Degree awarding powers (DAPs) assessment report for Regent's University London Limited

Assessment for variation of degree awarding powers

Provider legal name: Regent's University London Limited

Provider trading name: Regent's University London

UKPRN: 10086591

Assessment conducted: 31 January 2024 to 9 July 2024

Reference OfS 2025.09

Enquiries to regulation@officeforstudents.org.uk

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Executive summary

A higher education provider that is registered with the Office for Students (OfS) and has held Full degree awarding powers (DAPs) for three years or more will normally be eligible to be considered by the OfS for a DAPs authorisation with no time limit. This is referred to as 'indefinite DAPs', irrespective of how those DAPs were awarded (for example, by the OfS or the Privy Council).

A provider may also request that the OfS extends its DAPs authorisation, for example if it holds Foundation DAPs and wishes to extend its authorisation to Taught DAPs. In addition, a provider can also request an extension to its powers where it holds subject-specific DAPs and wishes to extend the subject areas covered by its DAPs authorisation. Such requests can only be made by providers holding either Full or indefinite DAPs authorisations.

This report represents the conclusions of a DAPs assessment for Regent's University London Limited seeking indefinite Taught DAPs. The assessment was a desk-based assessment and did not include a visit to the provider.

The purpose of a DAPs assessment is to gather evidence to inform a judgement about whether a provider meets the DAPs criteria and has the ability to:

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

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

DAPs assessments are conducted by assessment teams with membership that includes OfS-appointed academic experts. The outcome of the assessment is a report, produced by the assessment team, setting out its advice to the OfS against the DAPs criteria.

This report does not represent any decision of the OfS in respect of compliance with conditions of registration.

1.   The criteria for DAPs authorisation are designed to ensure that a higher education provider with DAPs demonstrates:

- a firm guardianship of academic standards

- a firm and systematic approach to assuring the quality of the higher education it provides

- the capacity to contribute to the continued good standing of higher education in England.

2.   The DAPs criteria are the reference point for the DAPs assessment process and assessment teams 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]

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[1] See OfS Regulatory framework, 'Annex C – Guidance on the criteria for the authorisation for DAPs (OfS 2022.69), last updated November 2022.

3.   Regent's University London Limited (the university) is a private limited company, which was incorporated on 10 July 2020. The university provides a range of undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses including in business and management, creative arts and design, media, journalism and communications and psychology.

4.   The university was awarded time-limited Taught DAPs by the OfS on 29 September 2020 for a period of four years. The time-limited Taught DAPs Order is due to expire on 31 August 2024.

5.   In accordance with the OfS's regulatory framework and Regulatory advice 17, the university is eligible to be considered for indefinite Taught DAPs because it has held time-limited degree awarding powers for a period of three years.[2]

6.   The OfS appointed an external assessment team on 6 October 2023 to undertake a desk-based DAPs variation assessment. The OfS asked the assessment team to give its advice about the quality of and standards applied to higher education courses at the university and whether the university continues to meet the DAPs criteria.

7.   The assessment team considered a range of information submitted by the university in support of its application to vary its DAPs authorisation.

8.   Table 1 summarises the assessment team's findings regarding whether the university continues to meet the DAPs criteria.

Table 1: Summary of findings against the DAPs criteria

Underpinning DAPs 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	**Summary**
The provider is a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems	Met

9.   This report does not represent any decision of the OfS in respect of whether the DAPs variation the university is seeking should be authorised.

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[2] OfS, 'Regulatory advice 17: Variation and revocation of degree awarding powers' (OfS 2019.48), last updated July 2023.

10. This report will be 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.[3] QAC will formulate its advice to the OfS regarding quality and standards at Regent's University London Limited, having considered this report.

11. The OfS will have regard to this assessment report and QAC's advice when making a decision about whether to vary the university's DAPs authorisation on the basis requested. The OfS will also consider its own risk assessment for the university 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.[4]

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

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

Introduction and background

12. A higher education provider that is registered with the Office for Students (OfS) and has held Full degree awarding powers (DAPs) for three years or more, will normally be eligible to be considered for DAPs authorisation with no time limit, referred to as 'indefinite DAPs', irrespective of how those DAPs were awarded (e.g. by the OfS or the Privy Council).

