institutional level. The data sets include student progression and achievement statistics, degree classifications and the National Student Survey (NSS). Institutional priorities for assessment are described in the Academic Strategy and are discussed further below⁵⁷.

The review team noted a lively internal debate on assessment within the College, in part spurred by the NSS survey which shows variable levels of student satisfaction with assessment. On a positive note, students reported that assessments are spread out effectively during the year and that feedback is generally prompt; feedback has become increasingly detailed in recent years. The review team heard that there are perceived issues of comparability and coherence across the departments and sometimes within departments⁵⁸. The review team noted that a similar issue had been identified within the MA for Stage Management where a discrepancy between internal and external placement marking had been identified at the Course Board⁵⁹.

In a meeting with members of the Academic Board the review team heard that one of the new principles of assessment is "what is less, is more". There is therefore a move to reduce the overall number of assessments⁶⁰. The College is enacting further reforms to assessment including adjusting assessment schedules and making greater use of on-going portfolio assessments, for example, in Creative Projects. The review team was informed that every effort is made by the teaching staff to ensure that students are aware of the location, purpose and significance of assessment criteria. Assessment literacy is considered to be a crucial dimension for students in the understanding of their work and its grading. The review team heard that the formal language associated with assessment can be a barrier. Work is being carried out to review the use of language and to make it more accessible in areas such as assessment criteria. There is also an initiative to share good assessment practice across the College's courses⁶¹.

The review team was interested to hear debates on the place of "real-world" assessment. It was given examples of where this takes place: the BMus is using these assessments more frequently and wherever possible and appropriate; similarly Arts Management assessments replicate industry situations⁶². In music, such assessments include orchestral side-by-side projects where the event may be assessed internally and by the external desk

⁵⁵ SER p.23, University of South Wales Quality Manual

⁵⁶ SER p.23

⁵⁷ Academic Strategy Domain 4

⁵⁸ Meeting 4 with students

⁵⁹ Course Board Stage Management Summer 2021, Meeting 4 with students

⁶⁰ Meeting 5 with members of the Academic Board

⁶¹ Meeting 3 with teachers; meeting 5 with members of the Academic Board

⁶² Meeting 3 with teachers

partner. The external assessor is briefed on the assessment expectations and the assessment criteria⁶³. In a meeting with students, the review team was informed of some discomfort with the marking of side-by-side real-world assessments. Whilst the experience of playing alongside a professional musician is very valuable and enjoyable, the marking process and the lack of formative feedback was described as problematic⁶⁴.

The dynamics of formative assessment was raised in a meeting between the review team and members of the Academic Board. The acting department is currently investigating the dynamics between formative assessment which aims to encourage improvement, and the ascribing of a final summative mark. The review team heard that encouraging remarks made within a formative assessment can sometimes be misinterpreted as indicative of the final summative mark rather than advice for improvement⁶⁵.

The review team noted the priorities set out in the Academic Strategy which are clearly linked to some of the debates described above and a response to data within the NSS. One of the objectives of the Academic Strategy is therefore to initiate an investigation with students into assessment as learning in the context of the conservatoire. There is also a commitment to initiate a training programme for internal and external staff who are involved in the assessment and feedback process⁶⁶.

The review team is aware that assessment is a live issue within the College and within the UK sector more broadly⁶⁷. It considers that the College has adopted a realistic approach to enhancing assessment procedures and responding to student feedback internally and within the NSS. The review team was impressed by some of the ideas for enhancement itemised above and expressed during site-meetings with staff and students. Overall, the review team endorses the action points in the Academic Strategy and it was encouraged to hear evidence from the student body that enhancements such as more detailed assessment feedback are already taking place. The review team suggests that the College continue to investigate and reflect upon the variation in NSS scores relating to learning and teaching across courses.

The review team is keen not to stray into the territory of course (programme) review. However, when considering a mark sheet, it noted that each learning outcome was commented upon separately and reference to the assessment criteria was not explicitly visible. That is not to imply that the assessment criteria were irrelevant to the marking process of this work. It is however, to suggest that some visible presence of assessment criteria might be helpful in making the assessments more transparent.

As the College continues to address issues within the NSS the review team encourages the College to clarify some elements of assessment and feedback and ensure consistency of feedback across both departments. This includes enhancing consistency between internal and external markers in the context of performance assessments and so called real-world assessments.

The Review team concludes that Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is fully compliant with Standard 2.3.

⁶³ Meeting 5 with members of the Academic Board

⁶⁴ Meeting 4 with students

⁶⁵ Meeting 5 with members of the Academic Board

⁶⁶ Academic Strategy Domain 4

⁶⁷ SER p.23

3. Student profiles

3.1 Admission/Entrance qualifications

Standard: clear admission criteria exist, which establish artistic/academic suitability of students.

Information regarding applications for the College's courses is housed on the RWCMD website. Higher education admissions requirements are specified on the main page of each course. There is a set of links to guide students through the application process including "How to apply" and "Audition Guidance". Each course has its own set of audition requirements which may include interviews, personal statements, portfolios and auditions. Candidates who might benefit from a non-traditional route into courses are considered with some flexibility in relation to published criteria in accordance with widening access policies. The College recognises prior learning (PL) and prior educational learning (PEL) and study abroad. Credit is awarded on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the College's procedures. Formal records are maintained by the academic administration and decisions are logged by the examination boards. The College has initiated a bursary scheme in 2021 so as to widen access and assist successful applicants from low income households⁶⁸.

Students requiring support for needs relating to health and learning are contacted by the Student Services department before registration so that a plan can be drawn up and agreed in advance of registration. Once registered, all students are offered an induction programme drawn up under the direction of the Head of Learning and Teaching. Themes for the programme include: wellbeing; transition into HE; College ethos; services and support; and engaging with differences. Although it is currently a two-week programme, the College is reviewing the potential for extending it further into the academic year⁶⁹.

The College uses various sets of data in support of its student recruitment processes, the most recent addition being a decliner survey⁷⁰. The SER gives details of the number of applicants set against the recruitment targets for each higher education course⁷¹. This is supplemented with data made available to the review team concerning student recruitment (applications, targets, offers and acceptances (home and overseas)), student profiles by course (gender, ethnicity and nationality) and student numbers by course (full-time/part-time, active, dormant, withdrawn, registration and end-of year numbers). The review team was given access to a sample of course monitoring reports and it noted qualitative commentary and evaluative discussion on student recruitment and student profiles (gender balance, ethnicity, regional recruitment, Welsh language capabilities)⁷².

Applications to the Junior Conservatoire are free of charge. Mirroring the process for higher education, information on applications and entrance requirements is available on the College's website accessed through the Children, Young People and Community portal. The portal also gives audition requirements and guidance for potential applicants. Entry to pre-HE courses is normally by audition except in the case of Theatre Workshop Classes where places are offered on a first-come, first-served basis⁷³.

Almost all courses at each level of study use either an interview or an individual audition as part of the admissions process. Students of the College spoke in very positive terms to the review team about their reasons for choosing the institution and their experience of application. Reasons for choosing the institution included the facilities, the teaching staff, the potential for experiencing both music and drama, the site and the relatively low cost of living. The review team heard repeatedly of the effectiveness of the admissions process from start to finish characterised by positive communications with members of staff, ushers and administrators⁷⁴. This positive account was mirrored

⁶⁸ SER p.25

⁶⁹ SER p.26-27

⁷⁰ Meeting 5 with members of the Academic Board

⁷¹ SER p.25

⁷² PG Music, MA Arts Management, BMus Course Monitoring Reports

⁷³ SER p.25

⁷⁴ Meeting 4 with students

by alumni of the College. Additionally, looking back on their experience, members of this group valued the way in which the College had fostered their individual learning goals⁷⁵.

Various enhancement initiatives related to recruitment are being explored. Building on the experience of online auditions during the pandemic, it is planned to expand this mode of auditioning so as to mitigate the financial barriers to applicants, facilitate widening participation and exploit administrative and logistical advantages. The College has therefore invested in an online application and audition platform which it is hoped will provide an efficient means of dealing with increasing numbers of applications. Alongside this, the College is evaluating how it can make its admissions procedures more interactive in order to reduce any inconsistencies caused through, for instance, overseas versus home applications and online versus face-to-face auditions.⁷⁶

With regard to student recruitment the Strategic Equality Plan states “ensure that we attract diverse students including students from non-traditional backgrounds and under-represented groups”⁷⁷. Similarly, the SER states that one of the overriding principles is that the College is a space for everyone and that it welcomes students of all backgrounds⁷⁸. The review team was very struck by the resonance of these statements evident in meetings that it held with students and alumni of the College. The overwhelmingly positive comments by these groups is a testament to the way in which the College is making this principle come alive. The review team finds that the College provides an exceptionally welcoming and inclusive environment at the point of application through to acceptance.

The review team finds that there are clear admissions requirements for all courses. When reviewing a sample of the entrance and audition requirements, it noted a considerable range of tasks tailored for the respective course disciplines and it concludes that these are appropriate tasks for applicants. The review team was provided with a sample of auditions assessment criteria⁷⁹. It concludes that auditions and entrance requirements are supported by effective criteria which enable teams to make sound judgements as to candidates’ suitability.

The review team noted the data relating to student numbers, programme recruitment and student profiles and it endorses the instigation of a decliner survey. The review team considers that these measures have the potential to determine how and where to widen the student recruitment reach and to strengthen the College’s competitive position in relation to other institutions within the sector. Course monitoring reports evidence evaluation of the student recruitment data and follow-up actions as appropriate. These reports also make reference to the relevant priorities in the institutional strategic documents. Related commentary on enhancing data collection and analysis follows in the next section (3.2).

The Review team concludes that the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is fully compliant with Standard 3.1.

3.2 Student progression, achievement and employability

Standard: the institution has mechanisms to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.

The College operates formal procedures for monitoring student progression and achievement. In terms of achievement, exam boards consider each students’ assessment profile and determine progression and achievement outcomes using this information. Exam boards report formally to the Academic Board where results

⁷⁵ Meeting 6 with representatives of the profession and alumni

⁷⁶ SER p.26-27

⁷⁷ Strategic Equality Plan Domain 3

⁷⁸ SER p.25

⁷⁹ BMus auditions assessment criteria

are considered at the highest academic level of the College⁸⁰. Student progression and achievement is also monitored at course level. The review team examined a sample of course monitoring reports containing evaluative commentary on progression and achievement and itemising measures for improving or enhancing student outcomes⁸¹. Supporting data for the evaluation of student progression and achievement includes spreadsheets on student degree outcomes, progression and achievement rates and student equality statistics (a historical breakdown of student numbers by gender, ethnicity, disability, fee status and Welsh fluency).

The SER itemises a number of measures that the College is taking to support and enhance student progression and achievement outcomes. Primary amongst these are the reconsideration and streamlining of assessment points and tasks (see also Standard 2.3), the support offered by the Student Services Department, the Fitness to Study Policy (which enables appropriate adjustments to be made to learning and teaching for individual students) and more consistent use of the virtual learning environment so as to improve monitoring of all aspects of assessment and student engagement⁸².

