Office for Students

Degree awarding powers assessment report for The London Interdisciplinary School Limited

New degree awarding powers end assessment

Contents

Executive summary

Type of assessment	Quality and standards assessment for full degree awarding powers
For	The London Interdisciplinary School Limited

1. This report represents the conclusions of an assessment for degree awarding powers (DAPs) at The London Interdisciplinary School Limited ('the school'). The school is seeking authorisation for Full DAPs for all taught awards (up to and including Level 7) covering all subjects.

2. To carry out the assessment, the Office for Students (OfS) appointed an independent team of academic experts. This report contains the advice and judgement of the team following its assessment.

3. The team concluded that the school met all the criteria for a Full DAPs authorisation (see Table 1). This report does not, however, represent any decision of the OfS to authorise these powers.

Table 1: Summary of findings against the DAPs criteria

Underpinning DAPs criteria	
Criteria	**Summary**
Criterion A: Academic governance	Met
Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks	Met
Criterion B2: Academic standards	Met
Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience	Met
Criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff	Met
Criterion D: Environment for supporting students	Met
Criterion E: Evaluation of performance	Met
Overarching Full DAPs criterion	
The provider is a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems	Met

What are new and full degree awarding powers?

The Office for Students (OfS) may grant a new degree awarding powers (New DAPs) authorisation to a provider that has been delivering higher education for less than three years.

The authorisation will normally be time-limited to four years. A provider with New DAPs is required to satisfy probationary reviews during this period.

Before the end of the probationary period, a provider can seek a variation of its New DAPs authorisation to a full degree awarding powers (Full DAPs) authorisation.

A Full DAPs authorisation will normally be time-limited to four years. At the end of the four-year period, a provider will be able to apply for an authorisation to grant awards without a time limit.

A provider with New DAPs may seek authorisation for Full DAPs for the following awards:

- foundation degrees only

- awards up to, and including, bachelor degrees

- all taught awards.

Providers may apply for authorisation on a subject-specific basis or covering all subjects.

Assessment and decision-making process

Before deciding whether to vary a provider's New DAPs authorisation, the OfS will undertake a 'New DAPs end assessment'. The purpose of a New DAPs end assessment is to gather evidence to inform a judgement on the extent to which a provider's arrangements:

- meets the DAPs criteria, including the overarching criterion for Full DAPs

- provide, and maintain the provision of, higher education of an appropriate quality

- apply, and maintain the application of, appropriate standards to that higher education.

The criteria for authorisation for DAPs are designed to ensure that a provider with DAPs demonstrates a firm guardianship of academic standards, a firm and systematic approach to the assurance of the quality of the higher education that it provides, and the capacity to contribute to the continued good standing of higher education in England. The DAPs criteria are the reference point for the DAPs assessment process and assessment teams will assess a provider against these criteria. The detailed requirements of the DAPs criteria are set out in Annex C of the OfS's regulatory framework. [1]

OfS officers first undertake an eligibility and suitability assessment of the provider. This initial assessment determines the scope and level of detail of the New DAPs end assessment, and an initial position on whether the assessment should be desk-based or include a visit to the provider.

---

[1] See Annex C of the OfS's regulatory framework: Annex C – Guidance on the criteria for the authorisation for DAPs - Office for Students.

DAPs assessments are conducted by teams with membership which include academic experts that the OfS has appointed. The outcome of the assessment is a report, compiled by the assessment team, summarising its findings.

The team's findings will be the outcome of a cumulative assessment process throughout the provider's New DAPs probationary period, and the assessment team's view of the success with which the provider has implemented its New DAPs plan.

The report is then considered by the OfS's Quality Assessment Committee (QAC). QAC has responsibility for providing advice to the OfS under section 46 of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA) on the quality of and standards applied to the higher education being delivered by providers for which the OfS is considering granting, varying (or in certain circumstances revoking) authorisation for DAPs.[2] After considering the assessment report, the QAC provides advice to the OfS regarding quality and standards.

In making its decision about whether to authorise DAPs on the basis sought by the provider, the OfS will have regard to the assessment report and the QAC's advice. The OfS will also consider its own risk assessment of the provider and will have regard to advice received from others where this has been sought. It will also take into account other relevant considerations, such as the OfS's general duties under section 2 of HERA.[3]

Further information

We have published further information about authorising Full DAPs at the end of a provider's New DAPs probationary period in Regulatory advice 12.[4]

4. The London Interdisciplinary School Limited ('the school') is a private limited company which provides undergraduate, postgraduate and professional courses in interdisciplinary studies.

5. The school was awarded New DAPs by the OfS on 18 December 2020, which authorised the school to grant a specified Level 6 taught award. The New DAPs order was varied three times to include intermediate awards and a specified Level 7 taught award between November 2021 and August 2022. Its current New DAPs authorisation (covering the Level 6, Level 7 and intermediate awards) is due to expire on 31 December 2024.

6. In accordance with the OfS's regulatory framework and its guidance on how to apply for degree awarding powers,[5] the school was eligible to be considered for time-limited Full DAPs because it was reaching the end of its probationary period. The school requested to seek time-limited Full DAPs up to and including Level 7 taught awards, inclusive of all subjects.

7. The OfS appointed an external assessment team on 9 February 2024 to undertake a desk-based New DAPs end assessment. The OfS asked the assessment team to give its advice about the quality of, and standards applied to, higher education courses being provided at the

---

[2] See Higher Education and Research Act 2017, section 46.

[3] See Higher Education and Research Act 2017, section 2.

[4] See Regulatory advice 12: How to apply for degree awarding powers - Office for Students.

[5] See Regulatory advice 12: How to apply for degree awarding powers - Office for Students.

school and whether the school has met the DAPs criteria through the implementation of its New DAPs plan during the probationary period.

8. This report will be considered by the OfS's Quality Assessment Committee (QAC). QAC will formulate its advice to the OfS regarding quality and standards at The London Interdisciplinary School, having considered this report.

9. The OfS will consider the assessment report, and QAC's advice, in deciding whether to grant the school's Full DAPs order on the basis requested. The OfS will also consider its own risk assessment for the school and have regard to the advice received from others where this has been sought, as well as other relevant considerations, such as the OfS's general duties under section 2 of HERA.

Introduction and background

10. The London Interdisciplinary School ('the school') was established in 2017 and operates from its campus in Whitechapel, east London. The school specialises in interdisciplinary learning and was set up with the aim to deliver a new approach to higher education, which equips its students with the knowledge and skills across multiple subject areas, to tackle complex social and global challenges.

11. The school has delivered higher education courses since 2021 and currently offers one undergraduate and one postgraduate programme: a BASc (Hons) in Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods, and an MASc (Hons) in Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods.

12. The school was awarded New DAPs by the OfS on 18 December 2020, which came into force on 27 September 2021 for a period of three years and three months. The New DAPs order authorised the school to grant the following specified taught award: BASc (Hons) in Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods, for a probationary period beginning on 27 September 2021 and expiring on 31 December 2024.

13. The New DAPs order was varied on 15 November 2021 to include the following associated intermediate awards: BASc in Interdisciplinary Studies, CertHE in Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods, DipHE in Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods. The variation came into force on 1 January 2022.

14. On 19 August 2022, the New DAPs order was varied for a second time to include the following specified Level 7 taught award: MASc in Interdisciplinary Practice and associated intermediate awards: PGDip in Interdisciplinary Practice and PGCert in Interdisciplinary Practice. The variation came into force on 26 September 2022. In order to align with the school's existing probationary period for its New DAPs Level 6 award, the OfS made the decision to reduce the school's probationary period for its New DAPs Level 7 award to two years and three months.

15. On 27 July 2023, the New DAPs order was varied again to include the following new titles for the specified Level 7 taught award: MASc in Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods and associated intermediate awards: PGDip in Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods, and PGCert in Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods.

16. The school's first cohort of students commenced the BASc (Hons) in Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods under its New DAPs authorisation in September 2021. Two further cohorts of students have since commenced the bachelors' degree programme.

17. The school's first cohort of postgraduate students commenced the MASc in Interdisciplinary Practice under its New DAPs authorisation in September 2022. One full-time and one part-time cohort of students have since commenced the school's masters' degree programme.

18. Over the next three years, the school plans to ███████████████████████████████ ███ ████████████████████████████████ The school will continue to deliver its current BASc and MASc in Interdisciplinary Problem and Methods and also plans to develop a broader range of modules related to interdisciplinary approaches to tackling complex problems.

19. Overall, the school had a student population in 2022-23 of 100 students.[6] This included 90 full-time undergraduate students and 10 full-time postgraduate students.

20. The school reported that it currently employs 24 academic staff, 10 of whom are part-time and two are visiting lecturers. There are a further 33 non-teaching members of staff based across the CEO's office, registry and marketing departments.

21. In December 2023, at the end of the school's year two probationary period, the school requested to be considered for time-limited Full DAPs up to and including Level 7 taught awards, and without the programme restrictions set out in its current DAPs authorisation.

22. In accordance with the OfS's operational guidance on assessment for degree awarding powers,[7] a typical monitoring schedule for a provider in its probationary period would see it undergo monitoring throughout year two of this period, with a view to commencing assessment for Full DAPs at the start of year three. The school's request to seek time-limited Full DAPs was in line with this timeline.

23. The operational guidance sets out information regarding the monitoring of providers with New DAPs and the assessment process at the end of the probationary period. To supplement this, the timelines and process of the New DAPs end assessment follow the timescales and processes detailed in the OfS's regulatory framework and its operational guidance on assessment for the variation and revocation of degree awarding powers.[8]

24. In accordance with this guidance, the OfS undertook an initial eligibility and suitability assessment of the school and decided that a desk-based New DAPs end assessment should be undertaken.

25. The OfS appointed an assessment team on 9 February 2024, which consisted of three academic expert assessors and a member of OfS staff in the following roles:

    a. Professor Joan Simons – committee chair and lead assessor

    b. Claire Blanchard – deputy committee chair and assessor

    c. Professor Alan Howard – deputy committee chair and assessor

    d. Thea Jones – committee member and assessment coordinator.

26. The OfS asked the team to give its advice about the quality of and standards applied to higher education courses at the school and whether the school has met the DAPs criteria through the implementation of its New DAPs plan during the probationary period.

---

[6] These figures come from the latest data available in the OfS's 'Size and shape of provision data dashboard', available at Size and shape of provision data dashboard - Office for Students.

[7] See Annex D, 'Operational guidance for providers on DAPs assessment by the OfS', at Regulatory advice 12: How to apply for degree awarding powers - Office for Students.

[8] See Annex B, 'Operational guidance for providers on assessment by the Office for Students', at Regulatory advice 17: Variation and revocation of degree awarding powers - Office for Students.

27. The assessment team considered a range of information submitted by the school in support of its request to seek time-limited Full DAPs, alongside evidence collected during monitoring activities throughout the school's probationary period.

Assessment process

Information gathering

28. In accordance with the operational guidance on assessment for degree awarding powers, the school submitted a self-assessment document on 1 March 2024, setting out how it considered it met the DAPs criteria through the implementation of its New DAPs plan during the probationary period.

29. To support the statements made in the self-assessment document, on 1 March 2024 the school submitted a range of documentary evidence. This included programme documentation and information relating to academic policies, processes and governance structures.

30. Following the team's assessment of the school's evidence submission, the team requested further information from the school, including access to the school's virtual learning environment (VLE). The school submitted a response to this request on 26 April 2024.

31. Following a review of the additional information submitted by the school, the team requested further information on two points. The school submitted a response to this request on 23 and 29 April 2024 respectively.

New DAPs probationary period monitoring activities

32. The team's assessment also included a review of previous monitoring activities undertaken, throughout the school's New DAPs probationary period.

33. The monitoring activities and associated evidence that the assessment team considered from the probationary period included:

- the school's New DAPs plan

- seven self-assessment reports and associated documentary evidence submitted by the school

- monitoring reports completed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in its former role as the designated quality body (DQB) in England.

Observations and visits

34. During the first year of the school's probationary period, the QAA undertook 10 observations between October 2021 and September 2022. This included observations of meetings of the Academic Board, Student Voice Committee, Examination Board, Regulatory Working Group and Board of Directors. The observations also included a staff training session on assessment, a faculty away day, an observation of teaching and the peer observation process and student induction. Eight of the observations took place online and two were conducted onsite. The QAA also undertook two onsite visits to the school on 26 November 2021 and 26 to 27 April 2022, in which it met with student representatives from the first cohort of students, teaching and support staff and senior staff.

35. During the second year of the school's probationary period, the QAA undertook five observations between November 2022 and March 2023. Three of the observations were of meetings of the Admissions Decision Committee, the Academic Council and a Town Hall meeting. The QAA also observed a Level 7 teaching and observation process and staff training session on supervision. The QAA also undertook an onsite visit to the school on 22 to 23 February 2023.

Assessment of DAPs criterion A: Academic governance

Criterion A1: Academic governance

Advice to the OfS

36. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion A1: Academic governance because it meets sub-criteria A1.1, A1.2 and A1.3.

37. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows, in summary, that the school has sound academic governance and management structures that deliver effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability. The school engages students as partners in the academic governance and management of academic standards and quality. It also has appropriate oversight to ensure that if it decides to work with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, the management of such opportunities is robust and effective and led by a strategic approach.

38. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion collated throughout the school's probationary period, and for the purposes of this New DAPs end assessment, alongside any other relevant information.

> **A1.1: An organisation granted degree awarding powers has effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.**

Advice to the OfS

39. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion A1.1 because it has effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.

40. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that the school has met the evidence requirements for A1.1 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Context

41. The school's Strategy and Business Plan sets out its overall higher education vision, mission, and strategic direction, the main themes of which are centred on delivery of modern, interdisciplinary and problem-based undergraduate and postgraduate programmes with an approach to admissions that evaluates the potential as well as attainment of prospective students. Alongside the strategic plan, sits the school's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which outlines the school's framework for development of learning, teaching and assessment alongside more specific policies concerned with the design and implementation of assessment at the school.

42. The principles of governance and terms of reference of each governance committee are set out in the school's Governance and Academic Regulations. The school's Board of Directors is its most senior authority, responsible for the financial and commercial strategy and

management of the institution. The Board's membership consists of independent external members, shareholders, senior staff, student representatives and the chief executive.

43. The Academic Council, operating under delegated powers from the Board of Directors, is the senior academic authority responsible for maintaining the quality and standards of academic provision. This includes the validation, monitoring, and annual review of programmes and modules. The Academic Council is chaired by the dean, and its membership includes the chief executive, up to 10 module leaders from the programme team, directors of different functions, independent external members and student representatives. To ensure the effectiveness of the Academic Council, the Board of Directors reviews the Academic Council's minutes as a standing item on its agenda and takes advice from its external, independent members to assure itself of the school's adherence to high academic standards.

44. The Academic Council is supported in its academic activities by four higher education sub-committees: the Admissions Decisions Committee, the Board of Examiners, the Policy and Regulatory Committee, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee, and the Student Voice Committee. These became fully operationalised, including with student representation, in 2021-22 following the school's first undergraduate intake.