13. Before making a decision about whether to vary a provider's DAPs authorisation, the OfS will undertake a DAPs assessment. The purpose of a DAPs assessment is to gather evidence to inform a judgement about whether a provider being considered for a variation of its DAPs authorisation, continues to meet the DAPs criteria and has the ability to:

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

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

14. OfS officers will undertake an eligibility and suitability assessment of a provider. This initial assessment will determine the scope and level of detail of the DAPs variation assessment and whether the assessment should be desk-based in the first instance or should include at the outset a requirement to visit the provider.

15. DAPs assessments are conducted by assessment teams with memberships that include OfS-appointed academic experts. Assessors have professional experience of higher education and knowledge relevant to the areas they assess. The outcome of the DAPs assessment is a report, compiled by the assessment team summarising its findings from the assessment.

16. This report represents the conclusions of a DAPs assessment for a provider seeking indefinite Taught DAPs. The assessment was a desk-based assessment and did not include a visit to the provider.

17. This report does not represent any decision of the OfS in respect of compliance with conditions of registration.

18. This report will be 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 Research Act 2017 (HERA) on the quality of and standards applied to the higher education being provided by providers for which the OfS is considering granting, varying, or (in certain circumstances) revoking authorisation for DAPs. QAC will formulate its advice to the OfS regarding quality and standards at Regent's University London Limited having considered this report. The OfS will have regard to the assessment report, and QAC's advice when making a decision about whether to vary the university's DAPs authorisation on the basis requested.

19. The OfS will also consider its own risk assessment for the provider and will have regard to 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.[5]

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

Context

20. Regent's University London Limited was established in 2020 and operates from its campus in Regent's Park, London. It offers a range of undergraduate degree courses including in:

- Acting

- Art history

- Business

- Digital marketing

- Fashion

- Film production

- Interior design

- International relations

- Hospitality management

- Media and advertising

- Psychology

- Screenwriting

- Sports management.

21. It also offers a variety of postgraduate degree courses including in:

- Business and management

- Digital business and data science

- Finance

- International relations

- Hospitality management

- Marketing

- Media and communications

- Project management

- Psychotherapy and psychology

- UX design.

22. Overall, based on the latest available 'Size and shape of provision data dashboard', the university had a student population in 2021-2022 of 1,860 students. This included 1,190 undergraduate students (all full-time). There were 680 postgraduate students; 240 of these students were part-time.[6]

23. The university currently employs 65 full-time academic staff, 135 part-time academic staff and 120 professional staff.[7]

24. In July 2023, the university requested to be considered for indefinite Taught DAPs, as it had held time-limited Taught DAPs for three years.

25. In accordance with the OfS regulatory framework and OfS Regulatory advice 17, the OfS undertook an initial eligibility and suitability assessment of the university.[8] It decided that a desk-based DAPs assessment should be undertaken to gather and test evidence. This is to inform a judgement about whether the university's powers have been exercised securely during the preceding three years, continues to meet the DAPs criteria and has the ability to:

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

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

26. The OfS appointed an assessment team on 6 October 2023 which consisted of three academic expert assessors and a member of OfS staff in the following roles:

   a. Dr Chris Kubiak – committee chair and lead assessor.

   b. Dr Caroline Chaffer – deputy committee chair and assessor.

   c. Dr Yvonne Moogan – deputy committee chair and assessor.

   d. Mrs Holly Howe – committee member and assessment coordinator.

27. The assessment team was asked to give its advice and judgements about the quality of and standards applied to higher education courses at the university and whether the university continues to meet the DAPs criteria.

28. The assessment team considered a range of information submitted by Regent's University London Limited in support of its application to vary its DAPs authorisation.

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[6] Available at Size and shape of provision data dashboard: Data dashboard - Office for Students.

[7] Available at Who's working in HE? | HESA.

[8] See OfS Regulatory framework, 'Annex C – Guidance on the criteria for the authorisation for DAPs (OfS 2022.69), last updated November 2022; OfS, 'Regulatory advice 17: Variation and revocation of degree awarding powers' (OfS 2019.48), last updated July 2023.

Assessment process

Information gathering

29. In accordance with the process outlined in Regulatory advice 17, Annex B: Variation and revocation of degree awarding powers in England Operational guidance for providers on assessment by the OfS,[9] the university submitted a self-assessment document on 31 January 2024. The document set out how the university considers it meets the DAPs criterion for the Taught DAPs authorisation it already holds.