Outcomes relating to student employability are recorded and monitored formally at course level through course monitoring reports and the review team noted relevant discussions with the sample of reports provided⁸³. The reporting route to Academic Board is via the College Quality Assurance Committee (CQAC) which considers the information provided in course monitoring reports and course boards. Data sources used by the College in relation to employability include the following documents: Graduate Outcomes, Student First destination statistics (Music and Drama).

The review team noted the function of the College's RepCo – a social enterprise-based model of employability support available to students. Students may apply to join a student-led company designed to provide early career experience and build new employability skills independently of their courses of study. Students have access to advice from internal and external experts during their membership of RepCo. Other enhancements to employability include the RWCMD Skills Award (a prize for reflection on co- and extra-curriculum experiences), and an honorary award to students who have made a significant contribution to their chosen career within 10 years of graduation (Associate of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama ARWCMD)⁸⁴. The review team was informed that the Alumni Department is an effective resource for graduates in the search for employment opportunities⁸⁵. Plans for further enhancements include the creation of employability incubation spaces for students and the profession and the creation of short courses for courses such as Arts Management⁸⁶.

On examination of some of the supporting data, the review team was able to identify a broad range of employment outcomes for both Music and Drama courses. The outcomes included a significant number of artistic/creative employments along with other employment categories⁸⁷. The SER lists some of the higher profile artistic graduate outcomes demonstrating success for those graduates concerned⁸⁸.

The review team considers that the College has appropriate systems backed up by a range of data which are generally effective in the monitoring of student progression, achievement and employability. The review team noted a reflective approach to the available data, particularly within the sample of course monitoring reports. It noted that there is recognition within the College that more needs to be done. For example, there is a commitment to recruiting a data analyst within the Academic Strategy (see Standard 1 above and Standard 7

⁸⁰ SER p.27, p.43

⁸¹ MA Arts Management, BMus, PG Music course monitoring reports

⁸² SER p.27-30, Meeting 5 with members of the Academic Board

⁸³ MA Arts Management, BMus, PG Music course monitoring reports

⁸⁴ SER p.29

⁸⁵ Meeting 6 with representatives from the profession and alumni

⁸⁶ SER p.27

⁸⁷ First destination statistics (Music and Drama)

⁸⁸ SER p.30

below)⁸⁹. The review team considers that the appointment of a data analyst would be very helpful in expanding the range of quantitative and qualitative information in student progression and achievement, employability and indeed, recruitment including widening participation (Section 3.1 of this report). With regard to student progression and achievement, the Strategic Equality Plan includes a priority to “*monitor progression and achievement of students from protected groups*”⁹⁰. The review team did not see any specific data relating to this. It therefore suggests that there is a need to prioritise collection and analysis of data relating to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in all areas of this standard. This would give impetus to specific aims of the Strategic Equality Plan.

The review team noted that since 2017 the College has not participated in the collection of formal published employability data and that it considers the participation rate of its graduates in the survey to be consequently low. Moreover, the college considers that the incorporation of its graduates’ returns into the larger USW data pool creates difficulties of extrapolation and interpretation of information⁹¹. This is another area in which a designated data analysis officer could intervene to provide clearer information. The SER suggests that there could be a greater role for the Alumni Association in the collection of data and the review team considers that this could be very useful in providing data and tracking student employment outcomes⁹². Overall it considers the College to be fully compliant with Standard 3.2 but it suggests that the college should continue development of systematic data capture and analysis to inform future curricular developments.

The Review team concludes that Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is fully compliant with Standard 3.2.

⁸⁹ Academic Strategy Domain 4

⁹⁰ Strategic Equality Plan Domain 3

⁹¹ First Destination Statistics/Graduate Employment/Early Careers – commentary document

⁹² SER p.30

4. Teaching staff

4.1 Staff qualifications and professional activity

Standard: members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists/pedagogues/researchers.

The College considers its teaching staff as key to the achievement of its strategic aims and objectives. It maintains that its staff has a high level of professional standing and experience and that it has well established strengths within the industry and the sector. The SER states that there is clear guidance for the appointment of staff which is underpinned by appropriate criteria for appointment. Members of staff have access to training provided by the USW through the Centre for Enhancement in Learning and Teaching. The ethos of this department is to recognise staff holistically in terms of their various professional dimensions (practitioners, research, educators and leaders). The Director of the centre is an external member of the College's Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee. With regard to teaching qualifications, new full-time staff are required to have or to undertake a higher education teaching qualification and all staff are encouraged to participate in the Advanced HE Fellowship award. Training for this is provided by the USW. The College is keen to maximise the benefits of the staff's career links with professional arts organisations such as the BBC National Orchestra of Wales⁹³.

The review team heard positive affirmation of the quality of teaching within the College. Students informed the review team that members of teaching staff took exceptional care to cater for the individual needs of students, both within discipline centred study and within outreach activities⁹⁴. This affirmation was reiterated by alumni of the College who stressed the teaching staff's commitment to helping students with their learning priorities and the achievement of diverse professional outcomes⁹⁵.

A relatively recent development is the introduction in 2019 of a new staff appraisal system which aims to embed critical reflection as one of its central planks. In summary, the appraisal has five principle aims all underpinned by reflection, discussion and engagement: evaluating performance; the identification of clear and measurable objectives; the identification of support and development requirements, individual career planning; and line-manager/employee engagement⁹⁶. The potential effectiveness of this system was confirmed to the review team which heard that staff appraisal along with positive engagement between individual members of the teaching staff and their line-managers would be an important vehicle for ensuring that staff development is given appropriate and equal priority across the staff body⁹⁷.

The review team noted that clarification of job descriptions, particularly those for heads of study and module leaders is a key area within this priority. It is anticipated that this would enhance engagement with quality assurance and enhancement, best practice and engagement with the wider strategic priorities of the College. The review team was informed that once finalised, the People Plan would assist in the development and emancipation of staff⁹⁸. The review team noted that the finalisation of the People Plan is eagerly awaited by members of the teaching staff who agreed that work needs to be done to clarify the roles of course leaders, module leaders and teachers following the recent reorganisation of the senior management levels⁹⁹.

⁹³ SER p.32

⁹⁴ Meeting 4 with students

⁹⁵ Meeting 6 with representatives of the profession and alumni

⁹⁶ SER p.32

⁹⁷ Meeting 5 with members of the Academic Board

⁹⁸ SER p.32, meeting 5 with members of the Academic Board

⁹⁹ Meeting 3 with teachers

Formalising support for staff to undertake professional development within their contracts is an urgent matter under review by the College. This priority is increasingly important and there is now greater strategic planning and investment to achieve this, the key areas being EDI, leadership and management¹⁰⁰.

Specifically concerning research, the review team was informed that the institution is in the early stages of developing an established culture and infrastructure and that staff contracts and clarity of job descriptions will be an important mechanism to achieve this¹⁰¹. There is enthusiasm within the staff body for research development and the appointment of a designated lead with appropriate levels of staffing is considered by some members of the teaching staff to be important to the furtherance of the College's research agenda¹⁰².

Overall, the review team considers that there is strong evidence for a high quality of teaching and that the teaching staff is extremely supportive of its students. This is evidenced by student progression, achievement and employability outcomes which give testimony to the success of learning and teaching within the College. Moreover, the review team was impressed by the affirmation given to the teaching staff body by students, alumni and representatives of the profession.

The review team notes the frank consideration within the SER and onsite meetings given to appraisal, staff development, research and contracts. There is institutional acknowledgement that staff appraisal and fit-for-purpose staff contracts are essential to furthering each individual's professional development and research aspirations and the Strategic Plan's fourth pillar – *an integrated research and enterprise environment incubating new work and innovating for the arts*¹⁰³. Additional benefits should include greater understanding and engagement with the College as an institution resulting in greater shared ownership and commitment to the College's academic development. The review team therefore encourages the College to prioritise the institutional ambition of systemising an equitable and effective mechanism for enabling staff development and research.

The Review team concludes that the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is fully compliant with Standard 4.1.

4.2 Size and composition of the teaching staff body

Standard: there are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programmes.

The College's staff consists of a core number of full-time staff and a body of over 400 hourly paid teachers who are employed for their professional standing and expertise in their respective disciplines. The allocation of a sufficient teaching body to each course is determined at the point of validation where staff levels are referenced against the USW resource criteria. The review team was offered examples of upskilling opportunities offered to the staff of the BA Acting course (which is currently undergoing revalidation) and MA Acting course (to be validated next year). As part of these validation processes the department is offering the opportunity to take the Advance HE training scheme administered by the USW with the aim of enhancing the level of teaching expertise¹⁰⁴.

The SER states that teaching and learning is monitored through a range of measures such as annual student surveys, the NSS and informally in for instance, production settings¹⁰⁵. On examination of the NSS statistics the team noted annual statistics for undergraduate student satisfaction with teaching dating back to 2013. Results across the courses for the academic year 20-21 show some variation in the range of student satisfaction although

¹⁰⁰ Meeting with members of the Academic Board

¹⁰¹ Meeting 5 with members of the Academic Board

¹⁰² Meeting 3 with teachers

¹⁰³ Strategic Plan Pillar No. 4

¹⁰⁴ Meeting 5 with members of the Academic Board

¹⁰⁵ SER p.34

the raw statistics prohibit a precise extrapolation of the reasons behind the data. These statistics are evaluated by course teams and reported within course monitoring reports, supported by action plans. Additionally, course monitoring reports consider External Examiner comments on learning and teaching¹⁰⁶.

Overall, the review team considers that these measures along with forums such as course boards, are an effective way to gauge both the quality and the sufficiency of teaching within courses and the College's wider performance operations. It strongly suggests the College to ensure that plans for expansion of student numbers are supported by an appropriate teaching staff level (numbers and expertise).

The Review team concludes that the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is fully compliant with Standard 4.2.

¹⁰⁶ BMus, PG Music course monitoring reports

5. Facilities, resources and support

5.1 Facilities

Standard: the institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and delivery of the programmes.

The current operating campuses are the castle grounds at Cathay's Park and the Llanishen Studios, acquired in 2019, and situated at approximately three miles distance from the main site. Llanishen Studios house the Scenic Construction courses including the recent addition of the Foundation Course. Additionally the College has been granted a ninety nine year lease on the Old Library in Cardiff which will provide a substantial space for learning and teaching, rehearsal and public spaces for performance and community activities¹⁰⁷.

The College has identified the potential for a further capital project to develop the main campus. Work has begun on the proposal and if carried out, it would provide additional flexible theatre performance space to support musical theatre productions (including an orchestral pit), an enlarged library to include a research and innovation centre, media studio performance spaces, practice facilities, enhanced social spaces and improvements to the Raymond Edwards Building¹⁰⁸.

In addition to the College's internal learning, teaching and performance activities, the campus hosts a range of national and international events and institutions. These include the BBC Young Musician, BBC Cardiff Singer of the World, Pinewood Films and World Stage Design¹⁰⁹.

Recent enhancements to the use of space have been initiated in response to new working practices which have developed during the pandemic (see also Standard 1 above)¹¹⁰. Building on these enhancements, the College intends to convert a significant amount of office space to enable flexible working. The target for completion of this work was December 2021. There is also the potential to convert some offices to learning and teaching rooms and the review team noted an example of this during a tour of the site. There is an on-going debate around the desirability of changing the departmental ethos from separately "owned" spaces to a more "shared" ownership approach¹¹¹.