45. The Leadership Group, a sub-committee of both the Academic Council and the Board of Directors, holds delegated operational and management powers. Chaired by the chief executive, the Leadership Group includes directors from the executive offices. The Audit and Compliance Committee, a sub-committee of the Board of Directors, is responsible for overseeing various financial and regulatory matters.

Reasoning

46. The assessment team reviewed how effective the school's academic governance is and sought to determine whether the school's higher education mission and strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, published, and understood. The team considered the detail of the college's Strategy and Business Plan alongside its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, and associated frameworks, policies, and procedures.

47. The assessment team found cohesion between the focus of the school's Strategy and Business Plan and its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Key themes from the Strategy and Business Plan were reflected in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, including the school's central ethos to provide a centre of excellence for interdisciplinary learning. These strategies are underpinned by the school's Academic Framework and Assessment and Classification Framework, which articulate the overarching general academic regulations that apply to the design, structure and assessment of its programmes. These frameworks are supported by a coherent set of academic policies. Additionally, the school's quality framework includes structured processes for review, monitoring, and annual reporting (covered in detail under criterion E1).

48. The team found that the objectives and aims of associated academic policies are consistent with the school's strategic mission and objectives. For example, the strategic objective to recruit students based on a holistic evaluation of their potential is clearly reflected in the school's Admissions Regulations and Procedures, which stipulates that all applications are contextualised, and all eligible applicants are invited to a selection day.

49. The assessment team observed that the school's policies and procedures are now in operation at all levels of its undergraduate and postgraduate provision. The portfolio of policies remains unchanged since the last degree awarding powers review report was compiled by the QAA monitoring assessment team in March 2022; however, individual policies undergo annual review by the Policy and Regulatory Committee, with outcomes and recommendations reported to the Academic Council.

50. The assessment team found that the school has introduced a policy effectiveness form to engage relevant stakeholders and assist with policy review. Minutes from the Policy and Regulatory Committee highlight the consideration of the annual policy review and any proposed changes, with student representatives actively contributing to the discussions.

51. The assessment team identified that student induction and reinduction activities included the provision of a Registry staff briefing to students on key school policies, procedures and committees. The school's student handbook also signposts policies and other key information.

52. The assessment team's review of new staff induction materials including the content of a briefing by Registry staff, confirmed to the team that new school staff are made aware of the key school policies and the wider regulatory landscape for higher education. Additionally, the assessment team's review of the 2023-24 academic staff development programme found the inclusion of policy refresher sessions.

53. The assessment team also found that the school's frameworks, policies, and procedures are published on its public website.[9]

54. The assessment team concluded that the school's higher education mission and strategic direction and associated academic regulations and policies are published and easily accessible to staff and students. Furthermore, the team concluded that the school has sound developmental processes for ensuring staff understand policies and can apply them consistently and that this supports effective academic governance.

55. To test if the school's strategic aims and academic policies are consistently applied in practice and therefore demonstrate sound academic governance, the assessment team reviewed the agendas and minutes from nine Board of Directors committee meetings held between academic years 2021-22 and 2023-24 as well as a DQB observation report from the January 2022 meeting. The team also reviewed a selection of agendas, papers, and minutes for the Academic Council from seven meetings held during the academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24. The team cross-referenced its findings with the school's New DAPs plan.

56. The assessment team found that the Board of Directors received and discussed updates from the Academic Council at each meeting. For instance, in its January 2023 meeting, the Board reviewed a presentation on the Annual Programme Monitoring report and actively questioned areas for improvement regarding academic stretch and student feedback. In a meeting held in July 2023, the Board received an update on the faculty's current thinking about artificial intelligence (AI), particularly concerning the upholding of academic standards. A monitoring assessment report compiled by the QAA following an assessor observation of the January

---

[9] See Policies - London Interdisciplinary School.

2022 meeting noted the attention given to strategic priorities, including undergraduate and postgraduate growth and the linkages between teaching and research.

57. The assessment team concluded that the Board of Directors is well informed and actively engaged in monitoring the school's academic standards and quality. The active discussion and appropriate challenges evidenced in Board meetings indicate that the school operates its academic governance arrangements effectively, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. The assessment team also concluded that the governance arrangements established and operationalised during the probationary period would have sufficient capacity and scope to maintain their current effectiveness with the development of new interdisciplinary programmes.

58. Academic Council meeting minutes demonstrate that each meeting includes reports and other documents, such as survey results, which are actively and robustly discussed. This supported the team's view that the Academic Council clearly understands its core role in overseeing academic quality and standards. In the December 2022 meeting, for example, the assessment team saw evidence of the Council's thorough consideration of the annual report on admissions and recruitment, including detailed discussions on accessibility of arrangements for online interviews. The June 2023 minutes further demonstrated the Council's engagement with the annual review of policies, as it received and approved recommendations from the Policy and Regulatory Committee.

59. Based on its review of various committee papers, the assessment team concluded that the school consistently applies its academic policies and strategic aims in practice, demonstrating effective academic governance.

60. To understand how the school operates its academic governance arrangements, such that its academic policies support its higher education mission, aims and objectives, the assessment team reviewed its academic, assessment and classification frameworks and associated policies and procedures.

61. The school's Academic Framework defines the underpinning structure of its programmes in alignment with the school's strategy and mission. The main purposes of the Academic Framework are to promote a common understanding of the school's awards, provide a reference point for academic standards, ensure its qualifications align with the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), and maintain consistency with the Higher Education Credit Framework for England.

62. The school's Assessment and Classification Framework outlines the regulatory principles for assessment and classification of its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The assessment team found that the school's frameworks effectively underpin its mission.

63. The team also found that the school's policies and procedures effectively support its mission, aims and objectives. For example, the Admissions Regulations and Procedure sets out a commitment to delivering a fair admissions system that admits students of outstanding achievement and potential, irrespective of their background. This is in alignment with the school's overarching commitment to widening participation articulated in its access and participation plan 2020-2025 and equality strategy 2022-2028.

64. The team concluded that the school's academic policies support its higher education mission, aims and objectives, and the delivery of effective academic governance.

65. The assessment team found that the school has clearly defined terms of reference for its committees, which helps delineate functions and responsibilities. The governance overview includes a scheme of delegation, further specifying roles and responsibilities, thereby contributing to clarity in governance. The school's review of committee terms of reference, undertaken in quarter three each year, ensures their effectiveness and allows for adjustments based on feedback. Feedback is collected from all members of the Academic Council's committees and working groups through a questionnaire. This survey invites evaluation of the operational performance of committees, as well as comments on membership and terms of reference.

66. The assessment team identified that the New DAPs plan included a commitment to commission an external review of the school's governance and quality assurance to ensure its approaches are benchmarked against sector best practice. The assessment team found that this external governance review took place, as planned, in 2022-23 and that it concluded that academic governance was fit-for-purpose and aligned with sector expectations, including the OfS's fourth public interest governance principle.[10] The external review was conducted by two experienced higher education quality assurance professionals. Based on feedback from its report, the school made minor modifications to its committee structure, including discontinuing the Learning Resources, Property, Data and IT Committee from 2023-24 onwards and reallocating its responsibilities to other committees.

67. The assessment team considers that the roles and responsibilities of the two primary governance committees – Board of Directors and Academic Council – are clear. The Academic Council, with representation from senior staff, students, and independent external members, serves as the senior academic authority, with overarching responsibility for managing the school's provision. The reporting lines from the Academic Council to the Board of Directors ensure that academic decisions are effectively communicated, contributing to transparency and accountability. A report from the Academic Council is a standing item on the Board of Directors' agenda. At the September 2023 meeting, for example, the team learnt that the Board considered the Academic Council's decision to update the Assessment and Classification Framework.

68. The assessment team found that the inclusion of various reports, such as the Annual Quality Report and Annual Programme Monitoring Reports, and the Annual Report on the Access and Participation Plan in the reporting to the Board of Directors also indicates a systematic approach to oversight and accountability.

69. The assessment team concluded that there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels of the school in relation to its academic governance structures and its arrangements for managing its higher education provision. This provided further assurance to the assessment team that the school has effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.

---

[10] See Public interest governance principles - Office for Students.

70. The assessment team's review of the terms of reference of the Academic Council and minutes from its meetings enabled the team to test whether the function and responsibility of the Academic Council is clearly articulated and consistently applied.

71. In the team's view, the function and responsibility of the Academic Council, as the senior academic authority, is clearly articulated in its terms of reference, including its relationship with the Board of Directors. The Academic Council is tasked with maintaining strategic oversight of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. Its remit includes the approval and monitoring of the effectiveness of all academic policies and procedures, including those related to curriculum development and review, admissions, learning and teaching, student support, student progression, quality assurance, and all other policies related to the assurance of standards and quality. The Academic Council may also give advice or make recommendations to the Board of Directors on a range of topics, including the regulatory landscape, establishment and closure of programmes and the educational characteristics and objectives of the school. The Academic Council has been delegated these responsibilities from the Board of Directors.

72. The Academic Council discharges some of its duties through six sub-committees: the Admissions Decisions Committee, Board of Examiners, Policy and Regulatory Committee, EDI Committee, Leadership Group and Student Voice Committee. Terms of reference and membership of each sub-committee are set out in the school's Governance and Academic Regulations.

73. The assessment team reviewed a sample of agendas, papers, and minutes for the Academic Council from eight meetings held between 2022 and 2024. The team found that Academic Council minutes demonstrate that the business undertaken in meetings fulfils the council's terms of reference and that reports from each sub-committee are considered. Actions arising are recorded in a table with the person(s) responsible and timescales allocated. The September 2023 meeting, for example, considered business concerned with admissions and recruitment, external examiner reports, module feedback, the Annual Scholarship and Pedagogical Effectiveness Report, the Annual Report on Student Support and approval of the Student Support Framework, the Annual Student Engagement Report, and an amendment to the Assessment and Classification Framework. The team found that all committee minutes evidenced that active discussion takes place, with members querying and offering robust challenge on agenda items as appropriate.

74. The assessment team learnt that the volume of business considered has increased since the award of New DAPs. Consequently, the number of meetings has increased from three to four a year and an additional external member of the Council was appointed during 2023-24 with expertise in employment matters.

75. As discussed in paragraph 68, the team found that reporting lines from the Academic Council to the Board of Directors ensure effective communication of academic decisions, maintaining transparency and accountability.

76. The assessment team concluded that the Academic Council's function and responsibility is clearly articulated and consistently applied and that it maintains appropriate accountability for, and good oversight of, its academic responsibilities.

77. To determine if there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership, the assessment team reviewed the school's organisational chart as well as the CVs of the senior leadership team and members of the Board of Directors.

78. The assessment team identified from the organisational chart that the senior leadership team is headed by the chief executive and comprises the dean, registrar, chief marketing officer, chief of staff, head of finance and HR and head of partnerships. The academic leadership and management structure was revised during the probationary period to create positions for a head of learning and teaching, a head of research and development and a programme director for the masters' degree programme, with all roles reporting to the dean. The assessment team considered that this reflected changes to activities planned during the probationary period, including the introduction of the masters' degree and expectations regarding academic staff engagement with research and scholarly activity. The assessment team found that these changes enhanced the management structure by incorporating a greater breadth of experience and expertise and represented appropriate development during the probationary period.

79. Through scrutiny of CVs and online biographies,[11] the assessment team found that the senior leadership team has significant breadth and depth of knowledge and senior-level higher education experience in well-established higher education providers. For example, the dean has over 20 years' teaching and programme leadership experience in a university and is a principal fellow of Advance HE. The head of learning and teaching has a PhD in education policy and programme evaluation and has several years research and teaching experience at other universities. The registrar was a previous director of studies at another higher education provider. The roles and responsibilities of senior leaders are clearly defined in respective role descriptors and the school's quality framework.

80. In addition, the assessment team found that collectively the Board of Directors has a range of significant senior leadership experience from across a variety of charities and industries, including higher education, business and the arts and media.

81. The assessment team concluded that this evidence demonstrates there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership within the school, to ensure the delivery of effective academic governance.

82. To determine if the school develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff and students and external stakeholders, the assessment team reviewed the terms of reference, membership and committee papers from a range of academic committees with a remit to develop or contribute to the development of academic policies and processes.

83. The assessment team found strong collaboration with students in the design and review of policies and procedures through committee membership and wider consultation. Students are represented on key committees including the Board of Directors, Academic Council, Student Voice Committee, EDI committee, and the Policy and Regularity Committee.

---

[11] See Meet the LIS Team - London Interdisciplinary School.

84. The assessment team considered recent examples of policy development with students, including a proposed amendment to the Academic Misconduct Policy to outline proper and improper use of AIPM. This was discussed with students at the February 2023 meeting of the Policy and Regulatory Committee. Another example involved an open consultation with students on the development of the school's equality strategy. This consultation identified the matter of 'dealing with difficult conversations' leading to the development of a draft code of conduct in collaboration with students. These examples support the assessment team's view that the school actively collaborates with students in developing and refining its policies and strategies.

85. As noted in paragraph 50, individual policies undergo annual review by the Policy and Regulatory Committee, with outcomes and recommendations reported to the Academic Council. The assessment team identified that both committees include student and faculty staff representation as well as school senior leaders and independent external members enabling an active contribution to policy review from a range of stakeholders. Furthermore, the assessment team found that the school has introduced a policy effectiveness form to engage relevant stakeholders and assist with policy review. Minutes from the Policy and Regulatory Committee highlight the consideration of the annual policy review and any proposed changes, with student representatives and external members actively contributing to the discussions.

86. The assessment team concluded that the school actively involves staff, students, and external stakeholders in the development, implementation, and communication of its policies and procedures.

87. As set out in the reasoning above, the assessment team has determined that the school has successfully managed its responsibilities during the New DAPs probationary period through:

- its governance committees, frameworks and academic policies and regulations concerned with programme design, approval and review

- monitoring of the student experience

- effective implementation of its assessment regulations and operation of examination boards.

88. Should the school achieve Full DAPs, it reports that the development of its overall academic portfolio will be guided by its Portfolio Development Strategy and will adhere to its programme and approval procedures. The school has also affirmed its commitment to retaining the existing governance and management structures, as well as the underpinning academic and assessment frameworks.

89. The assessment team formed the view that the school's effective academic governance structures, along with its clear and appropriate lines of accountability, provide assurance that it is successfully managing the responsibilities under its current DAPs authorisation and will continue to do so in respect of any extension of this authorisation.

Advice to the OfS

90. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion A1.2 because its academic governance, including the control and oversight of its higher education provision, is conducted in partnership with its students.

91. The assessments team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that the school meets the evidence requirements for A1.2 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

92. To determine the extent to which students are engaged as partners in the governance and management of the school and its higher education provision, the assessment team reviewed the school's Student Engagement Framework and evaluated the integration of students as partners into the school's committees and feedback mechanisms.

93. The assessment team found that the school continues to engage students as partners in accordance with its Student Engagement Framework and that students from all levels of undergraduate and postgraduate study are involved in committees as well as other engagement activities. The team found these arrangements to be consistent with the plans for student engagement originally detailed in its New DAPs plan.

94. The Student Engagement Framework outlines a tiered model for student engagement, providing individual, representative, and collective opportunities for input and feedback on the school's operations and the quality of its provision. This includes:

- committee membership

- termly module feedback forms and student surveys

- 'You Said We Did' communications

- student focus groups.

95. Regular 'town hall' meetings hosted by senior staff are open to all students and facilitate discussion on a range of topics including resources, assessment and technology. For example, the November 2023 meeting included feedback on previous action points and a focused discussion on campus facilities.

96. Elected student representatives serve on key governance and academic committees, including the:

- Board of Directors

- Academic Council

- Programme/Module Review and Approval Panel

- EDI Committee

- Student Voice Committee
- Policy and Regulatory Committee.

97. The assessment team observed that student representatives receive an induction into their role and are provided with a written guide intended for ongoing reference. In the team's view, induction materials appeared comprehensive, covering the role, its responsibilities and best practices.

98. The team found that in 2022-23 student representation was expanded to include full-time postgraduate representatives and, in 2023-24, part-time ('remote-first') postgraduate students were also included. The school confirmed that all cohorts are represented through the committee system. Given the relatively small undergraduate and postgraduate cohort sizes at present, the assessment team found that the school has been effective in filling places on each committee and ensuring representation from all cohorts.

99. The assessment team considered that the Student Voice Committee acts as a community of practice for all elected student representatives. It holds two meetings each year to discuss and review the effectiveness of different student voice strategies, including feedback on student effectiveness on governance bodies and the extent to which the students feel that their voices are being heard. The committee is also a forum for hearing student feedback on a range of module, programme, and student experience matters, and to consult with students on proposed changes to, and the management of, programmes. Membership includes all elected student members of the school's working groups and committees alongside senior staff members, including the dean and head of learning and teaching. A student representative serves as co-chair of the committee.

100. The team reviewed minutes from a sample of five meetings held between 2021 and 2023 and checked the findings of the probationary period observation conducted in May 2022.

101. The May 2022 observation report highlighted that meeting papers were of high quality and circulated in advance, providing adequate time for students and staff to explore new ideas and express their views. The report set out that diverse opinions were given due consideration, and chairs systematically summarised various viewpoints at the end of each discussion, identifying actions arising from them. Despite the presence of senior management, it was apparent that students and staff felt free to express their opinions, even when they differed from those of senior staff. The report further noted that the group avoided knee-jerk reactions, systematically understanding issues raised, and demonstrated a commitment to listening, considering, and recognising feedback, even if not all feedback could be acted upon.

102. Based on the review of minutes and observations of the committee operating in practice, the assessment team concluded that the Student Voice Committee works effectively, covering a broad range of business related to student engagement, governance, programme management, and student experience. This enables student representatives to contribute meaningfully to all aspects of the control and oversight of the school's higher education provision. The assessment team observed that the school had been particularly effective and proactive in engaging students through this committee and other engagement mechanisms. This was notable because the pool of prospective student representatives was drawn from

small initial cohorts of the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The assessment team concluded that this is an example of positive practice.

103. The team reviewed nine sets of minutes of Board of Directors meetings from 2022 to 2024 and found that the student representative attended regularly and actively contributed to discussions. Observation reports compiled during the probationary period also indicate that the student representative was an integral member of the Board attending for all items except reserved business related to confidential, commercially or financially sensitive matters.

104. Similarly, the assessment team found regular attendance by student representatives at Academic Council meetings held between 2022 and 2024, with examples of student input, including the review of policies. As previously reported, the Academic Council carefully considers the outcomes of student surveys, module questionnaires, and other feedback mechanisms, including the Student Voice Committee. Through the Annual Programme Monitoring report, the council keeps the Board of Directors informed about the quality of provision.

105. The assessment team concluded that students are treated as valued partners in the school's two main governance committees, the Board of Directors and the Academic Council.

> **A1.3: Where an organisation granted degree awarding powers works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, it ensures that its governance and management of such opportunities is robust and effective and that decisions to work with other organisations are the result of a strategic approach rather than opportunism.**

Advice to the OfS

106. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion A1.3 because, where the school plans to work with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, it ensures that its governance and management of such opportunities is robust and effective and that decisions to work with other organisations are the result of a strategic approach rather than opportunism.

107. The assessments team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the school has met the evidence requirements for A1.3 and other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

108. The assessment team learnt that the school's approach to the development of academic partnerships is guided by the school's Portfolio Development Strategy and associated Working with Others policy. In the view of the team, this policy is comprehensive, outlining the due diligence, feasibility, management and governance arrangements required for the school to consider before entering relationships with other organisations.

109. On the governance side, the Policy and Regulatory Committee sets the overall policy for working in partnerships with other organisations and is responsible for undertaking due diligence of potential partners. The Leadership Group is responsible for making the final

decision on whether to proceed with a partnership, taking account of resource and operational management factors.

110. The team was informed that EM Lyon (referred to by its brand name 'emlyon') and its parent company Galileo Global Education became institutional investors in the school in July 2023, giving them a combined minority stake in the school and one seat each on the Board of Directors. Following the investment, it was agreed that emlyon and the school would explore different forms of collaboration. The assessment team found that the school subsequently signed a memorandum of agreement with emlyon in April 2024, to develop potential collaborative educational activities, starting in May 2024. Initial activities involve study visits by emylon students to the school in May and June 2024 and visits by students from the school to emylon in November 2024, with neither visit resulting in the award of credit by the school.

111. The assessment team reviewed the process followed in establishing this academic partnership with emylon, to ensure alignment with the school's Working with Others policy. The team found that the school had adhered to its documented process, including initial approval by the Leadership Group, completion of due diligence by the Policy and Regulatory Committee, meetings and discussion with emylon, and production of documentation and signing of contracts.

112. The assessment team learnt in the school's New DAPs plan and latest self-assessment submission that the school did not enter other partnership arrangements during the probationary period. It is also not involved in validation or franchise arrangements with any other organisation. Nor is any part of its curriculum or assessment delivered on its behalf or in partnership with another institution. The school does not currently offer placement opportunities as part of the curriculum, although optional summer internships for undergraduate students (which do not contribute to their awards) are available. The school does not have any plans to enter into partnership with organisations over the next three years, but identified that it will 'explore possible opportunities for future partnerships with other organisations in support of our mission' as part of its Portfolio Development Strategy. It reports that any new partnerships will be developed in line with the school's Working with Others policy, which the team considered appropriate.

113. Based on the evidence assessed, the assessment team concluded that the school takes a strategic approach to developing partnerships with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities. Furthermore, the team concluded that the management and governance of these opportunities, as outlined in its Working with Others policy, is robust and effective.

Conclusions

114. The assessment team concluded that the school demonstrates effective academic governance, due to its well-developed governance committee structure with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities, as defined in published Governance and Academic Regulations. As the senior academic authority, the Academic Council provides regular assurance to the Board of Directors on academic matters, while the Board of Directors offers appropriate oversight and challenge to the Academic Council. The function of the Academic Council is clearly articulated and supported by strategic frameworks and policies that are coherent, published, understood and consistently applied. There is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels within the academic

governance structures. The school exhibits appropriate strength in academic leadership, ensuring the delivery of effective academic governance. The school develops, implements and communicates its academic policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff, students and external stakeholders.

115. The assessment team also concluded that all aspects of the school's control and oversight of its higher education provision are conducted in partnership with its students. The school has established mechanisms for engaging students, including student representation on key governance committees such as the Board of Directors and the Academic Council, the Student Voice Committee and through various student experience surveys.

116. Furthermore, the assessment team concluded that the school has sound arrangements and policies for developing partnerships with other organisations, ensuring that its governance and management of such opportunities is robust and effective. Decisions to collaborate with other organisations are strategically driven rather than opportunistic.

117. Overall, the assessment team formed the view that the school's effective governance structures, together with its clear and appropriate lines of accountability, provide assurance that it is successfully managing the responsibilities under its current DAPs authorisation and will continue to do so in respect of any extension of this authorisation. The assessment team also concluded that governance arrangements have been successfully embedded and operationalised throughout the probationary period, in line with the New DAPs plan. As noted in paragraph 58, these arrangements are expected to remain effective and maintain sufficient capacity as the school seeks to add new interdisciplinary programmes to its portfolio.

Assessment of DAPs criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks

Advice to the OfS

118. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks because it meets sub-criteria B1.1 and B1.2.

119. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows in summary that the school has in place a comprehensive set of academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit, including the approval of degree programmes and the conduct of student assessments. The school maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves, and this constitutes the reference point for delivery, assessment, monitoring and review of each programme, and for the provision of records of study.

120. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion collated throughout the school's probationary period, and for the purposes of this New DAPs end assessment, alongside any other relevant information.

> **B1.1: An organisation granted degree awarding powers has in place transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications.**

Advice to the OfS

121. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion B1.1 because it has comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications it awards.

122. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence under sub-criteria B1.1 and B1.2.

Reasoning

123. The assessment team reviewed the school's academic frameworks and regulations, and identified that its regulations, associated policies and procedures are reviewed annually by the Academic Council, with input from the school's student representatives (see paragraph 105). Their implementation is monitored through a range of processes including annual programme monitoring, rolling internal audits and annual reports to the Academic Council on quality, student support, scholarship and pedagogical effectiveness.

124. The team saw evidence that the school had updated its regulations during the probationary period to include the MASc programme and associated exit awards, and found that the regulations clearly articulate how the school awards academic credit and qualifications up to and including Level 7.

125. The assessment team also found that the school has responded to the need to review and update policies and procedures, in response to changes in the higher education sector during the probationary period. For example, the 2023 internal Assessment Audit Report outlines an action for the school to develop an overarching position on its approach to the use of generative AI in summative assessment. The plan demonstrated that the school is responding to the potential challenges of AI in the context of academic integrity and subsequently, the award of credit. This example assured the assessment team that the school is appropriately incorporating new elements into its academic frameworks, to ensure that it remains comprehensive in covering new developments in the higher education sector.

126. The assessment team considered the school's Academic Framework, which works in conjunction with its Assessment and Classification Framework to define requirements relating to student admissions, assessment, progression, award of credit, appeals and complaints. The underpinning policies appear appropriate to the school's status and the team observed examples of the framework being implemented fully. For example, the school has evaluated its admission procedures each year by surveying students on their experiences of admissions, induction and founder's week. The survey results from 2021 to 2023 demonstrate that most students were satisfied with the admissions process and the school continued to meet or exceed the expectations of students. The assessment team determined that the school has demonstrated throughout the probationary period that its academic frameworks and regulations are comprehensive and amended appropriately in light of student feedback and changes to its provision.

127. The team considered the school's policies governing appeals and complaints, including for applicants. Although the school reported it had only received one appeal during the probationary period and no complaints, the assessment team saw evidence that the school had followed and demonstrated consistent application of the relevant procedure. This is discussed in more detail under criterion B3.1, paragraph 209.

128. Throughout the probationary period, the school has ensured the implementation of its academic frameworks and regulations for new and existing provision through the Programme/Module Review and Approval Panel (PMRAP) and Annual Programme Monitoring processes respectively (see paragraph 148 and 162 for more detail on these processes). The assessment team deemed this to be a robust approach. The assessment team reviewed the minutes of the Academic Council over the three years of the probationary period, which demonstrated not only an attitude of responsiveness to issues raised but also one of continuous improvement. An example of this is the proactive engagement of the school's staff with students, and the increase in student attendance as provision has expanded.

129. When developing new higher education provision, the school plans to maintain its current academic frameworks and regulations. It further reported in its self-assessment submission that any new provision will be determined by its alignment to the school's interdisciplinary mission, adjacent to existing provision and supported by existing faculty expertise in interdisciplinary studies. The assessment team considered that the school's ██████ ██ ██ ██████████████████████████████████████ demonstrated evidence of this in practice. The assessment team reviewed the school's Business Case and Feasibility form, which must

be completed for proposed new programmes or subject areas and approved by both the school's Board of Directors and the Academic Council. The team found that the form was comprehensive and provided assurance that new provision will be scrutinised effectively to ensure it is developed in line with the school's academic frameworks and regulations. The team also identified that the school has its first quinquennial review of its bachelors' degree programme planned for 2026.

130. The assessment team concluded that the school has comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations in place to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications. The school has systems in place to monitor the quality of all aspects of its provision to students, both for the BASc and MASc programmes, and proposed new provision. The school enacts its policies through robust scrutiny and continuous evaluation, as evidenced in the oversight of the Academic Council.

> **B1.2: A degree awarding organisation maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.**

Advice to the OfS

131. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion B1.2 because it ensures it has a formal record of its qualifications as it approves them. These formal records clearly outline the delivery as well as the assessment of each programme the school offers, as well as its monitoring and review of its programmes. The school also has in place a process to provide students and alumni with a record of their study at the school.

132. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence under sub-criteria B1.1 and B1.2.

Reasoning

133. The assessment team reviewed programme specifications for the BASc Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods, the MASc Interdisciplinary Practice and the MASc Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods.

134. The assessment team found that the school's Academic Framework sets out the basic structure of the school's higher education qualifications and confirms that the definitive record of each programme being offered is set out in the programme specification and associated module forms. The requirements of each programme specification are set out in the school's Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures.

135. The school's PMRAP reviews all proposed programmes and modules to ensure alignment to the award in the FHEQ. Each module is scrutinised as a standalone unit of learning and assessment, in addition to how well it fits within a coherent programme.

136. The school reports in its programme approval procedure that once a new programme is approved by the Academic Council, the programme specification and module records form

the definitive documentation for the programme. Finalised programme and module documentation for new programmes is logged with the registrar and made available to students via the learning management system. Modifications to existing programmes and modules are categorised in two ways:

- minor modifications which require no formal approval, such as changes to a reading list

- modifications which do require formal approval, such as changes to a learning outcome.

137. Formal approval of a modification is signed off by the Academic Council with input from the external examiner and, as with new programmes, updated programme and module documentation is logged with the registrar. The assessment team saw evidence of the school engaging and responding to external input in light of proposals for a new module at Level 6 and changes to Level 4 and 5 modules from the 2022-23 academic year, and found this to be a robust process. The assessment team's view, therefore, is that the school maintains a definitive and up-to-date record of each programme and that these records are used for the delivery and assessment of the programmes.

138. The assessment team saw evidence that the school provides students with a record of their learning and achievement following an examination board, in the form of a student transcript. The team also reviewed a copy of the student progression email template, which is sent to students prior to receiving their transcript, to confirm that they have progressed from one level of study to the next (where applicable).

Conclusions

139. The assessment team concluded that the school has in place transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications to its students.

140. The school has also developed and maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves. These records constitute the reference point for delivery, the assessment of the programmes, and their ongoing monitoring and review. The school has developed robust mechanisms to provide records of study for their students and alumni. Students are automatically provided with a record of their study as they progress from one level to the next and transcripts of study are issued to students as they complete each level of their programme.

Criterion B2: Academic standards

Advice to the OfS

141. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion B2: Academic standards because it meets sub-criteria B2.1 and B2.2.

142. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows in summary that the school has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of both its undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications. The school has demonstrated that it is able to both design and deliver course and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ and sector-recognised standards. The school demonstrates that the standards that it sets for its qualifications are maintained above the threshold are reliable over time and comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

143. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion collated throughout the school's probationary period, and for the purposes of this New DAPs end assessment, alongside any other relevant information.

> **B2.1: An organisation granted degree awarding powers has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications.**

Advice to the OfS

144. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion B2.1 because it has regulations in place that are clearly set out and are consistently applied for setting as well as maintaining its academic standards of its higher education qualifications.

145. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence under sub-criteria B2.1 and B2.2.

Reasoning

146. To determine how the school's Academic Framework and Assessment and Classification Framework fit within the school's Governance and Academic Regulations as well as its programme approval policies, the assessment team reviewed a range of minutes from the PMRAP. This enabled the assessment team to evaluate how the school demonstrates that it has mechanisms in place that follow the programme approval procedures. The assessment team also reviewed programme specifications for both the BASc and the MASc.

147. The assessment team saw evidence that any new programme or module is scrutinised by the PMRAP. The PMRAP is chaired by an external member of the Academic Council and membership includes the registrar, the director of student experience, careers and partnerships, at least one external academic adviser (with expertise relevant to the subject area) and a student member and/or alumnus. The panel's role is to receive proposals for new taught programmes and modules and make recommendations to the Academic Council as to whether the proposed programme or module should proceed.

148. The assessment team reviewed the school's 11 point 'checklist for external advisors', and a completed example. The checklist covers the alignment of module and programme learning outcomes (PLOs), module credit and whether the programme and modules are set at the appropriate level of the FHEQ. External advisers are asked to consider the proposed programme documentation and provide comment on each item in the checklist, in advance of a PMRAP event. The team found that the checklist was comprehensive. It also saw how – during the event – all members of the panel must approve and document further consideration of a programme's alignment with the FHEQ and the school's academic regulations.

149. All modules within a programme at the point of validation are included within the PMRAP scrutiny process and are evaluated both as standalone units of learning as well as in relation to the building blocks of a programme overall. The assessment team considered this to be a robust process. It also found that the Programme Learning Outcome Matrix for the BASc (see paragraph 151) and MASc evidences how core and optional modules at each level align with the PLOs. In the view of the team, this document is a useful reference guide for the ongoing monitoring of programmes by both module teams and the programme team, as it lends itself to expansion of the programme if new pathways were to be developed to provide student choice. The assessment team concluded that the school has in place robust processes for setting and maintaining academic standards.

150. The assessment team learnt there are currently no underpinning subject benchmarks as a reference point for the BASc Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods or MASc Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods, due to the novel nature of the programmes. The team found that in the absence of subject benchmarks, the school had engaged with a range of external and independent expertise in the development of both the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. This external input informed the development of a comprehensive Programme Learning Outcome Matrix, which maps each module learning outcome (MLO) to the PLOs and to the relevant assessment in each module. The school reported that it had drawn on the expertise of the school's director for teaching and learning, who had been involved in the development of a similar MASc in Creative Health at another English higher education provider. It also reported that school members are part of a national group which has drafted a Subject Benchmark Statement to help set out the expectations of standards for interdisciplinary degree programmes. The school's MASc draws on the characteristics of a masters' degree set out in the QAA's 'Characteristics Statement',[12] in particular the category of 'specialised/advanced study'.

151. The assessment team saw evidence that external and independent scrutiny of undergraduate and postgraduate modules as part of the programme approval process was undertaken by two members of the Academic Council and an associate professor of liberal arts as the external adviser. The assessment team considered these external members to be sufficient to bring a balanced and informed level of scrutiny to the school's review of modules and programmes. The maintenance of academic standards is monitored by appointed external examiners who scrutinise samples of students' assessed work and participate in discussions on progression and award recommendations in exam boards. The evidence assured the assessment team that the school's processes for setting and maintaining of academic

---

[12] See Characteristics Statement - Masters Degrees.

standards take appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and external and independent points of expertise.

152. The assessment team concluded that the school has clear mechanisms for setting and maintaining academic standards of its higher education qualifications, and that these are consistently applied. The qualifications also correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ set out in the sector-recognised standards.

> **B2.2: Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that they are able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).**
>
> **Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that the standards that they set and maintain above the threshold are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.**

Advice to the OfS

153. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion B2.2 because it has clear mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications, and that these are consistently applied.

154. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the school has met the evidence requirements for B2.2 and other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

155. To evaluate if the school has demonstrated that it can design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ, the assessment team reviewed a range of evidence.

156. The assessment team found that the school's programme development and approval operate in line with the school's academic regulations. There are policies in place for programme development, monitoring, assessment of students' work and award of credit, such as the Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedure, the Academic Framework and the Assessment and Classification Framework, which also ensure that programmes are designed and delivered at a level to meet the UK threshold standard for the qualification.

157. The assessment team found the school's programme external examiner report template to be comprehensive. The team also considered two papers to the Academic Council which captured an overall summary of external examiner feedback and copies of the annual reports for the second and third year of the probationary period. The papers provided evidence of correspondence from four external examiners, spanning both the BASc and the MASc. The reports confirmed that programmes are consistently offered at the right level of study. The assessment team were satisfied that the school demonstrates that the programme approval arrangements are robust, applied consistently and ensure that the academic standards are

set at the right level, which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with the school's Academic Framework and regulations.

158. The assessment team reviewed a sample of students' marked assessments and feedback spanning Level 4 to Level 7. The students' work reviewed consisted of short reflective pieces of 500 words to larger group work submissions of nearly 4,000 words. In the view of the team, the feedback provided to the students is consistent, balanced and constructive. The assessment team concluded that credit is only awarded where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated and in line with the school's assessment framework. The team further concluded that both the UK threshold standards and the academic standards of both the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes have been satisfied.

159. The assessment team reviewed the school's detailed Programme Learning Outcome matrices for the BASc and MASc, which identify which MLOs link to each PLO at each level of study. PLOs are categorised by knowledge, skills and attributes and threshold descriptors are provided for each level of study for the BASc programme. The assessment team further reviewed 12 module specifications across Level 4 to Level 7. Each module specification outlines how the PLOs are linked to the MLOs and indicate how they are being addressed in each module. In the view of the team, the evidence demonstrated well designed assessments and detailed mapping of PLOs against MLOs. Both the matrices, programme and module specifications clearly articulated at which stage in the programme students will achieve each learning outcome in a way that is transparent to students.

160. The assessment team concluded that the school has mechanisms in place to ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment.

161. The assessment team saw evidence of robust programme approval arrangements in the minutes of the Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel from February 2020. Once a programme is designed, developed, scrutinised and approved by the PMRAP, the assessment team found that the school has a robust process of monitoring and evaluating the quality of each programme going forward, as evidenced in recent Annual Programme Monitoring reports from December 2023 and the Annual Quality Reports. A range of appropriately qualified and experienced externals were engaged in the development of modules. The team considered this was in line with the school's External Academic Expertise Framework and the school's Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures and found that the school had also made use of the guidance on external expertise set out in the QAA's Quality Code.

162. The team found that external examiners are asked to comment on the academic standards of the school's degree programmes on an annual basis, through submission of an annual report. This includes confirming that academic standards are set at an appropriate level and are comparable with similar programmes or subjects at other providers, and commenting on student performance. Feedback from the reports demonstrated that academic standards are maintained and comparable with other providers.

163. The school uses external academic expertise to provide input into the development of its programmes as well as scrutinise the comparability of its academic standards with those

offered at other higher education providers. The assessment team found that externals are seen as integral members of programme and module reviews and provide robust scrutiny, as evidenced in the school's MASc Interdisciplinary Practice PMRAP meeting. The team saw evidence that external examiners provide external scrutiny and criticality, and quality assure the programme. They also evaluate the nature, level and rigour of the assessments, as well as the level of students' work, while comparing the programme and students work with similar programmes elsewhere. The assessment team therefore concluded that the school makes use of appropriate external and independent expertise to ensure threshold standards and comparability with other higher education providers.

Conclusions

164. The assessment team concluded that the school demonstrates that it is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ. Through the consistent and balanced scrutiny of its modules and programmes, the school also demonstrates that it sets and maintains standards above the threshold, and these are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies. The assessment team further concluded that the arrangements that the school has in place for approval, monitoring and review of programmes will ensure standards in respect of new programme development.

Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience

Advice to the OfS

165. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience because it meets sub-criteria B3.1.

166. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows in summary that the school demonstrates that it is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all its students from all backgrounds irrespective of their location, mode of study, academic subject, protected characteristics, previous educational background or nationality. Learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously assessed.

167. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion collated throughout the school's probationary period, and for the purposes of this New DAPs end assessment, alongside any other relevant information.

> **B3.1: Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that they are able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students from all backgrounds, irrespective of their location, mode of study, academic subject, protected characteristics, previous educational background or nationality. Learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured.**

Advice to the OfS

168. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion B3.1 because it designs and delivers programmes and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students from all backgrounds. The assessment team found that all learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously assured, and the school operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.

169. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence under sub-criterion B3.1.

Reasoning

170. The school's EDI committee monitors the progress of students from all backgrounds, nationalities and those with protected characteristics. The assessment team found that the committee periodically receives attainment and demographic reports and the team observed an example from the November 2022 meeting which identified that all students in the lowest POLAR and Index of Multiple Deprivation quintiles had passed their modules. The report states that in terms of progression there was no significant difference between the proportion of those in the cohort from any demographic group and the proportion of those progressing after the resit period represented by that group. The assessment team concluded that the school has in place mechanisms to ensure a high quality academic experience to all students from all backgrounds.

171. The assessment team found that the school demonstrates an attitude of continuous improvement, as evidenced in the school's self-assessment document. As an example of the

school's attitude of improvement, it introduced the recording of sessions following feedback from the EDI committee, which further assists those with relevant access needs. This assured the team that the school provides learning opportunities that are consistently and rigorously quality assured.

Design and approval of programmes

172. The assessment team reviewed the school's processes for the design, development and approval of programmes (see also criterion B2.1, paragraphs 148-149) to evaluate whether the support for all students to have a high quality academic experience is in place.

173. The assessment team found that the school provides internal training for faculty staff in relation to the design of programmes. The team reviewed good examples of training, including an assessment guidance PowerPoint, which included a step-by-step guide for markers to ensure they apply the process consistently, and include standardisation, moderation and quality checks. The whole school away day in July 2023 included a keynote talk delivered by a professor of sociology and social epistemology, which also enabled staff involved in programme development to gain an understanding of the basis of interdisciplinary ethos.

174. The assessment team found evidence of responsibility for approving new programme proposals being clearly assigned. For example, the Academic Council oversees curriculum design in line with the PMRAP process and the director of admissions and student support is responsible for oversight of the PMRAP terms of reference. This evidence shows a clear process for assigning external expertise being included in the approval of new programmes and subsequent action is then carefully monitored.

175. The assessment team found that the Programme Development Team use external expertise in the development of new programmes. Membership of the PMRAP includes a range of externals who are aligned to the subject area under development. The PMRAP scrutinises and evaluates module and programme documentation and provides conditions and recommendations to the Programme Development Team, before making its recommendation to the Academic Council on whether the programme should be approved.

176. The team saw evidence of how the panel's recommendations and conditions are considered and actioned by the Programme Development Team for both the BASc and MASc programme approvals. For example, the approval panel for the BASc programme set out a condition relating to clearer specification of assessment methods. In response, the Programme Development Team subsequently undertook a full review of all relevant modules. Minutes from a PMRAP meeting held for the BASc identified that the panel must confirm it is satisfied that the Programme Development Team has met the conditions set out by the panel and that in its view, the programme should be formally approved. The assessment team found this to be an effective approach and were assured of external engagement providing independence and external expertise.

177. The assessment team identified a change made by the school, which involved merging the original external adviser and external subject specialist roles into a single role, to increase the efficiency of external scrutiny during the process of programme approval. In the view of the team this appears to be a logical change, that maintains an appropriate level of external scrutiny. Other changes carried out by the school during the New DAPs probationary period

were identified in an observation of the Student Voice Committee carried out by the QAA when it was monitoring the school. The report identified that the school demonstrated a commitment to addressing issues related to the quality of teaching. Students were found to be confident in raising issues and the school was seen to acknowledge concerns raised, and subsequently take action to address them. The observation report also concluded that students are treated as partners and co-constructors and help to shape the future of the academic programme and its quality. This inclusion of students provided the assessment team with assurance that the school is providing students with the best chance of achieving their objectives and being successful in their studies.

178. The school has developed a masters' degree programme and a further pathway in Climate and Biodiversity since its approval of the BASc. This has meant programme approvals in 2022 of the MASc and the creation of a second pathway to the MASc in 2023. The approval report for the additional pathway evidences detailed discussion of the proposal, including around maintaining coherence of the programme with a new pathway. The report states that the approval panel was satisfied that the addition of the pathway did not undermine the coherence of the programme. In the view of the team, both approvals were carried out in line with the school's Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures, and these frameworks are likely to support the coherence of any possible new pathways in the future and/or the proposed new masters' degree programme as set out in Portfolio Development Strategy.

179. The assessment team observed that as part of developing a programme for approval, the Programme Development Team is required to gain input from internal and external subject and resource experts and also prepare learning resource plans to submit to the PMRAP. As part of its scrutiny of the programme, external members of the PMRAP are required to evaluate whether there are appropriate facilities, learning resources (such as software packages and journals) and sufficient student support services to deliver a high quality academic experience. In its review of the programme approval report for the MASc, the assessment team identified that the panel had considered whether the proposed learning resources were appropriate and if there were clear plans for additional resources where these might be required. The panel concluded that it had no concerns relating to the appropriateness of the proposed learning resources, and that the Programme Development Team were exploring options for enhancing existing resources. The assessment team were satisfied that close links are maintained between learning support services and the organisation's programme planning and approval arrangements.

Learning and teaching

180. To evaluate the consistency of the school's approach to learning and teaching with its stated academic objectives, the assessment team reviewed the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The strategy sets out the school's plan to deliver a quality experience to all students, which it describes as one that is challenging and engaging, with the appropriate level of support to facilitate a successful and engaging student experience. The assessment team saw evidence of the strategy in practice in the Annual Scholarship and Pedagogical Effectiveness Report presented to the Academic Council, which assured the assessment team that the school articulates and implements a strategic approach to learning and teaching which is consistent with its stated academic objectives.

181. In considering the physical, virtual and social learning environments maintained by the school, the team reviewed a range of reports:

- the Annual Report on Student Support 2022-23

- the Annual Student Engagement Report September 2023

- the Annual Learning Resources Report 2023 and Learning Resources Plan

- the BASc Annual Programme Monitoring Report 2022-23

- the MASc Annual Programme Monitoring Report 2022-23

- the Annual Quality Report 2023

- the Annual Report on Scholarship and Pedagogical Effectiveness

- the Town Hall meeting December 2023.