The College's library possesses approximately seventy thousand items in various formats including relevant Welsh materials and language provision. The library catalogue can be accessed online through a designated portal. The Library is home to the Drama Association of Wales and the Foyle Opera Rara Archive and it is a founder member of the Welsh Higher Education Library Forum. The review team was informed that the pandemic has driven a move towards greater focus on digital access and provision¹¹².

Students of the College have access to a range of technological learning aids and materials including 35 open access computers and relevant software programmes. The College is served by Wi-Fi (open access and Eduroam) and teaching rooms are equipped with smart boards and Black Box AV units where appropriate. The College considers that there is potential to further develop the use of technology in learning and teaching through the extension of blended, remote and distance learning. This would enhance widening access and participation and it would facilitate international strategies. The collaboration with the Aureus Conservatory in Singapore (see Standard 2.2 above) may now be more digitally focussed rather than face-to-face due to the rapid development of digital strategies and the imperative to respond to the environmental sustainability agenda.¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ SER p.36, SER p.11

¹⁰⁸ SER p.36, Meeting 1 with the Senior Management Team

¹⁰⁹ SER p.36

¹¹⁰ SER p.37

¹¹¹ Meeting 1 with the Senior Management Team

¹¹² Meeting 2 with senior administrative staff/QA office, SER p.36

¹¹³ SER p.36-37, RWCMD equipment overview EXCEL document, Meeting with Senior administrative staff and the QA office

The review team was informed that the first stage of the new digital strategy proposal was carried out in response to the pandemic and that there was an initial investment to ensure that the College's core learning and teaching activities could be delivered successfully online. Funding is in place to underpin the next stage of digital development and external advice is being sought on the objectives, planning and delivery of the strategic objectives¹¹⁴. The review team heard that validation offers an expedient opportunity for digital provision to be built into courses¹¹⁵. In addition to building elements of online delivery into existing courses the College intends to launch a new programme called Opera 360 which will be taught substantially online¹¹⁶.

The College is further developing a digital element to its Creative Programme running alongside the more traditional live (in person) approach to performance. The review team was informed that the College is reflecting on the digital experiences of the pandemic in this arena and that it is considering how these can be used to create enhanced digital provision¹¹⁷.

The College is committed to ensuring that it operates in an environmentally sustainable manner. It has developed an Environmental and Sustainability Policy to facilitate actions such as reducing the carbon footprint. A key action point relating to this is the development of a sustainable travel and fleet management policy. Additionally each College department will be requested to formulate supporting sustainability measures¹¹⁸.

As part of the site-visit the review team was offered a number of opportunities to tour the College's main campus, observe classes, attend a concert and view the facilities. The review team concludes that the College has a highly impressive site with excellent specialist facilities, access to green space and a warm welcoming ambience. The review team notes the College's reflective stance on a range of facilities issues. Matters currently under consideration include, learning from the experiences of the pandemic, maximising space use through re-designation of current spaces and the notion of "shared" rather than "owned" space and sustainability.

The review team commends the speedy adoption post-pandemic of new and flexible working spaces and arrangements so as to enhance learning and teaching. It endorses the notion of "shared" rather than "owned" space and strongly encourages the College to continue the culture shift to "shared" space wherever possible and appropriate. This would assist the building of cross-departmental collaboration and it would strengthen the pathway to international recognition of the College as a unique multi-disciplinary, collaborative institution.

The Review team concludes that the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is fully compliant with Standard 5.1.

5.2 Financial resources

Standard: the institution's financial resources enable successful delivery of the study programmes.

An important recent factor affecting the College's short and long-term approach to financial planning has been the pandemic. The pandemic, whilst having a negative and serious short-term impact on finances - for example external hires¹¹⁹ - has resulted in a braver, less risk averse approach to financial planning and it has been a catalyst for resilience and forward movement¹²⁰. Other recent operational developments impacting on financial management have been the appointment of a new Director of Finance and Resources along with upgraded management information systems. These upgrades include systems within Payroll and Human Resources which

¹¹⁴ Meeting 2 with senior administrative staff/QA office

¹¹⁵ Meeting 3 with teachers

¹¹⁶ SER p.10

¹¹⁷ SER p.36, meeting 2 with senior administrative staff/QA office

¹¹⁸ SER p.37, RWCMD Environmental and Sustainability Policy, Strategic Plan

¹¹⁹ Meeting 2 with senior administrative staff/QA office

¹²⁰ Meeting 2 with the Senior Management Team

provide better reporting to budget holders. The College plans to recruit a new Business Finance Partner to provide support for financial planning in support of the strategic mission¹²¹.

Key to the strategic allocation of financial resources is the Investment Plan which has been approved by the Board of Governors. The next stage for the Investment Plan is dissemination to the wider College community followed by moving forward with rolling out its objectives¹²². The Investment Plan contains five principal areas of focus for future development: growing student numbers; tackling equality, diversity and inclusion; completing and implementing the People Plan Project; governance, partnership and academic maturity as a preparation for independence; and rehearsal and teaching spaces¹²³.

The Investment Plan provides financial underpinning for the College's Strategic Plan and the associated range of sub-plans. As an illustration, the expansion of student numbers (a top financial priority¹²⁴) is supported by the Student Recruitment Strategy. This sets out a detailed plan of the projected objectives for each course. The Investment Plan allocates resources to this priority, and in the case of student recruitment, it includes a short summary of the risks and ramifications of under-recruitment of students¹²⁵.

The College is keen to develop strategies for sustainable funding sources. There is recognition that despite having a relatively healthy reserves balance, there needs to be less reliance on financial streams from the Development Department which are used for the normal operations of the institution¹²⁶. The College is cautious about the prospect of public funding uplifts and the review team heard that this stream is likely to be more focused on capital bids in the future. The College is nonetheless committed to exploring potential public funding avenues, for example the possibility of bringing the Musical Theatre discipline into the specialist funding category¹²⁷.

The Development Department's complementary funding streams are an important source of revenue. The SER gives details of substantial and growing development income streams over recent years. An important future priority will be the "Promise Addewid' Campaign" with the objective of raising substantial sums for the following areas: bursary fund; digital strategy; visiting artists, ensembles and artists in residence; commissioning new work; Welsh language work; wider community engagement and national touring; and the Cardiff Old Library Project.

The review team considers that the financial planning is clearly focused on the objectives of Strategic Plan and its supporting policies. The links and interrelationships between the institutional documents provide a secure methodology and convincing pathway to achieving the College's strategic aims. It considers that the College has bold financial planning exemplified by the recent lease of the Old Library in furtherance of the strategic plan objectives. The acquisition of this lease provides extra space which will, following reconfiguration, make the expansion of student numbers feasible. Whilst payment for the lease provides a financial challenge and commitment, the Investment Plan allocates initial funding for the building. It commits to formulating a separate long-term business plan for the funding of the building. That stated, the review team did not access a risk management strategy although the College does have an operational version, including a Risk Register maintained by the senior Management Team and reviewed as a standard agenda item at each Board meeting. A strategy would facilitate decision making in the event of unexpected events and it has the potential of providing alternative courses of action should they be needed. The review team recommends that the risk management strategy (or equivalent) be regularly reviewed so that it can be used as circumstances require. The climate within the national and international sector is challenging for many institutions and overall, the review team

¹²¹ SER p.38

¹²² Meeting 1 with the Senior Management Team

¹²³ SER p.38

¹²⁴ Meeting 1 with the Senior Management Team

¹²⁵ Strategic Plan, Recruitment Strategy, Investment Plan, SER p.38

¹²⁶ SER p. 38, meeting 1 with the Senior Management Team, Strategic Plan

¹²⁷ Investment Plan, Strategic Plan Pillar 5, Meeting 1 with the Senior Management Team

considers that the College has developed a coherent and realistic approach to developing and achieving its sustainable financial strategic objectives and to maintaining the ongoing operations of its courses.

The Review team concludes that the Royal Welsh College of Music is fully compliant with Standard 5.2.

5.3 Support staff

Standard: the institution has sufficient qualified support staff.

The College employs a significant number of support staff to facilitate its wide range of specialist learning, teaching and performance activities. Support staff may be specialists in a particular field holding qualifications from the relevant professional or educational institution. A good percentage of support staff are graduates of the College who have links to the industry and a working knowledge of the College's values and operations. College departmental teams liaise with the external conservatoire and higher education sectors as a means to enhancing working practices and ensuring that procedures are current and comparable. Support staff teams are encouraged to work closely alongside academic staff and to participate fully in activities such as quality assurance and quality enhancement. They also input into academic courses through their participation in validation panels¹²⁸.

Support teams participate in regular meetings and staff development days and the College is confident that the development of online training and support will enhance the opportunities for developing its teams. Staff have access to USW training courses including the Fellowship of Advance HE. Support staff may also lead training events for other members of staff in their areas of expertise¹²⁹.

The College operates a range of policies related to the Strategic Plan which support staff in areas such as staff training and recruitment. The Investment Plan (discussed in Standard 5.2 above) allocates priority to investment in EDI and the completion of the People Plan, both of which are important to the values, culture and workings of the institution. The People Plan, although currently incomplete, will consolidate a number of EDI initiatives including anti-racism, neurodiversity/disability, gender, equality and associated inclusive staff recruitment processes¹³⁰.

The review team was given access to the Proposed Staff Training Plan which outlines priorities for training and staff development for the current academic year (21/22). These priorities were formulated by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the SMT. Priorities for 21/22 include EDI, restorative practice, Advance HE Fellowship Support, leadership and management and safeguarding. Additional elements of training include Welsh language, induction and health & safety. These training activities are supported by an allocated financial resource¹³¹.

The review team was given access to the Staff Recruitment Plan which supports the delivery of the five-year Strategic Equality Plan. The Staff Recruitment Plan's priority of inclusivity is benchmarked against the Inclusive Employer Quality Standard. The plan includes a set of comprehensive objectives for staff recruitment in areas such as (but not limited to) the articulation of job advertisements, person specifications, shortlisting and interviews¹³².

The review team considers that teaching, learning and artistic activities are well supported by a qualified team of non-teaching staff. It considers that the College's policies relating to staff development and recruitment are effectively coordinated and are governed by clear, overriding strategic priorities emanating from the Strategic Plan. The values of the institution are strongly stated in all strategic documents. Consistent achievement of strategic objectives will result in significant institutional change in values and culture. This will in turn enhance

¹²⁸ SER p.39

¹²⁹ SER p.39

¹³⁰ Investment Plan, SER p.39

¹³¹ Proposed Staff Training Plan 21-22

¹³² Staff Recruitment Plan

academic development. It was impressed by the strong awareness and support of the overriding values associated with EDI expressed by members of the student body¹³³.

The review team encourages the College to work systematically to enable its support staff to benefit from staff development opportunities and where possible, to ensure that appropriate allocations within staff contracts are made. This would align with the recommended arrangements for academic staff development (see 4.1 above). The review team encourages the College to give priority to the completion of the People Plan so as to enhance strategic coherence, consolidate its strategies and give impetus within the institution's communities.

The Review team concludes that the Royal Welsh College of Music is fully compliant with Standard with Standard 5.3.