182. The assessment team concluded that the school is diligent in its provision and monitoring of the physical, social and learning environment, and demonstrates sensitivity towards the needs and challenges of students living and studying in London. For example, the assessment team found that all applications for a hardship grant had been approved by the Hardship Panel in 2022-23. The school operates a student laptop bank with 20 laptops, 18 of which are currently on long-term loan to students.

183. On review of the January 2024 report to the Academic Council (the Annual Learning Resources Report and Learning Resources Plan), the assessment team found that resources have increased at the school in line with the development of the MASc programme, with additional study space being provided to accommodate the expected increase in students using the space. To provide more learning support, the assessment team learnt that the school made a change in the Learning Resources Plan (as part of the MASc development in 2022) that facilitated the wider purchasing of academic articles bespoke to individual requirements at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

184. The assessment team found that the school has a threefold approach to enable students to access learning materials, including academic books, journals and other digital content. The approach involves the school developing its own collection of physical and digital resources and ensuring students have access to core reading. As part of this, students will have a designated budget to facilitate the purchase of supplementary learning and research resources. The school will also provide access to an external digital library via the digital learning platform Perlego, and institutional partnerships, such as with Jisc, for journal articles.

185. To assess the school's provision of a safe, accessible and reliable physical learning environment, the assessment team reviewed evidence that student feedback on the learning environment of the school is sought and acted upon on a regular basis. For example, the team saw from the minutes of a Town Hall meeting held in December 2023, that the school has provided more facilities for students, such as more microwaves, blankets and bean bags, therefore enabling students to use the facilities for longer periods of time in comfort. In the Annual Learning Resources report in December 2022, plans were put forward for a

Community Pantry, which the assessment team considered as good practice to help students, particularly during a cost of living crisis.

186. The assessment team accessed the school's VLE, Canvas, through which all students access online resources. The site is well laid out and easy to follow, with a range of 'How do I' pages. The school reported moving from EduFlow to Canvas to provide the learning environment, and feedback from staff and students is universally positive. The assessment team learnt that work on integration and new features continues. The assessment team found that the VLE receives a high rate of usage among students, with 82 per cent of students reporting that they access the VLE approximately every day. Based on the assessment team's review of the school's virtual, in addition to its physical and social learning environments, the team concluded that the school maintains environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, and it promotes dignity, courtesy and respect in their use.

187. The school's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy for its MASc programme cites that it embeds arrangements to support distance learning as part of its commitment to inclusive, flexible learning through its VLE, Canvas, for all students. The school introduced a 'remote-first' (delivered part-time over two years) mode of delivery for the 2023-24 academic year. The school reported that this mode also includes optional, in-person integration opportunities on campus to support networking with the 'campus-first' cohorts. The assessment team saw evidence that this has been implemented following feedback from the annual programme monitoring process. The school's Academic Framework[13] sets out that student support and learning resources are provided online for 'remote-first' students, and the assessment team also reviewed a copy of the weekly e-newsletter which shares information and announcements to support the student experience for all students. The assessment team concluded that the school's arrangements for providing distance learning opportunities are effective.

188. The assessment team reviewed the student handbook, which is clearly set out. The assessment team found it to be engaging, with clear information that, in the team's view, would be useful for both current and prospective students. The assessment team considered the structure and flow of information easy to follow, with good narrative content: it starts with the academic calendar followed by the school's values and key policies, before identifying the school's staff, how the school maintains standards, supports students and wants them to be involved, and finishes with a section on resources. The assessment team concluded that the handbook skilfully addresses the necessary content but also addresses content that is likely to be reassuring to prospective and current students, such as resources, student representation and student support.

189. The Academic Tutor Guidance was considered by the assessment team to be an example of very good practice. In this guidance, the school clearly sets out the responsibility of the academic tutor along with supportive information to enable the tutor to provide timely, consistent support to students. The school has also developed a Student Support Framework which is monitored and reported on via the Annual Report on Student Support to the Academic Council. The assessment team considered the September 2023 report which included results of the student support questions from the end-of-year survey and data on

---

[13] See Policies - London Interdisciplinary School.

student access to support services during the 2022-23 academic year. The team learnt through the report that the majority of students were satisfied with the student support mechanisms that the school provides. Students also reported feeling part of a community. The assessment team therefore agreed that this report provided evidence that the school has in place mechanisms for establishing that its intentions to provide all students with the opportunities to be successful, are being met.

190. Based on its review of the minutes of the September 2023 Academic Council meeting and the Annual Report on Student Support considered at that meeting, the assessment team concluded that students studying on campus or at a distance are provided with a comprehensive level of support from academic tutors, as set out in the Academic Tutor Guidance document for 2023-24. The assessment team learnt that the school also provides student support in the form of coaches and career support. In conclusion the assessment team were assured that the school has robust arrangements for ensuring that students both on campus and studying remotely have effective learning opportunities.

191. The assessment team found that the school has developed robust mechanisms to provide records of study for its students as well as alumni. Students are automatically provided with a record of their study as they progress from one level to the next and transcripts of study are issued to students as they complete each level of their programme. The assessment team also learnt that the school is considering enabling students to develop a portfolio of work which would be made up of 'product' or 'project' assessments across modules and then evaluated against PLOs on an annual basis. This development would enable students to monitor their progress annually with support from their tutor and therefore contribute to their academic and professional development. This suggested development is encouraged by the assessment team, in line with the proposed programme-wide assessment review, as a way of enabling students to benefit from developing a portfolio of their work and reflecting on their learning as they progress through their programme.

Assessment

192. In order to ascertain that the school operates valid and reliable processes of assessment, and that these enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes, the assessment team reviewed a range of evidence: the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy for both the BASc and MASc; a report on the rolling internal audit of assessment and feedback from June 2023; and a sample of three Level 5 assessment briefs. In the team's view, assessment methods and criteria are clearly linked to learning outcomes, with summative assessments mapped to PLOs, thus ensuring that the qualification is awarded only to the students who meet the specified learning outcomes.

193. Throughout the probationary period the school has evaluated the assessment approach of its programmes. For example, in the September 2023 annual report to the Academic Council on scholarship and pedagogical effectiveness, the assessment team saw evidence of the school making efforts to improve marking and feedback on the BASc programme. Comparing the 2022 and 2023 end-of-year surveys, the report noted the impact of marking and feedback and that the programme-wide efforts to improve assessment had paid off.

194. Comparing the end-of-year survey results for 2022 and 2023 also showed that – during the probationary period - the share of students reporting that marking criteria were clear in

advance had improved from 46 to 71 per cent. The assessment team observed that the programme team demonstrate a willingness to listen and respond to student feedback, while acknowledging that there is still room for improvement. Further work has gone into improving assessment briefs for the 2023-24 year, which in the assessment team's view now provides greater clarity and consistency. The assessment team concluded that the school operates valid and reliable processes of assessment.

195. The assessment team considered the school's continuous engagement with students to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made. The assessment team found that students had reported delays in receiving feedback on their assessed work and this had resulted in students being less likely to be able to apply the feedback to their work. In the end-of-year survey responses, while 89 per cent of respondents said that they received feedback on time often or very often, only 70 per cent said that feedback helped to improve their work.

196. After this student feedback, the assessment team found that the programme team had responded by introducing formative assessments, with an emphasis on more informal and regular feedback during the term. The assessment team considered that this change was positive and had the potential to address student concerns. With the formative assessments linked to the summative assessments, students could benefit in two ways: they are able to use the formative assessment feedback to support their development for a subsequent assessment, and the change also creates an explicit link from one assessment to the next.

197. The team identified that this could help address the concerns identified in the recent Annual Report on Scholarship and Pedagogical Effectiveness. The report highlighted that some students felt that they are always tackling a new assessment approach and therefore struggle to feel that they are building their knowledge and skills across assessments. The assessment team concluded that the school has put in place processes to enable staff and students to engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made.

198. The assessment team found from external examiner annual reports that the school has received a wide range of complimentary feedback on the programme, and any issues of concern are responded to appropriately. For example, in a 2022-23 report for the BASc programme, an external examiner notes that over the last year work had been 'undertaken to review student workload and map assessments across years groups and review is ongoing as new learning is applied to the assessment planning process'. The assessment team deemed this to be a challenging task but found that the school is undertaking work to address student workload, as articulated in paragraph 194.

199. The assessment team identified that the school has a Recognition of Prior Learning policy, which was developed and approved in 2021. The policy states that a student may be awarded recognition for prior learning (certificated or experiential) for a minimum of 15 credits and a maximum of 90 credits of the total credit requirement of that award. The assessment team considered that, given the uniqueness of the school's interdisciplinary, problem-centred programmes, the scope for recognition of prior learning (RPL) in terms of exemption from programme modules is necessarily limited. This is because, for example, it is sometimes difficult to map prior learning to a module or level that is interdisciplinary in nature. The team formed the view that the current limited scope is understandable for a novel subject area and

that this is a credible approach. It is stated in the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure that the director of teaching and learning is responsible for exemptions from admissions criteria; an indication that RPL for admissions criteria is likely to be rare given the school's unique admissions criteria and process. Given that there are three or four other similar programmes being offered across the UK, there may be a growing demand for RPL.

200. The school has procedures in place to ensure the academic integrity of students' work and the assessment team found that the school is responsive to students' need for support to avoid plagiarism. The school includes a section on 'Academic good practice and misconduct' in the student handbook which is revised and updated each year. The latest version from 2023 sets out the school's expectations regarding academic good practice and includes links to the school's Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure. In response to reports that students were unclear on plagiarism, the school revised its reference guide, which is available on the VLE. The assessment team observed that the guide is also available on the school's website homepage and contains clear, accessible links to resources for further information, including 'Cite Them Right'.

201. The team also learnt that the school has processes in place to prevent plagiarism, such as the session offered for new students during Founders' Week. This introduces students to good academic practice through referencing, as well as discussing trends in plagiarism and an introduction to Turnitin (an originality and plagiarism prevention product). In the school's internal assessment audit, it was found that students are engaging with assessment tasks with a 'high level of academic integrity'. The use of problem-orientated work as an integral part of the school's interdisciplinary curriculum and assessment is likely to be increasing the individuality of students assessed work and therefore contributing to academic integrity. The assessment team concluded that the school operates processes preventing plagiarism.

202. The assessment team identified an area of good practice in the school's assessment audit caried out in 2023, which outlines a long-term goal of programme-level assessment. This proposed development would provide students with clarity on how each assessment works in relation to the achievement of each MLO and overall PLOs. The assessment team commended this work and considered that inclusion of a UK higher education wide taxonomy of learning should be the basis for a standardised marking rubric for essay-based work, in particular, such as outlined in assessment two of Global Thinking: Placing Complex Problems in their International Contexts.

203. The assessment team concluded that the school demonstrates diligence in relation to maintaining a quality student experience, which includes assessment. This is evidenced for example in its internal Assessment Audit Report. With student input, the assessment audit reviewed the volume and variety of assessments students undertake, the use of rubrics and the linking for students' learning between assessments. As a result of this detailed audit, the school has plans to develop a programme-level approach to assessment and adapt the 'generic marking scale' into a formal tool. It has also since developed rubrics which cover two kinds of information:

- criteria to support students to reflect on whether they are demonstrating the necessary learning outcomes

- criteria for high quality version of that work.

204. The assessment team found that staff are provided with training on assessment processes at induction and before they start marking. The team reviewed copies of training PowerPoints that had been delivered in 2021-22 and further developed for 2022-23, and formed the view that the training is detailed and covers relevant information, including marking, standardisation and moderation. The assessment team concluded that the school has in place processes for marking assessments and moderating marks that are clearly articulated and consistently operated by the school's staff involved in the assessment process.

External examining

205. In order to ascertain that the school makes scrupulous use of external examiners including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work, the assessment team reviewed a range of evidence on external examiner nominations, examination board minutes for the BASc and MASc programmes. The assessment team observed that school staff source new external examiners, and they are then nominated with their CVs for scrutiny at the Academic Council. This process is overseen by the Head of Quality. External examiners attend exam boards, which are held in July for the BASc and September of MASc. The school has developed an External Examiner Assessment Brief Approval Form which sets out in one area all the modules being examined by each external examiner and their response to the assessment tasks, which each module leader then responds to. The assessment team concluded that this is an example of good practice as it provides a holistic view of assessments for each external examiner alongside a dialogue with module leaders.

206. Each module in each qualification is reviewed and views of externals sought. In MASc external examiner feedback on assessed work from September 2023, the external examiner stated that 'it was a really interesting course and that clearly a lot of thoughtful work and good design had been put into the assessments by staff'. It was stated that it was a 'really positive and interesting course'.

207. As discussed under criterion B2 (see paragraphs 158, 163, 164), the assessment team identified that the school works diligently with its external examiners. The assessment team also found that there is a clear induction for external examiners. External examiner annual reports are reviewed and responded to in detail and the school demonstrates a willingness to accept suggestions to improve the quality and coherence of assessments and improve the student experience. For example, in August 2022 an external examiner for the BASc programme raised consistency and clarity of assessment briefs and marking rubrics across modules and different types of assessment as an opportunity for continued development. In response, the school revised the assessment brief template for 2022-23 to ensure increased consistency and simplicity in the provision of assessment information for students, with a commitment to keep this under review. The assessment team therefore concluded that the school gives full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examiner reports and provides external examiners with a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations.

Academic appeals and student complaints

208. In order to ascertain that the school has effective procedures in place for handling academic appeals and student complaints, the assessment team reviewed the Academic Appeals Procedure, Applicant Complaints and Appeals Policy as well as the November 2023 Policy and Regulatory Committee minutes. The school reported that it has only received one appeal

to date, in the 2022-23 academic year. The assessment team found that following this appeal, which was upheld, the Policy and Regulatory Committee (PRC) had reviewed and approved proposed changes to the Academic Appeals Procedure to clarify that the formal part of the procedure may be repeated if a procedural error has occurred. The complaints and appeals processes are part of the school's regulatory framework and are published on the school's website for applicants and students to access. The assessment team identified that there had been no formal complaints reported, but its view was that the respective policies are fair and accessible for students who are dissatisfied with an aspect of their experience at the school. The team also concluded that the school had demonstrated ongoing review of the clarity and effectiveness of the policies.

Conclusions

209. Having reviewed the above evidence in relation to:

- the design and approval of programmes

- the school's learning and teaching strategies and delivery of them

- assessment processes and procedures

- the contribution of external examiners and the school's responses to these

- oversight of academic integrity,

the assessment team concluded that the school demonstrates that it is able to design and deliver qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students from all backgrounds. The learning opportunities the school provides to its students are consistently and rigorously quality assured, through mechanisms such as annual reporting to the Academic Council, external examiners reports and its programme design and review procedures.

Assessment of DAPs criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff

Criterion C1: The role of academic and professional staff

Advice to the OfS

210. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion C1: The role of academic and professional staff, because it meets sub-criteria C1.1.

211. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows in summary that the school has demonstrated that it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students, and that staff are appropriately qualified to teach and support students at the levels of the qualifications being awarded. The school ensures that staff maintain a professional understanding of current developments in research and scholarship in their subject and engage in professional practice.

212. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion collated throughout the school's probationary period, and for the purposes of this New DAPs end assessment, alongside any other relevant information.