¹³³ Meeting 4 with students

6. Communication, organisation and decision-making

6.1 Internal communication process

Standard: effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the institution.

The College operates both formal and informal mechanisms for internal communications with staff and students. E-mail is the standard form of written communication for both students and staff. It is also the mechanism for external communications with stakeholders such as visiting artists, international chairs, examiners and guest lecturers. Protocols for student communications are based on best practice and set out in the Student Experience Information section on the VLE. This includes guidance on methods and content of communication and parameters for promptness of response. The College operates a facility whereby urgent communications requiring consideration within a twenty-four hour time frame are delivered by text¹³⁴.

The Hub portal of the VLE is a pivotal means of internal communication. It provides a substantial range of institutional and departmental information and it permits students to register notes of concern which can be anonymous. When a serious note of concern is registered (for instance safe-guarding) it is followed up urgently and a formal process may be initiated if merited. Similarly a note of concern may result in referrals as appropriate¹³⁵.

The student cohort receives regular newsletters and updates including the Principal's fortnightly e-letter. The review team was informed that the e-letter is an effectively presented communication with a focus on the "big picture"¹³⁶. Other cohort communications include departmental updates and thematic welfare bulletins from Student Services¹³⁷.

There is a range of formal meetings to support communication between managerial staff and students including joint meetings between the SMT and Student Union Executive (chaired by the SU President), meetings between the Student Union and the Principal and nonminuted course cohort meetings designed to provide feedback on courses. Students are represented on formal academic committees such as the course boards, study area boards and the Academic Board and this representation provides both an outlet for the student voice and the opportunity for students to input into quality assurance and enhancement¹³⁸.

There is a range of staff communication forums. The annual staff development days held in September set the College's strategic priorities for the year. Additionally there are termly staff meetings and scheduled departmental meetings. Remote access to meetings (used frequently during the pandemic) is a recent facility that is increasingly used by members of staff. As is the case with students, members of staff are represented on academic committees thus providing opportunities for shared communications and input into quality assurance and enhancement¹³⁹.

Microsoft Teams is used for designated Task and Finish groups. These groups are tasked with completing actions relating to the strategic priorities of the College, for example, the development of the Alumni Association. The review team was given access to the work carried out by the Task and Finish group on the National Student Survey. The survey contains data on a wide-range of areas including student satisfaction with communications. The work of the group included an analysis of the results, comparison with other institutions in the sector and a set of key action points to address specific issues¹⁴⁰.

The SMT directors have executive responsibility for the quality of communications mechanisms and for ensuring that communication flows effectively in both directions. The review team was informed that there are plans to

¹³⁴ SER p.41

¹³⁵ [HUB / HWB – \(rwcmd.ac.uk\)](https://www.rwcmd.ac.uk), meeting 2 with senior administrative staff and the QA office

¹³⁶ Meeting 4 with students

¹³⁷ SER p.41

¹³⁸ SER p.41

¹³⁹ SER p.41

¹⁴⁰ Analysis of the National Student Survey

enhance communications and to make them more accessible, digestible and visually amenable. There is now a dedicated staff resource in place, allowing greater focus on internal communications and it is hoped the positive effects of this will be noticeable soon¹⁴¹. In its meeting with students, the review team heard evidence that improvements to communications have already been noted within the student body¹⁴². The incorporation of administrative support for Junior courses within the Central Support Office is considered by the College as a means of enhancing communications through improved working practices. Additionally, the College considers that the extension of online and recorded staff meetings will enhance access to information and institutional engagement in a cost efficient manner¹⁴³.

The College is keen that good communications practice is shared across the departments. The Drama and Production Visiting Staff Handbooks are considered to be a good example of this and there are plans to extend their use across all departments¹⁴⁴.

Formal communications are supplemented by a range of informal methods including blogs and social media. Internally, the College is keen to promote an informal “open door” culture for both staff and students which includes access to the SMT. Similarly, the use of open office space is considered to be an enhancement to communications and working practices¹⁴⁵.

The review team was informed that effective communications are essential to the College’s working relationships with external partners. Representatives from these groups reported lively informal and flexible methods of communication. The review team heard how in one case, work is being carried out to improve communications so as to provide greater consistency in the student experience of placements¹⁴⁶.

The review team was impressed by the approach to communications taken by the College. It is clear that the importance of communications - with and between staff and students, internally and externally - is high on the College’s agenda. The review team was informed repeatedly during site visit meetings of the value of communication and its effects on the operation of the College and there is evidence that new enhancement initiatives are already beginning to take effect¹⁴⁷. In particular, the review team considers that there is a clear commitment to ensuring that working arrangements facilitate open communication and conversations. Such practices include the use of shared/open office space and the open door culture.

The review team noted a critical approach to the improvement of communications. There is frank institutional acknowledgement that communication mechanisms are not perfect and that there are still members of the institution who are not aware of the College’s strategic and operational priorities. This is perhaps to be expected in the context of an institution with a high ratio of hourly paid lecturers¹⁴⁸. The review team considers that communication is of the utmost importance in terms of operational efficiency and equally importantly, as a vehicle for change management. Effective communication will be pivotal to the realisation of Strategic Plan objectives and the evolving culture and values of the institution *The review team strongly encourages that the College investigates ways in which to optimise its vehicles for communication in order to ensure that strategic priorities are shared and owned at all levels of the institution.*

¹⁴¹ SER p.41, meeting 2 with senior administrative staff and the QA office

¹⁴² Meeting 4 with students

¹⁴³ SER p.22

¹⁴⁴ SER p.22

¹⁴⁵ SER p.41-42

¹⁴⁶ Meeting 6 with representatives of the profession and alumni

¹⁴⁷ Meeting 3 with teachers, Meeting 4 with students, Meeting 2 with senior administrative staff and the QA office, Meeting 6 with representatives from the profession and alumni

¹⁴⁸ Meeting 5 with members of the Academic Board, Meeting 2 with senior administrative staff and the QA office

The Review team concludes that the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is fully compliant with Standard 6.1.

6.2 Organisational structure and decision-making processes

Standard: the institution has an appropriate organisational structure and clear decision-making processes.

The Board of Directors sits at the highest level of governance of the College, comprised of a team of experts in different fields of expertise relevant to overseeing the operations of a registered charity. As of 21/22 the Board formed two principal sub-committees: People Values and Culture; and Finance. At executive level the Principal leads all elements of the College's strategic operations¹⁴⁹.

The Academic Board (chaired by the Principal) is the top level academic committee and all sub-committees report either directly or indirectly to this Board. There are four layers of sub-committees focussed on exams, quality assurance, learning and teaching enhancement and research¹⁵⁰.

The SMT is responsible for operational and budgetary decisions of the College. Non-academic management committees are specified on the College hub page which itemises the structures and membership of each area. Areas of management reporting to the SMT include: Academic Administration (Music and Drama); Finance and Operations; Student Experience; Marketing; and Development and Pre-College. Whilst students are not formally standing members of management committees, the review team was informed that they are involved in working groups on non-academic policies. The Student Voice Officer is a member of the non-academic Student Experience Committee¹⁵¹.

Committee terms of reference are reviewed annually and this includes consideration of EDI and externality within committee membership. For example, the CQAC has recently reviewed those for course boards. As a result course boards now operate standard agendas across all courses so as to strengthen coherence and maximise the opportunities for quality enhancement. Additionally, course boards are now facilitated by a member of the CQAC in alignment with the College's priority for restorative practice. The College plans to monitor the effects on decision making resulting from the reviews of terms of reference and committee membership. It is hoped that this analytical task will take place jointly with staff and students during 21/22¹⁵².

As discussed in Standard 1, the College is strengthening ownership and responsibility for its governance. With the appointment of a new Principal in 2018, there has been greater focus on academic governance and decision making and through an evaluation of the academic committee structures, it was decided to widen the pool of staff participating in committees. The terms of reference of academic committees ensure that there is representation of staff and students at all levels of academic decision making¹⁵³.

The preparation for the latest version of the Strategic Plan approved in 2019 was concomitant with the move to greater focus on academic governance. Prior to its approval there was a substantial consultation process across the College so as to maximise two-way information and feedback channels, and to mould the future direction of the College collegiately with staff and students. The preparation for the Strategic Equality Plan followed a similar process and involved specialist external experts¹⁵⁴.

¹⁴⁹ SER p.43

¹⁵⁰ SER p.43-45

¹⁵¹ RWCMD Hub, SER p.43, Meeting 2 with senior administrative staff and the QA office

¹⁵² SER p.43-45

¹⁵³ SER p.43, Academic Governance Terms of Reference

¹⁵⁴ SER p.44

The SER states that a Student Voice Officer was appointed in March 2020. The College considers that this appointment is unique within the conservatoire sector and that it demonstrates strong commitment to the College's values of shared ownership and working together. The roles of the Student Voice Officer include ensuring the efficiency of course boards, overseeing elections and coordinating the appointment of student representatives for other College committees. The Student Voice Officer is also a member of the Student Experience Committee. In a meeting with students the review team was informed that the new role of Student Voice Officer is having a positive effect on students' input into the College's decision making¹⁵⁵.

The review team was informed about the Course Leaders Group which does not sit formally within the College's academic and managerial structures but operates as an academic enhancement to the College's courses. This group enables cross-course discussions across a range of issues such as revalidation, best practice and cross-disciplinary and collaborative initiatives. The group also had a significant input into the preparation for this review and the production of the SER¹⁵⁶.

The review team considers that the College operates a coherent organisational structure for its decision making. There are clearly defined parameters governing both academic and non-academic operations. Academic committees have clear terms of reference which are reviewed at regular intervals. The review team notes the recent renewed vigour with which academic governance has been considered and it commends the move towards greater democratisation. The review team considers that the inclusion of a wider body of students and staff on institutional committees leads to enhanced communication, decision making and above all, ownership. It commends recent enhancements to the student voice exemplified by the appointment of the Student Voice Officer which further strengthens the democratic and restorative values of the College. Both measures have the potential to increase focus on the day-to-day student experience of courses and to enhance the quality of the College's provision.

The Review team concludes that the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is fully compliant with Standard 6.2.

¹⁵⁵ SER p.45, Meeting 4 with students

¹⁵⁶ Meeting 3 with teachers

7. Internal Quality Culture

Standard: the institution has a strong internal quality culture, supported by clear and effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.

The College articulates a strong commitment to maintaining and enhancing its quality assurance framework. The College aims to strengthen its global position as the National Conservatoire of Wales and under the third pillar of the Strategic Plan there is the following commitment: “*strengthen HE administration and systems. This includes governance and quality assurance, student recruitment, course delivery, data management and reporting*”. This is expanded upon further in the Academic Strategy which states that a strategic approach to quality assurance and enhancement will be facilitated in partnership with the USW. There are subsequent supporting key action points relating to continuous monitoring, performance indicators and student engagement¹⁵⁷.

The College’s quality assurance policies and procedures operate within the USW framework and apply to all provision at undergraduate and postgraduate levels which are credit bearing. Where appropriate adjustments are made to ensure that the policies and procedures are relevant to the specialist requirements of the College. As stated above in Standard 2.1, the College’s courses operate within the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales and there is alignment with the Quality Code of the UK Quality Assurance Agency. There is also international alignment with the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, and the AEC’s Learning Outcomes and Polifonia Dublin Descriptors¹⁵⁸.