> **C1.1: An organisation granted powers to award degrees assures itself that it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students. Everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, is appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the level(s) and subject(s) of the qualifications being awarded.**

Advice to the OfS

213. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion C1.1 because all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, are appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the level(s) and subject(s) of the qualifications being awarded.

214. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence under sub-criterion C1.1.

Reasoning

215. To determine whether staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning have relevant learning, teaching and assessment practices, the team reviewed the school's Academic Community Development Framework. The framework was implemented at the start of the New DAPs probationary period and continues to be used to steer staff development and manage performance. It incorporates: a comprehensive Academic Career Development Framework, which sets out the school's baseline expectations of engagement in staff development at each grade (such as instructor, associate professor, professor) and indicative activities; a faculty training programme; and policies on class observation and the induction of academic staff.

216. The assessment team learnt that the school has plans for expanding its programmes, ███████ ███████████████████████ This expansion is part of the Portfolio Development Strategy, which sets out how the school has used a non-accredited programme on Cross Functional Leadership to test out this new focus. The plans set out in the Portfolio Development Strategy are in line with the school's development during the probationary period and will maintain an interdisciplinary focus. Expansion will mean an increase in new staff and the assessment team's view is that plans for this are set out in a measured way to ensure that the school has the staff for increases in student numbers. The assessment team observed that the school reiterated the interdisciplinary nature of assessment during staff development, with guidance to staff on supporting students' work to focus on different interdisciplinary perspectives. The assessment team concluded that the school has processes in place to maintain the interdisciplinary nature of its programmes as they move forward with its portfolio development.

217. In addition to weekly mandatory faculty meetings, the assessment team saw evidence of regular opportunities for reflection and evaluation of academic practice which the school facilitates through activities such as the annual faculty away day, external Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching Conference, and peer observation of teaching. The Reflective Practice Group (RPG) and Research and Development Forum support the school's interdisciplinary approach, with fortnightly sessions for faculty staff to cover issues, questions and reflections on interdisciplinary learning, teaching or research. Examples of this include mapping integration across the curriculum and staff experiences of designing and delivering a Level 6 'Global Thinking' module. A QAA observation report of the 2022 faculty away day also highlighted how staff incorporate learning from their own development activities in the context of interdisciplinarity. In this instance, the assessor found that a session reflecting on the delivery of a module had used a technique deployed at an interdisciplinary conference.

218. The assessment team found that the school continues to operate class observations for relevant staff through its peer observation policy. The team reviewed a sample of four peer observations conducted in autumn 2024 covering modules across Level 4, 5 and 6. The team also observed that the Annual Report on Scholarship and Pedagogical Effectiveness reports to Academic Council on the observation process.

219. Training for faculty staff has included a range of topics including assessment, project supervision, coaching and student support. The assessment team identified that the training materials often embed student feedback, and provide clear guidance and opportunities for staff to engage in role play to enhance practice, for example facilitating a coaching session.

220. The assessment team concluded through its review of the widespread staff development activities and supporting evidence that the school has effective learning, teaching and assessment practices which are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship, all of which contributes to the distinctive interdisciplinarity nature and ethos of the school, ensuring the school staff have the necessary academic expertise.

221. To test whether the staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning have both academic and (where applicable) professional expertise, the assessment team reviewed a sample of staff CVs for both academic and professional staff. The team were assured that staff are well qualified in their respective fields and have a wide range of qualifications which

help contribute to the interdisciplinarity of the school. For example, the school shared that out of a faculty of 20 academic staff:

- 85 per cent hold a qualification at Level 7

- 70 per cent have or are working towards a PhD or DPhil

- five per cent have a Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning (or similar)

- 40 per cent hold or are working towards Advance HE Fellowship.

222. The assessment team reviewed the school's faculty recruitment process which clearly outlines the process of how staff are recruited to the school. The team found that candidates are initially shortlisted according to their level of academic qualification and academic profile in relation to the school's priority subject areas. The process also includes a practical task which asks candidates to deliver a session to students and staff on how they would apply their area of academic and/or interdisciplinary expertise to three real-world problems. The assessment team found this to be appropriate in ensuring the academic expertise of new faculty staff and concluded with its review of staff CVs that staff have the academic and professional expertise to deliver the interdisciplinary curriculum.

223. The team also found through its review of a sample of four redacted appraisal forms, CVs of senior staff and a sample of professional staff development undertaken by two professional staff that professional staff also have sufficient expertise to support student learning.

224. To test whether staff are able to demonstrate active engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge, the assessment team reviewed the school's faculty training programme as set out in its Academic Community Development Framework. The team found the programme to be comprehensive and learnt that a range of pedagogic development opportunities are provided both internally and externally, (see also paragraph 218) such as through inclusion at the RPG, peer observations and Advance HE Fellowship applications. The school explains that such opportunities were developed to ensure that relevant academic staff members can 'reflect on teaching practices with an emphasis on problem-based learning approaches', learn about new, inclusive and best practice approaches in teaching and deliver research supervisions for dissertations.

225. The assessment team saw evidence of engagement following its review of a sample of staff development activity undertaken by three academic and two professional staff from 2021-22 to 2023-24. The assessment team also reviewed a record of staff engagement during the probationary period in a wide range of conferences from 2021-22 to 2023-24, which further demonstrated active engagement of staff in the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge to ensure they are able to deliver the interdisciplinarity of the curriculum.

226. The team found that the school is now an affiliate member of Advance HE and that 40 per cent of faculty staff hold or are engaged in applications for fellowship or senior fellowship recognition. The team also considered it of note that the school's director holds principal fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (PFHEA), which demonstrates external recognition of strategic leadership of student learning. The assessment team considered affiliate membership of Advance HE a positive initiative, as it allows the school access to development courses and conferences, as well as membership and resources offered by

Advance HE Connect and networking opportunities, therefore promoting active engagement with the pedagogic development of discipline knowledge. In summary, the assessment team is assured that the school has effective mechanisms in place for staff development as the school pursues active engagement with the pedagogic development of its discipline knowledge.

227. To test the school's research capacity, the team scrutinised the school's research strategy which sets out the school's overarching strategy for research and development and the structures and processes the school has in place to support research outputs. The team found the strategy to be clear and comprehensive and reflective of the school's interdisciplinary ethos. The school has developed its research activity in line with the strategy throughout the probationary period. The research strategy creates a feasibility process for new research projects or new research areas. The assessment team considered this to be good practice as it directly feeds into the school's curriculum development and enhancement, and it facilitates the development of interdisciplinarity into the curriculum. During the probationary period the school reviewed its academic leadership as part of the Academic Community Development Framework and appointed a head of research and development as well as a part-time director of research. Other examples of good practice are the school's RPG, which provides staff with a research seminar series that covers active engagement with pedagogical development of their discipline knowledge.

228. The assessment team learnt that research and scholarship opportunities are delivered through a Research and Development Forum and sessions in school away days. Staff development funds are available for conference attendance and other activities linked to research and advanced scholarship, and the team saw evidence that many faculty staff have been able to participate in conferences or other external events during the scrutiny period as a result. The team found that academic contracts continue to have 0.2 FTE of staff time devoted to research and scholarship.

229. The assessment team concluded that the school has an effective understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in its discipline and that such knowledge and understanding directly inform and enhance its teaching. The team also saw evidence of active engagement with research and/or advanced scholarship to a level commensurate with the level and subject of the qualifications being offered.

230. To test whether the school provides opportunities for staff to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice, the assessment team reviewed the class observation policy. The class observation policy is led by the director of teaching and learning and states that each member of academic staff will undergo a class observation by a peer at least once a year. The assessment team reviewed a range of observation reports undertaken by the QAA during the probationary period in addition to examples of completed class observations and found that class observation had taken place with relevant staff observed and discussed with peers in line with the peer observation policy. Furthermore, a QAA observation report of the peer observation process identified a detailed post-session briefing which had provided an opportunity for the tutor to reflect on their practice and receive suggestions for improvement, including focusing on the application of students' learning in the context of complex, interdisciplinary problems.

231. Matters arising from class observations are summarised and reported to the Academic Council annually as part of the Annual Report on Scholarship and Pedagogical Effectiveness. For example, an annual report to the Academic Council in September 2023 identified that class observations in the 2022-23 academic year had been undertaken in three ways:

- by the head of teaching and learning

- via co-teaching, with the faculty 'auditing' each other's courses

- via a 'buddy' system in which colleagues observed one another and fed back via a centralised form and in person.

232. As discussed in paragraph 219, the team reviewed a sample of four recent peer observations which demonstrated that the class observation process has continued in 2023-24. The team consider this to be an effective method to engage in reflection and evaluation of the school's learning, teaching and assessment practice.

233. The assessment team concluded that the school provides effective opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice. Having reviewed the opportunities that are afforded to staff, the team were assured that the school provides opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of its learning, teaching and assessment practices.

234. The assessment team observed that, in order to stay at the forefront of interdisciplinary thinking, academic staff remain active in research and scholarship. The team reviewed a range of documents including the Portfolio Development Strategy, Research and Development Strategy, Faculty Training Day Programme and the attendance of staff at various conferences throughout the probationary period. The team reviewed the Academic Community Development Framework and learnt that the 0.2 FTE allocated for research and scholarship for full-time academic staff can be deployed individually or collectively and 'depending on the interests of the individual academic staff member, knowledge development and research can focus on a particular academic specialism, interdisciplinarity, or pedagogy. Knowledge transfer can additionally encompass the broader academic community, or commercial, third sector and public sector organisations and agencies'. External research outputs are considered as part of the appraisal process and can be used to support the progression of staff members through the Academic Career Development Framework.

235. The team also found that the school can demonstrate active engagement with research and/or advanced scholarship to a level commensurate with the level and subject of the qualifications being offered**.** The team saw evidence of research aligned with the development of a portfolio of programmes related to interdisciplinary approaches to tackling complex problems. During the probationary period the school staff attended a wide range of conferences, providing opportunities to enable them to enhance the knowledge and scholarship. The assessment team concluded that the development opportunities which are afforded to staff enable them to enhance both their practice and scholarship and enable them to stay at the forefront of interdisciplinary practice.

236. The assessment team found that the school's Register of External Appointments sets out a list of faculty staff external engagement with other higher education providers, which includes evidence of appointments as external examiners, external reviewers and research

collaborations. The school reported in its self-assessment that two members of staff currently hold external examiner appointments for taught programmes at other UK higher education providers, and one member of staff had examined a PhD thesis. This number of staff having external appointments is likely reflective of the relatively new area of interdisciplinary studies. The assessment team identified that the Academic Council receives the register annually as part of the school's Annual Report on Scholarship and Pedagogical Effectiveness and found this an appropriate mechanism for monitoring this activity. The team felt that the school has appropriate mechanisms in place for developing an appropriate level of external expertise and for encouraging wider engagement with the sector.

237. The assessment team concluded that the school provides effective opportunities to engage with the activities of other higher education providers, for example, through becoming external examiners, validation panel members or external reviewers.

238. The team found that the school's founding faculty are experienced members of teaching and learning staff with significant relevant expertise from other UK higher education providers, and that the faculty team's experience in the design and delivery of assessment and feedback has continued throughout the probationary period. External examiners have commented favourably on the development of the school's practices with regards to assessment and feedback. As planned, the school held an internal rolling audit focusing on assessment and feedback during 2022-23 comprising an evaluative report and plan with supporting documentation. The process resulted in a report which was subsequently considered at a meeting of the Academic Council. The assessment team learnt that the report identified a number of recommendations for the school to:

- produce a synoptic document combining PLOs, assessment and content together creating a detailed map

- reduce the amount of summative assessment load and consider the frequency and timing of assessments to enable time for learning

- continue to explore opportunities to look at international practice in assessment strategy

- continue to explore ways of improving consistency of forms of feedback with students and increase the opportunity for dialogue, such as through the encouragement of student feedback on feedback.

239. The assessment team observed that assessment training is delivered through an annual refresher session, inclusion in faculty meetings and inclusion of sessions in the school away days as appropriate. Through its review of the RPG schedule and reports to the Academic Council, the assessment team considered that the RPG provides academic staff with opportunities for pedagogic development of discipline knowledge and assessment practice. The team reviewed a wide range of staff development activities which have taken place during the probationary period. The director of teaching and learning and/or head of assessment provides support, training and development to the members of academic staff involved in the assessment of students. The strategy for training is aligned with the QAA UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance: Assessment. The team considered this to be a highly effective approach and conclude that the school has expertise in providing feedback on assessment, which is timely, constructive and developmental.

240. Having reviewed the documentation together with the feedback from the external examiners, the assessment team concluded that the school has expertise in providing feedback on assessment, which is timely, constructive and developmental.

241. The assessment team found that the school provides opportunities for all academic staff to gain experience of curriculum development and assessment through the development of specific modules. The team identified that modules are reviewed annually, which gives staff the opportunity to amend curricula and assessments. The development of the initial BASc and subsequent MASc programmes has enabled staff to develop their expertise in curriculum development and assessment design, which has helped them to enhance and develop their knowledge in this area. An example is the move towards more formative assignments for students as they progress through a module towards a summative assignment. This change has required staff to align module content across the curriculum with the Programme Learning Outcomes to Module Learning Outcomes Matrix.

242. The team learnt that curriculum design training is delivered through an annual refresher session, and there are regular opportunities, including through faculty seminars and school away days for staff to increase their knowledge of curriculum development. The director of teaching and learning provides support, training and development to the members of academic staff involved in the assessment of students. Throughout the probationary period, as outlined in paragraph 220, the school has provided detailed training, which it has recently updated. The strategy for this is aligned with UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Course Design and Development. The assessment team concluded that these activities provide sufficient opportunities for staff to engage in curriculum design training.

243. The team observed that curriculum development training covers all levels with additional content related to Level 7 as required. The relevant administrative staff receive training on the school's Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures to ensure that they manage the process in a way that is consistent with the school's academic regulations. The assessment team concluded that the school has established experience of providing curriculum development and assessment design and these mechanisms are an effective way to provide curriculum development opportunities.

244. As discussed in paragraph 237, the team saw evidence that academic staff engage with the activities of other higher education providers. The Register of External Appointments demonstrates that this includes involvement of staff as external examiners, external reviewers and through research collaborations. The assessment team found further evidence of staff engaging with the wider higher education sector through attending and presenting at conferences and holding membership and/or advisory roles on various boards and groups, such as the national Interdisciplinary Curriculum Group. Staff engagement in the activities of other higher education providers continues to be monitored via the annual report to the Academic Council, and the school also reported that staff routinely report on upcoming external engagements at weekly faculty meetings. The team found this reporting process to be effective and that staff are encouraged to play a role in the wider higher education sector through a range of activities.