Whilst the Junior Conservatoire operates outside the higher education framework, where possible it observes key elements of the structure such as course boards and annual monitoring. There is a commitment to strengthening its quality assurance links with the College’s higher education framework in the next phase¹⁵⁹.

The College’s committee structure defines the reporting mechanisms for quality assurance and enhancement. The CQAC oversees quality assurance and it has reporting obligations to the College’s Academic Board. Some of the information provided by CQAC is forwarded to USW’s overseeing quality assurance committee. The College Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee (CLTEC) oversees enhancement in teaching and learning and reports directly to the College’s Academic Board. The College characterises the flow of quality assurance policies and procedures as moving downwards through the institution; conversely, quality enhancement moves upwards having often emanated from good practices within localised pockets of the College¹⁶⁰.

As an illustration of their work, the review team was given access to a sample of committee meeting minutes for both committees. Within minutes for CQAC the review team noted quality assurance discussion relating to cross departmental approaches to risk assessment for placements, validation and the role of the Internal Scrutiny Panel. Within CLTEC minutes there was enhancement discussion on the quality of student experience, the use of inclusive language and improving the evaluation of performance modules¹⁶¹.

The terms of reference for both committees enshrine stakeholder representation for staff and students. Quality assurance and enhancement coalesce formally at the Academic Board where the minutes of each committee are considered and from where, new initiatives can be agreed for further action. Other additional forums for students to engage with quality assurance and enhancement include the Student Council and the Student’s Union. The Student Voice Officer is another conduit for the flow of information between students and the College¹⁶².

¹⁵⁷ Strategic Plan third pillar, Academic Strategy section 3

¹⁵⁸ SER p.47

¹⁵⁹ SER p.47

¹⁶⁰ SER p.43, Meeting 2 with senior administrative staff and the QA office

¹⁶¹ CQAC minutes 20-20, CLTEC minutes 20-21

¹⁶² SER p.50 CQAC & CLTEC terms of reference

Quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms typically apply to the following areas: course design (monitoring, review, validation and minor modifications); external examiner appointments, reports and feedback; admissions policies and procedures; and student casework. The College is keen to maintain and enhance its evidence base so as to further develop the reliability and transparency of its information and strengthen its decision making. Frequently included in the evidence base for quality assurance is the NSS, internal student surveys and module evaluations¹⁶³.

Data collection, processing and analysis is a priority within the Academic Strategy (see also Standards 1 and 3.2 above). The review team was informed that an external audit of the use of data had taken place and that the College is consequently aware that better use of data and analysis is needed to enhance quality assurance. The review team heard that data sharing with the USW needs to be more effective; for instance, extraction of information provided by the USW relating to exam boards does not always produce optimally manageable and relevant data. As reported in Standard 3.2, the College is exploring the feasibility of appointing a data officer to enhance its operations in this area¹⁶⁴.

Courses are formally reviewed at a maximum six year period with exceptions for those that are at greater risk where scrutiny will be more frequent. Conversely, stable courses which will not be undergoing significant change may be subject to perpetual review which is more focussed on on-going monitoring rather than preparing for major change. Data sources feeding into course review includes information collected through monitoring, student progression and achievement statistics and early career data sources¹⁶⁵.

In addition to the maximum six-yearly review, courses are subject to annual reviews known as annual monitoring. Action points arising from the annual review report are a standing agenda item on termly course board meetings. Thus an ongoing review of each course takes place three times a year and this is known as “continuous monitoring”. The review team was informed that the process of continuous monitoring strengthens the evidence base for review; it enables greater shared ownership of the course through wider engagement with the process by staff and students and greater focus on the student experience¹⁶⁶. Annual and continuous monitoring reports along with course board minutes are considered by the CQAC and then in turn by the Academic Board. The course team, module leaders and students are all involved with course monitoring as it passes through the cycle of continuous, annual and six-yearly review. The CQAC is responsible for monitoring and disseminating good practice within the College. The CQAC also carries out a review of all module reports and action plans and it formulates an overarching analysis with associated action plans. Course monitoring reports are forwarded by the CQAC to the USW’s equivalent committee¹⁶⁷.

There are three guiding principles for course revalidation: academic standards and benchmarking; quality of learning opportunities; maintenance of standards and enhancement of quality. Outcomes of validation include commendations, conditions (with a three months sign-off clause) and recommendations (reporting to course monitoring)¹⁶⁸. The course self-evaluation review is a major overarching document which uses data to assess the course’s teaching and assessment strengths, identifies areas for development and sets out proposals for change. The course team engages with stakeholders to obtain feedback on the current course and on revalidation proposals. Stakeholder groups include core staff, part-time staff, student representatives and the student cohort more widely. An internal scrutiny panel chaired by a member of CQAC looks at the revalidation proposals ten and six weeks before the validation event. The validation event is chaired by a senior member of the USW’s academic

¹⁶³ SER p.47

¹⁶⁴ Meeting 5 with members of the Academic Board

¹⁶⁵ SER p.48

¹⁶⁶ Meeting 5 with members of the Academic Board, Meeting 2 with senior academic members of staff

¹⁶⁷ SER p.49

¹⁶⁸ SER p.49

staff. The validation panel includes at least one external member who is a specialist in the discipline, student representation and members of the CQAC¹⁶⁹.

Proposals for new courses are approved according to a specific set of criteria and parameters which include prospective for the market, employer demand, comparable offers in other institution, logistical and management factors, and resources. For a new course to be initiated it requires approval from the QCAC and from the SMT which also evaluates business feasibility¹⁷⁰.

The College considers that externality is present at all levels of its quality assurance and enhancement operations including the Board of Directors. It considers that the USW operates as a quasi-external body through its placement of members of College committees such as the CQAC and the LTEC. Other external participants include: course external examiners; associate examiners who provide subject expertise in exam settings; external participants in validations; external experts and advisers who advise pre-validation; and visiting artists and teaching staff who are able to advise informally on quality and standards¹⁷¹. In a meeting with representatives of the profession and alumni the review team was given an example of how a partner institution had engaged with the revalidation process and how the course leader created a forum for external partners to feed-in more regularly and consistently to such events. At the same meeting, the review team heard that the Junior Department had benefitted from discussions with partners to inform its curriculum¹⁷².

As reported in Standard 6.1 above students are able to register matters of concern using a portal on the College's VLE. The review team was informed of the College's Code of Conduct and Complaint Procedures which have recently been updated and now make provision for external input into the process if required. The Complaints Procedures process is multi-layered with various protocols pertaining to each layer. Restorative practice is an important principle within this procedure. The review team heard that there were eighteen logged notes of concern pertaining to the previous academic year and all had been investigated resulting in appropriate actions and/or referrals. The College believes that the recent implementation of these new complaints procedures represent a culture shift that will enhance student and staff experience by providing a more accessible and transparent mechanism. The review team heard evidence from students that the new procedures are already positively impacting upon the culture of the College in relation to values and the investigation of complaints¹⁷³.

Some courses offer learning through placements provided by external partners. The review team was informed of an example where discussion had taken place between a course team and an external partner regarding improving communications and procedures so as to enhance the consistency of student experience within placements (see also Standard 6.1)¹⁷⁴. The review team was informed that procedures for placements have been identified by the College as an area for quality enhancement. A written policy and guidance document has been created and this is currently being reviewed. The document draws on examples of good practice and once approved, the policy will be disseminated across the College¹⁷⁵.

The review team considers that the College has a coherent and well-articulated conception of quality assurance and enhancement. This is manifest within its range of quality assurance mechanisms including the CQAC and CLTEC which have discrete but complementary roles.

College committee structures are well conveyed and there are clear terms of reference for all quality related committees. Participation of stakeholders in quality assurance and enhancement is valued by the College and

¹⁶⁹ SER p.49

¹⁷⁰ SER p.48

¹⁷¹ SER p.50

¹⁷² Meeting 6 with representatives from the profession and alumni

¹⁷³ Meeting 2 with senior administrative staff and the QA office and Meeting 4 with students

¹⁷⁴ Meeting 6 with representatives from the profession and alumni

¹⁷⁵ Meeting 2 with senior academic staff and the QA office

clearly laid out within the terms of committee membership. In addition to well-defined strategic ambitions for quality assurance and enhancement the review team considers that the College demonstrates a strong practical commitment to quality assurance exemplified by the recent decision to give responsibility to the Quality Assurance Officer for the facilitation of course boards. This strengthens the operation of the Boards and provides an appropriate level of objectivity in managing the business of meetings. Similar examples of the College's commitment to quality enhancement can be evidenced by the formation of the Course Leaders' Group (see Standard 6.2 above) and the commitment to bringing the Junior Conservatoire further into the quality framework. Overall, the review team considers that there is an effective range of internal and external stakeholders with input into quality assurance and enhancement. This is achieved in part through the committee structure but it is evident in other mechanisms such as departmental meetings, staff and student forums and within the open door culture of the College.

The review team was impressed by the College's investment in a comprehensive complaints procedure management system which has the potential to create positive long-term effects on the culture and values of the institution. In particular, the College commends the accessibility of the procedure and its emphasis on restorative practice.

Discussion of data collection and analysis has taken place at various points within this report, particularly in Standards 1 and 3.2. The use of data, perhaps facilitated by a designated officer, will be an essential tool for achieving the College's global ambitions and to providing the required information to facilitate quality assurance and enhanced course decision making. The review team encourages the College to ensure that mechanisms for quality assurance and enhancement are future-proofed for plans such as expansion and autonomy. On a less strategic note, the review team considers that there is more work to be carried out in terms of closing the feedback loop to students on actions taken in response to their feedback¹⁷⁶. Whilst this is not per se a high level ambition, if achieved consistently it would lead to a heightening of students' confidence and satisfaction with the College's quality assurance and assessment feedback mechanisms. The review team suggests that the College continue to investigate and reflect upon the variation in NSS scores relating to learning and teaching across courses and use the College's strategic reflection in NSS scores as another internal quality enhancement metric.

Whilst the College's validation mechanisms are extensive the review team considers that there could be more input from alumni to inform course development. Greater input from this group of stakeholders, although sometimes difficult to obtain, would further expand and enhance the data pool feeding into the curricular decisions taken by course teams as they review and develop their courses.

The Review team concludes that the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is fully compliant with Standard 7.

¹⁷⁶ Meeting 2 with senior academic staff and the QA office, Meeting 4 with students

8. Public interaction

8.1 Cultural, artistic and educational contexts

Standard: the institution engages within wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts.

Pillars two and three of the College's Strategic Plan commit the College to developing and extending its cultural, artistic and educational reach in regional, national and international contexts. Examples of the Strategic Plan's ambitions include: building a student touring programme across all disciplines; working in partnership to extend outreach and embedding this in the curriculum of pre-higher education and higher education courses; and establishing an international network of courses to enhance student and staff experience and promote cultural exchange¹⁷⁷.

The College aims to develop a more systematic approach to the development of its partnerships with external bodies. The review team was informed that in the past, partnerships tended to be localised agreements which were not collated and operated centrally. International partnerships are now coordinated within the External Affairs Department by a designated manager and there is now a centralised log. The SMT has overall responsibility for monitoring review and approval of existing and new partnerships. The review team was informed that the Academic Board has responsibility for the academic integrity of partnerships involving accreditation and formal links with courses¹⁷⁸. Examples of current regional partnerships include student engagement with the Flintshire Music Service, and Theatre Clwyd. The College is developing new models of partnership and collaboration working alongside Welsh Music Services and The Prince's Foundation. Internationally, there is currently a focus on partnerships within China which will explore the potential for collaborative provision and student recruitment. The review team was informed that overall, the depth and range of partnerships is becoming significantly greater with the inclusion of EDI relationships, exemplified by the partnership project involving the National Open Youth Orchestra¹⁷⁹.

The College is involved in a range of in-reach and outreach artistic projects. In-house events within the College's Creative Programme consist of music, theatre and musical theatre live concerts and exhibitions. The inclusion of visiting national and international artists broadens the dimensions of the Creative Programme. There is a commitment within the Strategic Plan to extending the content of the Creative Programme and increasing its diversity and inclusivity (see also Standard 1)¹⁸⁰.

At pre-higher education level, the Junior Conservatoire and Young Actors School aim to provide a number of educational opportunities for the community. These include summer schools and short courses, some of which are targeted at young people in need. An example of this is the First Campus programme which aims to break down barriers to education for young people and children in low socio economic groups¹⁸¹.

At higher education level, the College has established touring programmes across Wales such as the Amser Jazz Time and Orchestra adventure giving students the opportunity for regional artistic engagement. The revalidated BMus aims to promote touring of small ensemble groups within the community. In addition to the artistic experience, it is hoped that this will give students the opportunity to engage with the wider community, develop networks of contacts and enhance employability skills. The review team was informed that such external facing outreach

¹⁷⁷ Strategic Plan Pillars 2 & 3

¹⁷⁸ Meeting 5 with members of the Academic Board

¹⁷⁹ SER p.54, meeting 2 with senior administrative staff and the QA office, meeting 5 with members of the Academic Board, Meeting 6 with representatives of the profession and alumni

¹⁸⁰ SER p.54, Strategic Plan

¹⁸¹ SER p.54, [First Campus, Exciting and Challenging Activities for Pupils in Wales](#)

opportunities are complementary to the College's vision of students as "makers in society". Students informed the review team that they highly value the opportunities for external performance and outreach¹⁸².

The College participates in public discourse with a number of different agencies. At National level, the College is contributing to cultural and policy developments with the Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales on initiatives such as the new governmental International Strategy. At national level the College is a member of Conservatoires UK and the Federation of Drama Schools. The College's Director of Academic Administration has been co-opted to the Conservatoire UK working group which examines the use of data to inform equality and diversity initiatives. Internationally, the College is a member of the AEC and the Principal is Chair of two of the association's project working groups. Additionally, individual members of staff engage in public discourse through their individual professional links. Members of staff may serve on key external academic, professional and industry organisations related to their academic and professional work¹⁸³.

The review team was impressed by the College's forward thinking ambitions for wider artistic, cultural and educational engagement. The College has a strong vision of where it wishes to position itself within the region, the nation of Wales, the United Kingdom and globally and the review team was able to see evidence of progress towards achieving its goals. Ambitions for engagement exist at all levels of the College's provision. This has potential benefits for all the College community. Notably, the review team considers that pre-higher education initiatives have the potential to impact positively on widening participation.

In particular the review team was impressed by the aspiration to bring in wider external engagement within the formal curriculum of courses. This should enable students to receive credit for participation and engagement and conversely, it offers opportunities for the wider community to be involved in the work of the College. As noted above, this is already beginning to take effect on the newly revalidated BMus. Moreover, the review team notes the intention to create a new module in the MMus that uses the concept of "makers in society" as a key plank to its curriculum. This will be an externally facing module that will enable students to consider their roles and engagement with and within society and the profession¹⁸⁴.

In summary the review teams finds the College to be a very public facing institution with a grounded understanding of its cultural, artistic and educational roles within Cardiff, Wales, and beyond. It has a strong ambition to serve under-represented groups and it is committed to developing strong and sustainable working relationships with the sector.

The Review team concludes that the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is fully compliant with Standard 8.1.

8.2 Interaction with the artistic professions

Standard: the institution actively promotes links with various sectors of the music and other artistic professions.

Strategic objectives for this standard are set out in the Strategic Plan and the Academic Strategy. The intended scope of academic provision in terms of lifelong learning can be summarised as: pre-higher education (Junior Conservatoire, Young Actors Studio); future-focussed vocational training and education from levels 4-8 (N.B. level 8 programmes are planned for the future); and post higher education short courses and professional development offers (some of which are in development)¹⁸⁵.

¹⁸² SER p.54, meeting 1 with the Senior Management Team, meeting 4 with students

¹⁸³ SER p.55

¹⁸⁴ Meeting 3 with teachers

¹⁸⁵ Academic Strategy Section 1

The Strategic Plan sets out objectives concerning the College's interaction and links with artistic professions. In parallel with objectives discussed immediately above in Standard 8.1, the Strategic Plan sets out the following aim relating to partnerships: *"Develop potential as a convener of strategic partnerships to deliver game changing work in and through the arts"*¹⁸⁶. In relation to performance, the SER gives the example of a successful partnership with Welsh National Opera, which enables the College's students to participate in professional performances both on and off-stage. Similar partnerships exist with the Welsh National Orchestra and the BBC. The review team was informed that these opportunities are greatly appreciated by students¹⁸⁷.

Non-performance opportunities for engagement with professional bodies within courses include external placements which are normally offered at postgraduate level and are assessed by professional practice portfolios. Placements vary in duration with short placements ranging from one to two weeks and those for MA Arts Management lasting up to a complete academic year. Additionally, the College is currently developing a relationship with the National Theatre of Wales with potential to offer students of the Stage Management Course opportunities for engagement¹⁸⁸.

The Creative Programme is a significant facilitator of engagement between students and professional artists and organisations within performance elements of courses. Engagement takes place in varied contexts ranging from recitals, workshops and master classes to side-by-side performances within the Creative Programme. The Young Classical Artist Trust is cited as an example of how, through a period of residency, students have been enabled to observe and perform alongside artists who have recently joined the profession¹⁸⁹.

The College's Summary of Graduate Outcomes tracks students' employment destinations after graduation. This document evidences students' attainment of positions in national and international performance companies and organisations. Members of the College's staff are also engaged in external professional, performance and academic organisations. In addition, members of staff may carry out external examining, assessing, adjudicating, and consultancy within the national and international higher education sector¹⁹⁰.

The review team considers that the College's direction of travel within this standard is clearly visible and that its priorities and objectives are coherent and fully aligned with the profile and identity of the institution. The review team commends the College's emphasis on the importance of partnerships and collaborative working with external organisations as a means to enhancing its interaction with artistic professions. This has the potential to raise the College's profile regionally, nationally and internationally.

It strongly encourages the College to continue to systematically extend its partnership list and to work methodically to ensure the consistency and quality of placements within courses so as to enhance the student experience. With regard to lifelong learning, the review team considers that the programme offer forms a valuable portfolio of educational courses with the potential to extend to doctoral level provision. The review team suggests the College to continue working towards firming up its research profile (see Standard 2.1) and its aspirations for short courses so as to extend its lifelong learning reach within the higher education portfolio and at post higher education non-degree level.

In summary the review considers that the College offers a substantial range of public interaction (cultural, artistic, educational and professional) within its educational courses and the Creative Programme. It concludes that the College has viable strategies to extend its educational provision and its range of external formal and informal partnerships and relationships.

¹⁸⁶ Strategic Plan Pillar 2c

¹⁸⁷ SER p.56, meeting 4 with students

¹⁸⁸ SER p.56, meeting 2 with senior administrative staff and the QA office

¹⁸⁹ SER p.56

¹⁹⁰ SER p.56, Summary of Graduate Outcomes

The Review team concludes that the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is fully compliant with Standard 8.2.

8.3 Information provided to the public

Standard: information provided to the public about the institution is clear, consistent and accurate.

The College's website is a primary mechanism for conveying information about the College to the wider public. It contains details of all courses including entry requirements, the application process, tuition costs, course structures, credit weightings learning, teaching, assessment and module specifications. These details are compiled directly from validation documents. The website also gives access to corporate information, legislation policy and Welsh Standards Legislation. Course pages give illustrations of the student experience of studying at the College with details on Student Services, the library and life at the RWCMD. More broadly there are illustrations of the experience of living in Cardiff with information on accommodation, and the sites and features of the city¹⁹¹.

The External Affairs Department is responsible for regular review and update of the website. Additionally, information concerning courses is reviewed annually by senior members of staff to ensure that the information is compliant with the UK Consumer Marketing Authority Regulations¹⁹².

In addition to the website the College uses a number of other modes of external communication. For example, *Connect* is used for communications with donors and there is a designated Alumni Association portal. Other modes of communication include e-bulletins, newsletters, and the *What's On* brochure. *Spektrix* software is a specialist software package for managing relationships with professional partners, membership schemes and ticket purchases. The College engages with social media platforms such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram*. These platforms enable two-way communication and facilitate feedback on performances given within the Creative Programme¹⁹³.

The College has made recent appointments in order to strengthen its engagement and communications with the wider public. A new Director of External Affairs was appointed in 2020 and this was followed by the appointment of a Head of Digital and Brand and a Head of Strategic Engagement. The College hopes that these appointments will positively impact upon its strategic objectives for partnerships, realising the potential of digital communications and for the expansion and diversification of the student cohort¹⁹⁴.

The College considers that better use of the website is desirable, particularly in relation to student recruitment. The review team was informed that work has already begun on restructuring elements of the website and that the higher level work is now complete. The College anticipates that with financial investment, this will be rolled out within the next year. The review team noted that within the "Other Strategic Priorities and Investment Contingencies" section of the Investment Plan there is a commitment to underpinning development of the website¹⁹⁵.

The review team considers that the College uses an up-to-date range of mechanisms for external communication. It considers that there are appropriate procedures for monitoring and reviewing content and its compliance with regulatory requirements. The designation of responsible officers is an important mechanism for ensuring the quality and consistency of information to the public. The review team endorses the College's ambitions for the website which, as a primary contemporary communications medium, is a vital tool. It strongly encourages the College to prioritise further development of the website so as to enhance the representation of the quality of work within the conservatoire. The expansion of student numbers is a key objective of the Strategic

¹⁹¹ SER p.57, [Student Life | Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama \(rwcmd.ac.uk\)](http://www.rwcmd.ac.uk)

¹⁹² SER p.57

¹⁹³ SER p.58

¹⁹⁴ SER p.58

¹⁹⁵ Meeting 5 with members of the Academic Board, Investment Plan

Plan. The review team therefore recommends that the College enhance the website in terms of accessibility and clarity in order to maximise its potential for priorities such as student recruitment. In summary, the review team considers that notwithstanding these two enhancement recommendations the College's external communications mechanisms are effectively aligned with the elements within this standard.

The Review team concludes that the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is fully compliant with Standard 8.3.