245. Through its review of a sample of 12 job descriptions relating to key academic and professional roles within the faculty, academic staff CVs and a breakdown of academic and professional staffing FTEs, the assessment team formed the view that the school continues to

have strong faculty capacity and has shown its ability to recruit and retain high quality teaching staff. Throughout the probationary period, the team found that the school took an effective approach to staffing in accordance with its New DAPs plan and associated statutory instruments, which prescribed the programmes that the school could develop during the probationary period. Subject to regulatory approval, the school will move into a period of time-limited Full DAPs in 2024. The team found that the Portfolio Development Strategy provides a synopsis of the overall programme development strategy for this period, which includes associated key programme-level objectives, plans for future staffing and indicative staff to student ratios. The school states that objectives, including those relating to staffing requirements, will be monitored in line with proposed changes in programmes and student numbers on a quarterly basis by the PRC. Via an annual report from the PRC, the Academic Council and Board will also have oversight. The team consider this to be an effective approach.

246. The assessment team identified that the school has a robust recruitment process with a clear recruitment policy for staff wishing to apply to the school. The team observed that the recruitment policies and procedures, in addition to expectations of working at the school, are also set out in a comprehensive Staff Handbook. As discussed in paragraph 246, the team reviewed the CVs and role descriptions of a number of academic and professional staff and considered that the role descriptions clearly set out the necessary qualifications, core and desirable skills and that candidates appear to be recruited on the basis of their qualifications and experience in relation to the requirements of the relevant post. The team further found that the school has in place well qualified non-academic staff with experience ranging from policy, regulation, higher education, and the private sector. The team observed that these staff were hired in line with the school's recruitment policy.

247. The assessment team concluded that the school has effective and appropriate mechanisms in place for recruitment to ensure it recruits academic and professional staff with relevant expertise. The school also has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for ensuring that it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students.

Conclusions

248. The assessment team concluded that the school has the appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students. Staff who teach or support student learning and assess student work are appropriately qualified and maintain a professional understanding of current developments in research and scholarship in their subject discipline. Staff are also supported and developed to the levels and subjects of the school's qualifications. The team further concluded that teaching at the school reflects the latest developments in the relevant discipline areas. It was also assured that the school has the infrastructure in place to maintain this as it develops new programmes in interdisciplinarity, should it be successful in gaining Full DAPs.

Assessment of DAPs criterion D: Environment for supporting students

Criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement

Advice to the OfS

249. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement because it meets sub-criteria D1.1.

250. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the school has in place robust arrangements and resources, which it monitors and evaluates, to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The school has demonstrated that its teaching and learning infrastructure maximises students' chances of developing their potential and of obtaining the qualification they are seeking. It has also proven that it has a strategic approach that embodies the integration, coherence and internal cooperation between different areas of the school across all strands of student development.

251. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion collated throughout the school's probationary period, and for the purposes of this New DAPs end assessment, alongside any other relevant information.

> **D1.1: Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.**

Advice to the OfS

252. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion D1.1 because it has resources in place, which are monitored and evaluated, to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

253. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence under sub-criterion D1.1.

Reasoning

254. To test whether the school takes a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement for its diverse body of students, the team reviewed the school's Student Support Framework, Academic Support Policy and the school's internal Assessment Audit Report and action plan.

255. The Student Support Framework was implemented at the beginning of the probationary period and sets out the school's overarching strategy for student support. The assessment team identified that the framework aligns with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and has three key strands: academic, personal and professional support, which are enabled by three named support figures: an academic tutor, a student support adviser and a careers adviser. More focused and specialist support is available for students who are identified as 'at risk' of not continuing their studies, for example students from underrepresented group. Students with specific learning requirements are provided with a personalised Student

Support Plan which sets out their individual requirements for the duration of their studies and any reasonable adjustments to ensure that they can succeed. The framework reports that for new students, support plans are created prior to induction week and reviewed during induction. For returning students, plans are reviewed in the first full week of term.

256. The Academic Support Policy aligns with the school's Academic Progress Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy and access and participation plan. The School's Academic Support Model comprises two core components:

- individual academic tutoring

- group coaching sessions (for undergraduate students only).

257. The assessment team learnt that all students are assigned an individual academic tutor as their main point of contact during their studies. The academic tutor has at least two meetings per academic year and offers drop-in sessions throughout the year to enable students to track academic successes, challenges and provide a check on attendance, wellbeing and reasonable adjustments (where relevant). Meetings are recorded and tracked via a Student Success Plan. Additional meetings are offered to students deemed 'at risk'.

258. The assessment team observed that coaching at the school serves a pivotal role in aiding and elevating students' pedagogical experience and facilitating interdisciplinary integration. Through weekly sessions, students are coached and guided in diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses of their learning experience. In this respect, each teacher acts as both a coach and a tutor for a small group of students. Coaching differs from tutoring in that students are asked to reflect on how their learning has developed, rather than what they have learnt, or what pastoral support may be needed for learning. The head of student support works closely with the coaching lead to ensure personal development is strongly considered to aid academic progression.

259. The assessment team learnt that the Student Support Framework is reviewed annually via the Academic Council and is accompanied by the annual student support report as well as student feedback via the end-of-year survey. The team considers that the school has robust mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness of its overall approach to student support.

260. The assessment team found that the school has in place mechanisms to evaluate how it enables student development and achievement as evidenced in the school's Assessment Audit report of the Assessment Lead in 2023. The assessment lead included issues raised by students in the student drop-box, Student Voice Committee and town halls, as well as discussions from school meetings and the RPG. A student focus group and school-wide survey was undertaken to gather views for the review. The Assessment Audit Report includes actions and long-term goals in response to the information gathered for the review.

261. The assessment team concluded that the school has effective mechanisms in place to support all its students. Given all the support in place as well as all the monitoring of its processes, the team were assured that the school takes a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement for its diverse body of students.

262. To determine whether students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way, and account is taken of different students' choices and needs, the assessment team reviewed the school's induction plan as set out in the Student Support Framework. The team identified that all new students receive a comprehensive induction and returning students receive a (re)induction at the start of the academic year. The team found that the induction provides a clear introduction to the school together with an overview of key policies, and signposts students to additional support should they require it.

263. The (re)induction covers areas such as programme structure and curriculum, assessment, student voice, student policies, complaints and appeals, academic misconduct and plagiarism, and student support. This initial information is then supplemented with an annually-published student handbook, which signposts a wide range of information for students, starting with the school's academic calendar and important policies for students. There are helpful links throughout the document so that students can access most information from the handbook, for example: links to the school's website and VLE, information on absence procedures, extenuating circumstances and financial support. Information is subsequently made available via a dedicated student homepage on the school's VLE.

264. The assessment team observed that the school continues to conduct an annual Admissions, Induction and Founder's Week survey, the results of which are considered by the Student Voice Committee and the Academic Council. The feedback from these surveys has been positive and enabled the school to enhance future induction periods and information provision, for example by including more information on modules. The Student Support Framework has been regularly reviewed during the probationary period with a range of developments to provide more comprehensive support to students as the school expands, for example a Student Experience Framework and Wellbeing Framework was added in September 2022. Having reviewed the induction plan together with the mechanisms in place to monitor the impact of the induction activities, the team were assured that the school provides a very comprehensive induction and review mechanisms are effective.

265. The assessment team identified that the school hosts a number of social events during induction where students have the opportunity to meet the academic, professional staff and fellow students. These are reviewed as part of the Induction and Founder's Week Survey and the feedback from these events is positive. The Admissions, Induction and Founder Week Survey asks students about feeling part of a community and in the most recent survey, 76.3 per cent of students answered strongly agree or agree. When students were surveyed again at the end of the year, 91 per cent reported that they felt part of a community. At the commencement of their studies, group mentoring sessions are provided to help students navigate the transition to higher education.

266. The assessment team concluded that the approach the school takes to induction is effective. The information that is provided is both clear and comprehensive. All students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way and account is taken of different students' choices and needs.

267. The assessment team observed that students continue to be supported as planned through the Student Support Framework, with dedicated professional support staff providing a range of services from disability and wellbeing to careers information and guidance. The team

reviewed two annual reports from the probationary period (2021-22 and 2022-23) which support monitoring of the effectiveness of student support. The first report found that coaching helped students in their 'pedagogical experience' and assisted them in understanding interdisciplinary integration. The second annual report provided positive feedback regarding coaching and stated plans for the coming year to increase the team by a minimum of one to two people for individual and group support, in line with the Student Support Framework. The assessment team also learnt that the school's planned rolling internal audit of student support commenced in September 2023, which it considered will provide a forum for ongoing self-criticality and reflection moving forward.

268. Student support is monitored via responses to the end-of-year survey, which has specific questions relating to student support. The survey report is received at both the Student Voice Committee and Academic Council where issues were raised relating to student support, follow-up actions were discussed and actioned. The team found that the survey report has provided positive feedback to the school in terms of student satisfaction with support.

269. Following student feedback during the probationary period, the school has amended its coaching model. In 2023-24, this has so far included enabling final-year students to coach students in later cohorts. This change allows student coaches to develop their own skills and enables further integration between different cohorts, therefore benefitting both levels of students. The team learnt that the use of coaching for supporting students provides a mechanism for facilitating interdisciplinary integration. Through weekly sessions for relevant terms, students are coached and guided in diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses of their learning experience at the school. In this respect, each teacher acts as both a coach and a tutor for a small group of students. Coaching differs from tutoring in that students are asked to reflect on how their learning has developed, rather than what they have learnt, or what pastoral support may be needed for learning. The team observed that the coaching model is an effective mechanism for offering further support to students.

270. The assessment team found that the teaching and learning infrastructure aims to ensure students' chances of developing their potential and of obtaining the qualification they are seeking. The school has mechanisms in place designed to support and develop students beyond the arrangements for learning, teaching and assessment. These include the specialist support services, such as counselling, disability and careers advice and cover both the generic provision of services to a cohort of students and the targeted support for individual students. It is part of the school's strategic approach, which embodies the integration, coherence and internal cooperation between different areas, including for example links between professional services, academic departments and student representative bodies, as well as with external organisations. The team concluded that the approach adopted by the school is effective and helps ensure that all students can achieve.

271. Having reviewed the documentation and the way the school monitors its provision, the assessment team concluded that the effectiveness of student and staff advisory support and counselling services is very comprehensive and enables any resource needs to be considered.

272. The assessment team identified that the school has progressively implemented multiple aspects of the student record system, including functionality to support admissions, enrolment, statutory returns (e.g. Data Futures) and assessment. The team found that the

school continues to integrate other systems with the aim of enhancing functionality. The school continues to monitor, as planned, its administrative systems via an annual report to the Academic Council. The assessment team found that the school's system allows students to monitor their progress and view their grades and marks online. From its review of the documentation, the team were assured that this has the potential to enhance students' ability to monitor their progress through the integration of Turnitin and Cortex, which will enable students to view grades and marks online and monitor progression. This will be in addition to existing channels enabling students to monitor their progress, such as through assessment feedback and the interim transcript.

273. The assessment team concluded that the school's administrative systems are effective. The school has in place support systems which enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs.

274. The assessment team observed that the school provides extensive opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression. The team tested this through evaluating and reviewing the Student Support Framework, which includes a Student Experience Framework, Student Careers Framework and Student Wellbeing Framework. Each framework sets out its guiding principles to encourage personal and professional development and provide information on the broad and inclusive range of activities and experiences to support this development. The assessment team reviewed an example four-week schedule of student experience activities for Level 4 students, which included 'Monday Mindfulness', breakfast networking opportunities and guest talks from industry professionals to support the development of the student community, wellbeing and the 'future self'.

275. The team observed that the school's Careers Framework sets out the school's approach to student careers and employability services and is guided by four key principles: 'accessible', 'holistic', 'student-driven' and 'networked'. The framework contains multiple touchpoints for students to engage with employers in meaningful ways, gain work experience, and develop an understanding of themselves and increase their skills in relation to their future career paths. The school has provided a range of careers and employability-focused activities, including one-to-one support and a careers workshop for finalists, which includes tips on how to search for employment opportunities and the preparation of CVs. The school also assists students in searching for internship opportunities. Moving forward, the school's rolling internal audit process will feature a review of careers information and support in 2026.

276. The assessment team were assured that the school provides opportunities for its students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression. It found that these opportunities are underpinned by relevant frameworks such as the Careers Framework and promote interdisciplinarity.

277. The assessment team found that the school has taken a strategic approach to learning resources which has ensured that a full suite of resources from relevant learning resources to specialist support are in place. The team found evidence that learning resources are monitored as part of the school's governance structure, which includes student representation. Throughout the probationary period, regular usage reports have been received at the Learning Resources, Property, Data and IT Committee and the Academic

Council has also received the Annual Learning Resources reports as planned for 2021-22 and 2022-23. The Learning Resources Plan sets out the school's plan for delivering learning resources to students and for supporting students in developing the skills to make effective use of these resources. New and returning students have dedicated digital sessions at the start of each academic year. Further support in making safe and effective use of resources is provided through the school's intranet and a one-to-one digital helpdesk operates throughout the academic year. The Data Protection Policy and Data Retention Schedule describes how the school continues to ensure the confidential handling of students' personal data, and the school's IT Acceptable Use Policy also enables the use of digital facilities in a safe environment.

278. The assessment team concluded that the school provides effective opportunities for all students to develop skills to make effective use of the learning resources provided, including the safe and effective use of specialist facilities, and the use of digital and virtual environments.

279. The school's EDI Policy continues to form part of the school's overall commitment to creating a diverse and inclusive culture in which its staff and students are equally valued and respected. The policy is underpinned by the school's Disability Policy and Dignity at Work and Study Policy and Procedure. The team learnt that the Disability Policy outlines the school's duties and the options available to both students and staff with disabilities, including mental health disabilities, in seeking support or adjustments to their studying and working environment. In the team's view it provides an effective framework to support the ongoing development of an inclusive, safe, enabling and supportive environment for all the school's staff, students, and visitors, regardless of disability.

280. The assessment team found that the EDI committee can monitor internal attainment data in relation to various demographic factors. The team observed that, to date, the school's internal data did not identify any gaps in outcomes between any specific demographic group and the wider cohort. The school has developed an action plan in relation to its equality strategy. During the probationary period, the EDI committee implemented an annual Equality Survey in 2021-22, which was carried out again in 2022-23, and provided an annual equality report to the Academic Council in both instances. The team formed the view that this process was operating effectively. The team further found that the school has continued in its implementation of the access and participation plan throughout the probationary period and key equality policies continue to be overseen by the EDI committee and reviewed annually.

281. Having reviewed the various policies associated with student support, the assessment team concluded that the school's approach is effective and is guided by a commitment to equity.

Conclusions

282. The assessment team concluded that the school has appropriate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The school sets out a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement, while its administrative support systems support students in monitoring their progression and performance.

Assessment of DAPs criterion E: Evaluation of performance

Criterion E1: Evaluation of performance

Advice to the OfS

283. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion E1: Evaluation of performance because it meets sub-criteria E1.1.

284. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows in summary that the school has established a quality framework that articulates the remit and timing of multiple monitoring and review processes that cover all aspects of the school's higher education provision and governance arrangements. Outcomes from these processes are reported to the Academic Council and, where appropriate, the Board of Directors enabling the school to effectively assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths.

285. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion collated throughout the school's probationary period, and for the purposes of this New DAPs end assessment, alongside any other relevant information.