Summary of the compliance with the standards

1. Institutional mission, vision and context	
Standard 1. The institutional mission and vision are clearly stated.	Fully compliant
Suggestion for enhancements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strengthen some elements of sub-strategies to provide further support to the overall mission and values, with particular focus on learning and teaching and ensuring a good balance between equality, diversity and inclusion 	
2. Educational processes	
Standard 2.1. The goals of the institution are achieved through the content and structure of the study programmes and their methods of delivery	Substantially compliant
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop a solid support structure (research culture & organisational infrastructure) in preparation for introducing doctoral level study 	
Standard 2.2. The institution offers a range of opportunities for students to gain an international perspective.	Fully compliant
Suggestion for enhancements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue to engage with agencies to facilitate international activities such as staff and student exchanges, and strengthen the visibility of international elements of the curriculum within course documents and the student experience of the curriculum so as to further embed internationalisation. 	
Standard 2.3. The assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.	Fully compliant
Suggestion for enhancements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clarify some elements of assessment and feedback and ensure consistency of feedback across both departments. This includes enhancing consistency in relation to internal and external markers and real-world assessments. 	
3. Student profiles	
Standard 3.1. Clear admission criteria exist, which establish artistic/academic suitability of students.	Fully compliant
Recommendations /	
Standard 3.2. The institution has mechanisms to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.	Fully compliant
Suggestions for enhancement	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continuing development of data capture and analysis in respect of employability to inform future curricular developments ○ Strengthen data collection and analysis relating to EDI in all areas of this standard 	
4. Teaching staff	
Standard 4.1. Members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists/pedagogues/ researchers.	Fully compliant
Suggestion for enhancement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prioritise the institutional ambition of systemising an equitable and effective mechanism for enabling staff development and research 	
Standard 4.2. There are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programmes.	Fully compliant
Suggestion for enhancement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure that plans for expansion numbers are supported by an appropriate teaching staff level (numbers/expertise) 	
5. Facilities, resources and support	
Standard 5.1. The institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and delivery of the programmes.	Fully compliant
Suggestion for enhancement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue the culture shift to shared departmental space wherever possible 	
Standard 5.2. The institution's financial resources enable successful delivery of the study programmes.	Fully compliant
Suggestion for enhancement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The review team recommends that a risk management strategy (or equivalent) be regularly reviewed so that it can be used as circumstances require. 	
Standard 5.3. The institution has sufficient qualified support staff.	Fully compliant
Recommendations	
/	
6. Communication, organisation and decision-making	
Standard 6.1. Effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the institution.	Fully compliant
Suggestion for enhancement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure that the vehicles for communication are optimised to ensure that strategic priorities are shared and owned at all levels of the institution 	

Standard 6.2. The institution has an appropriate organisational structure and clear decision-making processes.	Fully compliant
Recommendations /	
7. Internal quality culture	
Standard 7.1. The institution has a strong internal quality culture, supported by clear and effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.	Fully compliant
Suggestion for enhancement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Further involvement of alumni to inform course development ○ Ensure that feedback loops to students are closed ○ Ensure that mechanisms for quality assurance and enhancement are future-proofed for plans such as expansion and autonomy 	
8. Public interaction	
Standard 8.1. The institution engages within wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts.	Fully compliant
Recommendations /	
Standard 8.2. The institution actively promotes links with various sectors of the music and other artistic professions.	Fully compliant
Recommendations /	
Standard 8.3. Information provided to the public about the institution is clear, consistent and accurate.	Fully compliant
Suggestions for enhancement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prioritise further development of the website so as to fully represent the quality of work within the conservatoire ○ To enhance the website in terms of accessibility and clarity in order to maximise its potential for priorities such as student recruitment 	

Conclusion

This quality enhancement review has taken place during a very exceptional period in the world's history. The College should be congratulated for the comprehensive and thorough preparations that it has made to ensure that the review could take place in an effective, meaningful and useful manner under such exceptional circumstances. The College is at the early stages of an ambitious agenda for change and development and having carried out significant changes to the upper-levels of management, the focus is now on the roll-out of the Strategic Plan. The pandemic has been both a restraining force and a catalyst for change and the College has been adept in its adjustments necessitated by the adverse effects. It has learnt from the experience and has developed positive short-term outcomes along with longer-term strategies emerging from this learning. The Black Lives Matter movement has been a similar catalyst for positive change.

The review team considers the SER to be a frank, open and grounded analysis of the College's current position and its ambitions for the future. The review team has found many points which can be celebrated during this quality enhancement review. These positive elements were outlined to the College in the final presentation of the site-visit and they are listed below. Alongside these within the Summary of compliance with the MusiQuE standards is a series of recommendations. Some of these recommendations will be manageable through the on-going processes of the College. Others may require significant institutional impetus and placement within the order of priority.

The College's ambitions for its institutional profile are particularly notable. The review team considers that its commitment to collaboration - partnerships (regional, national and international) and optimising the multidisciplinary experience within the curriculum – as particularly impressive. These ambitions have the potential of creating a unique institutional quality which may have positive effects on the College's attractiveness to potential students and its ability to form strategic institutional relationships and partnerships. This in turn will have positive effects on its regional, national and global status. Equally, the review team considers that the College's commitment to the individual student experience, its commitment to serve under-represented groups and to promote equality diversity and inclusion is a highly valuable set of aims. This commitment was evident to the team in all its site visit meetings, institutional documents and dealings with the College.

Perhaps one of the most important recommendations relates to research. The College is aware that its current position is relatively nascent. It is committed to developing a research culture that will impact upon the College's programmes, give opportunities for its staff and enhance institutional reputation. Whilst this is an urgent priority, the review team believes this cannot be rushed and that firm foundations and a solid infrastructure are essential early stage priorities. This includes the formalisation of the mechanisms for staff development and research.

The review team was impressed by the approach towards quality assurance and enhancement. With its organisational links to the USW, the College benefits from the structures and procedures of the university. As the College rolls out the strategic plan and works towards autonomy it will be necessary to review these procedures so that it can develop the most appropriate structures for its own context and to ensure robust information in support of its decision making. There has been considerable discussion regarding data capture and analysis within this report and the review team considers this to be a high priority which, once achieved, will underpin the College's strategic priorities ranging from EDI to expansion and autonomy.

Communications are a key underpinning mechanism that can enhance or detract from an institution's success. The College places high value on its communications mechanisms and the review team noted the high degree of "buy in" from the stakeholders that it met during the site visit. This could not have been achieved without mutual communication and understanding. The College has a substantial body of students and staff and the review team was obviously only able to meet with a very small range of its stakeholders. The extent to which the institution's members have assimilated the strategic priorities is therefore difficult to assess. However, the importance of an optimal communications framework is beyond question and the review team strongly encourages the College to prioritise its efforts in this direction so as to ensure buy in for the College's strategic priorities.

The Royal Welsh College of Music has exciting and ambitious plans for its future. The review team hopes that the commentary within this report will be helpful as the roll out of its strategic objectives continues and it wishes the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama every success for the future.

Summary of the strengths identified during the final feedback meeting between the review team and the SMT.

- Clear statement on the mission and values of the institution with a strategy for dissemination to all levels of the institution
- A strong emergent and developing unique institutional profile
- The approach to institutional values is confident, reflective and informed by national and international contexts
- An agile approach to planning and seizing opportunities presented by the pandemic
- A flexible approach to facilitating individualised pathways of study
- A strong commitment to building on and enhancing the industry-led curriculum
- A strong institutional approach to shared educational values at all levels of study (pre-He to HE)
- A realistic approach to enhancing assessment procedures and responding to student feedback internally and within the NSS.
- An exceptionally welcoming and inclusive environment at the point of application through to acceptance
- There is strong evidence for a high quality of teaching
- The teaching staff is extremely supportive of its students
- The institution has a highly impressive site with excellent specialist facilities, accessible green space and a warm welcoming ambiance
- The speedy adoption post-pandemic of new and flexible working spaces and arrangements so as to enhance learning and teaching
- Bold financial planning exemplified by the recent lease of the Old Library in furtherance of the strategic plan
- Clear commitment to ensuring that working arrangements facilitate open communication and conversations
- The inclusion of a wider body of students and staff on institutional committees leads to enhanced communication, decision making and above all, ownership
- A strong commitment to quality assurance and enhancement as exemplified by the recent initiative involving the facilitation of course boards by the Quality Assurance Officer
- A well-articulated and thought through conception of quality assurance and enhancement
- Investment in a comprehensive complaints procedure management system
- A very public facing institution with a grounded understanding of its cultural, artistic and educational roles within Cardiff, Wales, and beyond

- A strong ambition to serve under-represented groups
- Strong and sustainable working relationships with the sector

Annex 1. Site-visit Schedule

Day 1 – (17/11/2021)			
Time	Meeting (working session)	Names and functions of participants from the visited institution <i>(The participants invited to the meetings can be combined taking care to ensure the avoidance of conflicts of interest)</i>	Location
8:15	Pick-up from the hotel		College van
9:00–10:30	Meeting 1 <i>Meeting with the management of the institution</i>	Helena Gaunt (Principal) Mark Davies (Director of Finance and Operations) Brian Weir (Director of Academic Administration and Student Experience) Kate Stokes-Davies (Director of External Affairs) Tim Rhys-Evans (Director of Music) Kevin Price (Director of Performance - Music) Sean Crowley (Director of Drama) Jonathan Munby (Director of Performance - Drama) Lucy Stout (Director of Development)	Meeting Room and TEAMS
10:30-10:45	Review Team meeting: Review Team members share conclusions with Secretary (debriefing)		
10:45-11:00	<i>Break</i>		
11:00-12:30	Meeting 2 Meeting with senior administrative staff/QA office	Mark Davies (Director of Finance and Operation) Brian Weir (Director of Academic Administration & Student Experience) Iestyn Henson (Academic Registrar) Keiron Burrows (Quality Assurance Officer) Judith Dray (Head of Library Services) Kate Stokes-Davies (Director of External Affairs)	Meeting Room and TEAMS
12:30-12:45	Review Team meeting: Review Team members share conclusions with Secretary		
12:45-13:45	<i>Lunch</i>		
13:45-15:15	Meeting 3 Meeting with teachers/lecturers	Andrea Jones (Head of BMus Course) Paula Gardiner (Head of Jazz) Zoe Smith (Head of Post-Graduate Music)	Meeting Room and TEAMS

		Patricia Keir (Head of Junior Conservatoire) Michael Waters (Course Leader (YAS)) Viv Care (Course Leader, Musical Theatre) Karen Pimbley (Course Leader, Arts Management) James Lea (Senior Lecturer (Music) & Research) Tim Richards (Hourly Paid Lecturer)	
15:15-15:30	Review Team meeting: Review Team members share conclusions with Secretary (debriefing)		
15:30-15:45	<i>Break</i>		
15:45-17:00	Guided tour - Review of the facilities Kevin Price (Director of Performance (Music), Ian Evans (Head of Stage Management and Technical Theatre), Leigh Kirk-Harris (Technical Operations Manager)		
17:00-18:00	Review Team meeting: Reflection on the first day and preparations for day 2		Meeting Room
18:00 19:00	<i>Dinner as proposed by the institution</i>		Studio space
19:30	Opera Gala – a side by side performance with College students and the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera		DSH