> **E1.1: An organisation granted degree awarding powers takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths.**

Advice to the OfS

286. The assessment team's view is that the school meets criterion E1.1 because it has in place a quality framework setting out arrangements for monitoring and review of its programmes and the student academic experience that enables the school to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths. The quality framework monitoring and review processes are overseen by the school's Academic Council and Board of Directors, as appropriate. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence under sub-criterion E1.1.

Context

287. The assessment team considered that, at the time of submitting its original New DAPs plan, the school had developed a comprehensive quality framework. This framework articulates the procedures and systems intended to facilitate ongoing self-evaluation, including internal quality improvement mechanisms and schedules of review aimed at driving continuous improvement of performance. The framework emphasises the importance of external input to these mechanisms. According to the New DAPs plan, and, as evaluated under criterion A1: Academic governance, the Academic Council is responsible for safeguarding academic standards and quality through ongoing assessment of the school's performance, agreeing on actions to address weaknesses, and developing strengths. This responsibility is discharged under the oversight of the Board of Directors.

Reasoning

288. To assess whether critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the school's higher education provision, and that action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review, the assessment team reviewed the school's New DAPs plan and quality framework, Governance and Academic Regulations, QAA observation reports, and minutes of meetings of the Academic Council and Board of Directors.

289. The assessment team learnt that the quality framework outlines arrangements for cyclical monitoring and periodic review of quality assurance processes, governance arrangements, the operation of the school's programmes and modules, and the wider academic experience of its students. These cycles are as follows:

    • annual programme monitoring

    • annual and termly reporting to the Academic Council

    • policy and procedure review schedule

    • rolling internal audit programme

    • annual governance effectiveness reviews

    • external review

    • programme lifecycle review.

290. The assessment team found that internal audits had been undertaken in 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 looking at admissions, assessment and feedback, and student support respectively. Each audit had clear terms of reference, identifying the focus and scope of the audit and a panel membership that included an external member and a student representative.

291. The assessment team scrutinised the 2022-23 assessment and feedback audit report and found that it detailed the documentation considered by the panel, the outcomes of meetings with staff and students, the panel's internal deliberations, and the conclusions and recommendations. This report was reviewed at the Academic Council in June 2023 and a resultant report and action plan was produced by the school's Assessment Lead for implementation during the 2023-24 academic year. While recommendations of the audit report focussed on areas of enhancement, rather than any necessary remedial actions, the assessment team found this to be a credible example of self-assessment being used by the school to plan improvements to the student experience.

292. The assessment team found that annual programme monitoring has now been completed on two occasions: in 2022-23 for the BASc Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods programme, and in 2023-24 for both the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The Annual Programme Monitoring reports are considered by the Academic Council and assist in the planning of improvement or enhancement activities. The reports include student feedback and data on student performance, external examiner feedback and module review outcomes.

293. The assessment team observed that module review processes are now embedded at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. End-of-module evaluation questionnaires are completed by students and the results are used by the module leader to complete a reflective report, known as the 'Module Leader's Log', which feeds into the production of annual programme monitoring reports. Such activity assured the assessment team that opportunities for critical self-reflection have been established at the module level, with appropriate onward reporting to the Academic Council through the annual programme monitoring reports.

294. The school identified that it plans to incorporate graduate outcomes data into its annual reporting arrangements when this becomes available, following graduation of its first undergraduate cohort. The school plans to use this data to further assist in scrutinising any gaps in attainment and progression between demographic groups via the EDI committee.

295. The assessment team found that the Academic Council also receives and discusses annual or termly reports on recruitment and admissions, external examining, student engagement, learning resources, scholarship and pedagogical effectiveness, and student support. As discussed under criterion A1: Academic governance, the assessment team found that the Academic Council operates effectively, with due consideration and challenge given to the tabled reports. Actions arising from these discussions are clearly identified, and responsibilities assigned.

296. The assessment team considered that the school used student feedback effectively in its governance system, including reviewing student feedback results at both the Student Voice Committee and the Academic Council. The team also recognised the school's engagement with the wider student body, such as the 'town hall' meetings hosted by senior staff and open to all students. The team concluded that the school's open engagement with students was a strength of its governance arrangements and an important source of information used in analysing the school's effectiveness.

297. The assessment team found that reports and outcomes from the various cyclical monitoring and review processes were discussed and scrutinised at Academic Council meetings with onward reporting to the Board of Directors through a standing agenda item on the Academic Council business. The team observed that discussion evidently included rigorous analysis and challenge, with resultant actions clearly documented. Additionally, the team learnt that the QAA observation report for the December 2022 meeting of the Academic Council found that the comprehensive agenda and provision of detailed reports on performance enabled a rigorous discussion of the school's activity and processes. The team concluded that the school has embedded effective evidence-informed reporting processes that enable the Academic Council and the Board of Directors to have clear oversight of the school's operation and to plan action in response to matters arising.

298. The assessment team found that policy and procedure reviews had been embedded into the work of the PRC and were being undertaken on an annual basis with outcomes and recommendations reported to the Academic Council.

299. The assessment team observed that an external review of its governance arrangements had been completed in 2022-23, with a further external review planned for the Full DAPs period should the school be successful in gaining Full DAPs. As noted under criterion A1.1 (see paragraph 67), the review was conducted by two experienced higher education quality

assurance professionals and their report concluded that academic governance was fit-for-purpose and aligned with sector expectations.

300. The team also found that the Annual Governance Effectiveness review is overseen by the Audit and Compliance Committee and that it includes a survey of governance committee members seeking feedback, including on whether members understand their responsibilities, whether the committee membership is appropriate and whether the terms of reference accurately reflect the responsibilities and decisions of the committee.

301. The assessment team identified that an Annual Quality Report is produced for both the Academic Council and the Board of Directors, providing an evaluative summary of the various quality assurance processes related to the quality of provision. The team concluded that this approach ensures that school management and governance committees are well-informed, enabling them to take targeted action should any issues arise.

302. The assessment team noted that the programme lifecycle review identified in the quality framework is scheduled to take place every five years and therefore had not taken place during the New DAPs probationary period but is scheduled to take place in 2025-26.

303. The assessment team identified that during the probationary period the school had tracked and reflected on progress made with implementing its quality framework and associated self-evaluation processes. The team observed that the school plans to continue its monitoring and review processes, with the timeline for key reviews being outlined in the school's 'Quality Review Cycle 2024-2025 to 2026-2027'.

304. The team concluded that evidence-based critical self-assessment was firmly embedded in the operation of the key governance committees and its higher education provision with outcomes from internal and external monitoring and review being used to plan improvements or develop further its strengths. The team also found that the school had met its intended schedule for implementing the quality framework, as set out in its New DAPs plan.

305. To assess whether clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision, the assessment team considered the school's Governance and Academic Regulations and minutes of the Academic Council.

306. The assessment team found that the Academic Council, as the senior academic authority of the school, effectively discharges its functions and assigns actions based on the processes that feed into it. Minutes of all committee meetings include a table of completed and incomplete actions, allowing individual committees to routinely track their actions. These are subsequently received at the Academic Council, enabling it to monitor the progress of its sub-committees. Additionally, individual reports, such as annual programme review reports and internal rolling audit reports, contain recommendations that are reported back to the council as part of the Annual Quality Report.

307. The team found these processes to be effective, confirming that clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging actions in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of the school's academic provision.

308. To determine if internal and external ideas and expertise are drawn into the school's arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review, the assessment team

reviewed the school's Governance and Academic Regulations, programme and module approval and review procedures, its use of external examiner reports and internal audit processes.

309. As discussed under criterion A1, the assessment team found that the school's key governance and committees include external independent members alongside internal staff and student representation.

310. The assessment team identified that, under the programme approval procedure, a programme development team is established when a new programme is proposed. The terms of reference state that this team develops the programme for approval, drawing on research, available evidence, and the input of internal and external subject and resource experts, and the views of other relevant stakeholders, such as alumni, students and employers. The team is chaired by the dean and includes all faculty members. The assessment team considered that this process had worked effectively on each of the three times it has been employed: for developing and approving the BASc (2021-22), the MASc programme (2021-22), and a new MASc pathway (2022-23).

311. The PMRAP is responsible for recommending to the Academic Council whether a new programme should be approved. This panel includes an external adviser with academic experience, an external member of the Academic Council who acts as chair, and, where possible, a student or alumnus with experience of the level of the proposed programme.

312. The assessment team found that external examiners are now firmly embedded in the school's processes with responsibilities including reviewing and commenting on module modifications at all academic levels, including associated assessment briefs. External examiner reports are also considered annually at the Academic Council.

313. As reported in paragraph 291, the school's internal rolling audit process uses external expertise as part of the audit panel. These audits focus on the student experience and have addressed areas such as admissions, assessment and feedback and student support, with reports going to the Academic Council. Over the next three years, the school reported that it plans to include reviews of learning resources and careers support in the internal audit process.

314. The assessment team found that the school intends to maintain its quality assurance and review processes without significant changes. Planned activities include a quinquennial academic review of the undergraduate programme in 2025-26, an external governance review, and a programme lifecycle review to further evaluate its academic portfolio.

315. The assessment team concluded that the school makes use of internal and external expertise in programme design, approval, delivery, and review.

Conclusions

316. The assessment team concluded that the school takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths due to its well-embedded quality framework. This framework includes several cyclical monitoring and review processes that ultimately report to the Academic Council. These processes engage external and internal expertise as well as student input. The Academic Council meeting

minutes and QAA observation reports confirm careful consideration of outcomes and reports, along with appropriate action planning.

317. The assessment team concluded that the quality framework and its associated monitoring and review processes demonstrate that critical self-assessment is integral to the school's operations. The scrutiny of processes, such as the annual internal audit, revealed a clear and coherent framework with audit panel membership that includes external academic expertise and student representation. Consideration of audit reports at the Academic Council has resulted in actions, such as the updated assessment and feedback strategy.

318. The assessment team concluded that clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging actions related to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision. The function of the Academic Council is clearly articulated and consistently applied, with clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels within the academic governance structures.

319. The assessment team concluded that the school uses ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation. This includes academic staff membership of programme development committees, external academic expertise on programme approval committees, the use of external examiner feedback to inform design of assessments and their delivery, and the independent external membership of the Board of Directors and Academic Council.

320. Overall, the assessment team concluded that the school clearly demonstrates its ability to take effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and further develop its strengths throughout the probationary period. The team also concluded that the school has fully fulfilled its objectives in respect of self-evaluation as set out in its New DAPs plan.

Degree awarding powers overarching criterion

Full DAPs: A self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems.

Advice to the OfS

321. The assessment team's view is that the school meets the DAPs overarching criterion because it meets all the underpinning criteria.

322. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the evidence, which shows in summary that the school has demonstrated that it is a self-critical, cohesive academic community. It has a clear commitment to the assurance of standards and is supported by effective quality systems.

323. This view is based on consideration of the evidence requirements for the DAPs criteria collated throughout the school's probationary period, and for the purposes of this New DAPs end assessment, alongside any other relevant information.

Reasoning

324. The Academic Council clearly understands its core role in overseeing academic quality and standards and Academic Council meeting minutes demonstrate that each meeting includes reports and other documents, such as survey results, which are actively and robustly discussed. The assessment team found that the volume of business considered has increased since the award of New DAPs. Consequently, the number of meetings of the Academic Council has increased from three to four a year and an additional external member of the Council was appointed during 2023-24, with expertise in employment matters. The assessment team formed the view that the school's effective academic governance structures, along with its clear and appropriate lines of accountability, provide assurance that it is successfully managing the responsibilities under its current DAPs authorisation and will continue to do so in respect of any extension of this authorisation. The assessment team also concluded that all aspects of the school's control and oversight of its higher education provision are conducted in partnership with its students. The school has established mechanisms for engaging students, including student representation on key governance committees such as the Board of Directors and Academic Council, the Student Voice Committee and through various student experience surveys.

325. The assessment team found the school has transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations that provide confidence in how the school awards academic credit and qualifications. The assessment team found that the school demonstrates that it has designed and is delivering qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students from all backgrounds and learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured. The school has systems in place to monitor the quality of all aspects of its provision to students. The assessment team found that the school demonstrates an attitude of continuous improvement, as evidenced in the school's most recent self-assessment document. The assessment team concluded that the school demonstrates diligence in relation to maintaining a quality student experience, as evidenced for example in its LIS

Assessment Audit 2023 Report of the Assessment Lead, in which the amount and variety of assessments student undertake, the rubrics being used and the linking for students' learning between assessments have been reviewed with student input. As a result of this detailed audit, the school has plans to develop a programme-level approach to assessment and to develop the 'generic marking scale' into a formal tool. The assessment team commends this work.

326. The school has credible plans to recruit additional suitably qualified and experienced staff to manage its planned growth. The school has proper and rigorous recruitment practices and has an effective plan to accredit teaching staff through Advance HE fellowship, through affiliate membership of Advance HE. The school has a process for onboarding and training staff that ensures staff are appropriately supported and developed. There is clear evidence of how academic staff can draw on scholarship in their discipline at an appropriate level. Staff are very well supported in their relevant disciplines, harnessing the latest developments in their respective fields of study. The assessment team therefore found that in its ongoing staff development programme, monitoring and the operationalisation of its policies and procedures throughout the school, the school has clearly demonstrated how it has matured and developed as a provider in relation to scholarship and the pedagogical effectives of the school staff.

327. The assessment team learnt that supporting students through an effective and integrated multi-channel approach is central to the school's mission and values. The school seeks feedback from students and actively responds to students' views, making changes as appropriate such as providing resources to students to help with the cost of living in London, and amending its coaching model. The team concluded that the school has a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement for its students as evidenced in the way that it collects, manages and analyses data to set objectives and key results to act as the foundation for enabling student development and achievement.

328. The assessment team found that administrative support systems at the school are designed to enable it to successfully monitor student progression and performance accurately. The school's Careers Framework forms part of the school's commitment to equity. All students develop an understanding of the world of work and start to grow their professional network. Therefore, the school has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources which enables students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

329. The assessment team's view is that the school takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths. The team found that reports and outcomes from the various cyclical monitoring and review processes were discussed and scrutinised at Academic Council meetings with onward reporting to the Board of Directors through a standing agenda item on Academic Council business. The assessment team concluded that the school uses ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation and concluded that the quality framework and its associated monitoring and review processes demonstrate that critical self-assessment is integral to the school's operations.

Conclusions

330. The team therefore concluded that the school meets the overarching DAPs criterion, as the evidence demonstrates that the school has a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems.

Annex A: Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
AI	artificial intelligence
DAPs	degree awarding powers
DQB	designated quality body
EDI	equality, diversity and inclusion
FHEQ	Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications
HERA	Higher Education and Research Act 2017
MLO(s)	module learning outcome(s)
OfS	Office for Students
PFHEA	Principal Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy
PLO(s)	programme learning outcome(s)
PMRAP	Programme/Module Review and Approval Panel
PRC	Policy and Regulatory Committee
RPG	Reflective Practice Group
RPL	Record of Prior Learning
VLE	virtual learning environment
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QAC	[OfS's] Quality Assessment Committee