Day 2 – (18/11/2021)			
Time	Meeting (working session)	Names and functions of participants from the visited institution <i>(The participants invited to the meetings can be combined taking care to ensure the avoidance of conflicts of interest)</i>	Location
8:15	Pick-up from the hotel		College van
9:00–10:30	Meeting 4 <i>Meeting with students</i>	Becky Mercer (Students' Union President) Abigail Fraser (Vice President – Music) Campbell Wallace (Vice President – Drama) Emma Shield (Vice President – Welfare) Eve Abiodun (Vice President – Equality and Diversity) Rob Bull (Vice President – Events and Societies)	Meeting Room and TEAMS
10:30-10:45	Review Team meeting: Review Team members share conclusions with Secretary (debriefing)		
10:45-11:00	<i>Break</i>		
11:00-12:30	Observation of student performances during class and / or exams Tim Rhys Evans (Director of Music), Sean Crowley (Director of Drama), Becky Mercer (SU President)		Various tbc

12:30-12:45	Review Team meeting: Review Team members share conclusions with Secretary		
12:45-13:45	<i>Lunch</i>	Review Team alone	
13:45-15:15	Meeting 5 <i>Meeting with members of the relevant board/academic council</i>	Helena Gaunt (Chair of Academic Board) Brian Weir (Chair of Quality Assurance Committee) Simon Reeves (Chair of Learning, Teaching and Enhancement) (Simon Reeves – as above and Chair of Music Exam Board) Zoe Smith (Chair of Drama Exam Board) Iestyn Henson (Academic Registrar - Secretariat)	
15:15-15:30	Review Team meeting: Review Team members share conclusions with Secretary (debriefing)		
15:30-15:45	<i>Break</i>		
15:45-17:00	Meeting 6 <i>Meeting with alumni and representatives from the music profession</i>	Liam Evans-Ford (Executive Director, Theatr Clwyd) Darren Joyce (General Manager, Cardiff Theatrical Services/WNO) Beatrice Carey (Head of Partnerships, BBC NOW) Lara Soley Johannsdottir (Managing Director, Iceland Symphony Orchestra) Alumni tbc	Meeting Room and TEAMS
17:00-18:30	Review Team meeting <i>Reflection on the first day and preparations for day 3</i>		
19:00-	<i>Dinner</i>	Review Team alone	Hotel

Day 3 – (19/11/2021)			
Time	Meeting (working session)	Names and functions of participants from the visited institution <i>(The participants invited to the meetings can be combined taking care to ensure the avoidance of conflicts of interest)</i>	Location
8:15	Pick-up from the hotel		College van
9:00–10:30	Meeting 7 <i>Extra session if required by the Review Team (members of the team may explore more thoroughly specific area, meet other representatives of their choice)</i>	As notified by the Review Team	Meeting Room and TEAMS
10:45-11:00	<i>Break</i>		

11:00-13:00	Review Team meeting – Preparation for the feedback meeting		
13:00-14:00	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Review Team alone</i>	
14:00-15:30	Meeting 8 Feedback to the institution	Helena Gaunt (Principal) Mark Davies (Director of Finance and Operations) Brian Weir (Director of Academic Administration and Student Experience) Kate Stokes-Davies (Director of External Affairs) Tim Rhys-Evans (Director of Music) Kevin Price (Director of Performance - Music) Sean Crowley (Director of Drama) Jonathan Munby (Director of Performance - Drama) Lucy Stout (Director of Development)	Meeting Room and TEAMS
END OF THE SITE-VISIT			

Annex 2. List of documents provided to the review team

General Information

1. Academic Governance Committee Terms of Reference
2. Academic Strategy
3. Digital Strategy Proposal
4. Environmental and Sustainability Policy (Draft)
5. Investment Plan
6. Old Library Presentation
7. People Plan
8. Recruitment Strategy
9. Research Strategy
10. Strategic Equality Plan
11. Strategic Plan

Standard 1

1. CQFW Level Descriptors
2. Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales 2018
3. Data – Degree Classifications
4. Data – National Student Survey Results
5. Data – Progression and completion Rates – Undergraduate
6. Data – Recruitment 2014-2021
7. Data – Student number totals by year and course
8. Data – Student Profile (ethnicity, gender, nationality etc)
9. QAA Dance, Drama & Performance Subject Benchmark Statement
10. QAA Music Subject Benchmark Statement
11. QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education
12. RWCMD Strategic Plan
13. University of South Wales Quality Manual

Standard 2

1. Junior College Feedback templates
 - a. Mini Music Sample Report
 - b. Music First Sample Report
 - c. Sample Assessment Scheme (technical assessment instructions)
 - d. Yr 11 classical pathway student sample report
 - e. Yr 13 jazz pathway student sample report
 - f. Yr 8 classical pathway student sample report

Standard 2.1

1. 21-22 BA Acting Syllabus
2. 21-22 BA Design for Performance Syllabus
3. 21-22 BA Musical Theatre Syllabus
4. 21-22 BA Stage Management and Technical Theatre Syllabus
5. 21-22 MA Acting for Stage and Screen Syllabus
6. 21-22 MA Arts Management Syllabus
7. 21-22 MA Design for Performance Syllabus

8. 21-22 MA Musical Theatre Syllabus
9. 2122 Scenic Construction Handbook
10. 21-22 Scenic Construction Syllabus
11. 21-22 MA Stage and Event Management Syllabus

*NB – all other course documents available via the Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle).
Username and password shared separately*

Standard 2.2

1. Aureus for MusiQuE Review
 - a. Curriculum Documents
 - b. Due Diligence
 - c. Aureus Company Profile
 - d. Aureus Conservatory Safeguarding
 - e. Aureus x RWCMD February 2019 Proposal
 - f. Media Release July 2019
2. ESTA for MusiQuE Review
 - a. ESTA Proposal March 2019
 - b. Memorandum of Understanding Dec 2019

Standard 2.3

1. 2030 Curriculum Design Principles Final Draft
2. Academic Appeals Regulations
3. Academic Blueprint RWCMD Variations
4. Assessment for Learning Policy
5. Assessment Tariff
6. Introducing the USW Graduate Attributes
7. USW Regulations for Taught Courses
8. External Examiner Reports and Responses
 - a. (All courses) 2017-18
 - b. (All courses) 2018-19
 - c. (All courses) 2019-20
9. Staff-Student Course Boards
 - a. (All meeting minutes) 2017-18
 - b. (All meeting minutes) 2018-19
 - c. (All meeting minutes) 2019-20
 - d. (All meeting minutes) 2020-21

Standard 3

1. Copy of JC Progression Nov 21
2. Junior Conservatoire Demographics (21-22 cohort)
3. Student Equality Statistics

Standard 3.1

1. Audition Guidance
 - a. Audition Guidance Accepted CY
 - b. Audition Guidance Accepted EN



2. Auditions and Interviews
 - a. Accepted
 - i. Accept Program Filter Dropdowns
 - ii. RWCMD Cloud Services Risk Assessment
 - b. Acting
 - i. 2021-22 Partner Drama School Agreement
 - ii. Audition Guidance Acting 2021
 - iii. Panel email
 - c. Music
 - i. Similarity Detection
 - ii. 2022 Target Numbers
 - iii. Accessing Accepted
 - iv. ODL main
 - d. Musical Theatre
 - i. Audition Guidance Musical Theatre 2021
 - ii. Panel email draft
3. Recall numbers and locations
4. Recall Planning
5. Open Days
 - a. Music
 - i. Friday 10 Sept 2021 Schedule
 - ii. Monday 12 July 2021 Schedule
 - iii. Re Virtual Music Open – Live Q A Sessions
 - iv. Thursday 9 Sept 2021 Schedule
 - v. Tuesday 13 July 2021 Schedule

Standard 3.2

1. Certificate Sample
2. Data – progression and completion rates undergraduate
3. Graduate Outcomes extract for MusiQuE
4. Graduating Statistics Report Summer 2020
5. Information Sheet for MusiQuE Review
6. Overview of Graduate Outcomes for MusiQuE
7. Student Equality Statistics
8. Transcript sample

Standard 4

1. Junior Conservatoire Data
 - a. JC Staff list 2021-22

Standard 4.1

1. College Staff – external examining & other engagement
2. Research Excellence Framework Submission 2021
3.
 - a. RWCMD REF 2021 Presentation
 - b. RWCMD REF 2021 Research Environment Statement
 - c. RWCMD REF 2021 Impact Case Studies



- i. John Hardy ICS
 - ii. Sean Crowley ICS
- d. RWCMD REF 2021 Sample Outputs
 - i. Allie Edge Outputs
 - ii. Jonathan Munby Outputs
 - iii. Lucy Hall Outputs
 - iv. Patricia Logue Outputs
 - v. Paula Gardiner Output
 - vi. Sean Crowley Output
 - vii. Simon Reeves FINAL
 - viii. Tim Rhys-Evans Outputs

Standard 4.2

1. Staff Equality Survey 2021

Standard 5.1

1. Hub.rwcmd.ac.uk/tech ops
2. RWCMD rooms and equipment overview
3. Rwcmd.ac.uk/library

Standard 5.2

1. Investment Plan

Standard 5.3

1. Conferences and membership table 2018-2020
2. Proposed Training plan 2021-22
3. Recruitment Plan

Standard 6.1

1. NSS 2021
2. Student Survey Overall Results
3. Visiting Directors Handbook 2021-2022

Standard 6.2

1. Committee Membership 202021
2. Hub.rwcmd.ac.uk/organisational chart

Standard 7

1. Student Complaints Regs 2020-21
2. College Academic Board Minutes
 - a. 201819 Meeting Minutes
 - b. 201920 Meeting Minutes
 - c. 202021 Meeting Minutes
3. College Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee Minutes
 - a. 201819 Meeting Minutes



- b. 201920 Meeting Minutes
 - c. 202021 Meeting Minutes
- 4. College Quality Assurance Committee Minutes
 - a. 201819 Meeting Minutes
 - b. 201920 Meeting Minutes
 - c. 202021 Meeting Minutes

Standard 8.1

- 1. Blog.rwcmd.ac.uk

Standard 8.2

- 1. Summary of Graduate Outcomes May 2020 roles and employer

Standard 8.3

- 1. (Links to websites included within Self-Evaluation Document)



Annex3. Definition of compliance levels

- **Fully compliant.** *A standard is fully compliant when the approaches, structures or mechanisms relevant to that standard are fully implemented in a coherent and consistent way.*
- **Substantially compliant.** *A standard is substantially compliant when the standard is in place, while minor weaknesses have been observed but the manner of implementation is mostly effective. In such cases Review teams are asked to include a recommendation as to how full compliance can be achieved.*
- **Partially compliant.** *A standard is partially compliant when the standard is in place, while significant weaknesses have been observed or the manner of implementation is not sufficiently effective. In such cases Review teams are asked to include a recommendation as to how full compliance can be achieved or a condition*.*
- **Not compliant.** *A standard is not compliant when the approaches, structures or mechanisms relevant to that standard are lacking or implemented inadequately. In such cases Review teams are asked to include a strong recommendation or a condition*.*

*(*Please note that conditions can only be formulated in accreditation reports and not in quality enhancement review reports.)*