30. To support the statements made in the self-assessment document, the university submitted a range of documentary evidence including course documentation, information related to academic policies and processes, and governance information.

31. Following its review of the university's initial evidence submission, the assessment team requested further evidence from the university, which was submitted on 19 March 2024 and received by the assessment team on 3 April 2024. The assessment team also requested further evidence on 12 June 2024 which was submitted by the university on 18 June 2024 and received by the assessment team on 19 June 2024.

32. The assessment team undertook its desk-based assessment of the university's evidence submission between 31 January 2024 and 26 June 2024.

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[9] Available at Variation and revocation of DAPs - operational guidance on assessment by the OfS (officeforstudents.org.uk).

Assessment of DAPs criterion A: Academic governance

Criterion A1: Academic governance

Advice to the OfS

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

34. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence that demonstrates in summary that the university has effective academic governance and management structures with appropriate and clear lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. The team is satisfied that all aspects of the control and oversight of the university's higher education provision is conducted in partnership with its students. The assessment team is confident that, when working with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, the university 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.

35. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Criterion A1.1

> **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

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

37. The team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that the university has met the evidence requirements for A1.1.

Reasoning

38. The assessment team considered the university's academic governance arrangements by reviewing its management and academic governance structure, which is publicly available on its website. The university's main governing body is the Board of Directors which retains overall authority and is responsible for the university's business, mission, strategic development and quality and standards. The team reviewed the annual report on academic assurance 2021-22 which shows that the Board of Directors monitors performance frequently through the university's academic assurance processes and procedures. The academic assurance reports provide the Board of Directors with evidence that the structures and processes for assurance of quality and maintenance of academic standards are effective. The

Board of Directors is directly responsible for the Audit and Risk Committee, the Renumeration Committee and the Nominations Committee. Sitting below the Board of Directors is the Vice Chancellor's Executive Team (VCET) which is responsible for the four committees: Prevent Working Group; Health and Safety Committee; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee; the Joint Consultative Committee; and the Academic Committee.

39. The Academic Committee acts as the university's academic authority and the terms of reference state that the committee is responsible for academic development, standards and student experience. The university's academic governance structure shows that five subcommittees report to the Academic Committee: Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC), Quality Committee, Research Committee, Admissions Panel and Collaborative Provision Committee. The assessment team reviewed the terms of references for the five subcommittees, and it found that the subcommittees have clear reporting lines to the Academic Committee, are chaired by senior leaders with appropriate qualifications and experience and have a diverse and active membership. The committee structure was the result of a governance restructure aimed to reduce the number of committees, streamline the university's business and ensure decisions were taken efficiently and more effectively.

40. The assessment team considered whether there is evidence to show that the university's higher education mission and strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, published, understood and applied consistently. It examined the university's current strategic plan 2023-28 which sets out the university's strategic mission and direction and is published on the university's website. The strategic plan includes coherent objectives to deliver an excellent student experience that enables students to reach their full potential and inspire staff to deliver innovative and inclusive teaching and learning. The assessment team considered how the university's strategic objectives were reviewed by the university and found that these were considered at Academic Committee and Board of Directors meetings. The most recent academic assurance reports to the Board of Directors were reviewed and these documents confirmed that the university's regulations deliver and enhance academic quality, academic standards and academic integrity in line with the university's strategy.

41. To test if the university's strategic aims and academic policies are consistently applied in practice, the assessment team reviewed the university's key academic strategies and found that these are underpinned by the Hallmark Pedagogy. The Hallmark Pedagogy is a set of principles describing the university's unique approach to teaching and learning, incorporating the attributes students will have when they graduate from the university. This informs curriculum design (framework and content), learning resources and technology, and includes the support available to staff to deliver the principles. The university's learning outcomes align with the qualification descriptors at Levels 3 to 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) which are cross referenced to the Hallmark Pedagogy. For example, one of the key academic strategies is the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2023-25 which is published on the university's website. The assessment team found that this strategy is aligned with the university's 2023-28 strategic plan and the Hallmark Pedagogy. This provides evidence that the university's core academic strategies and learning outcomes are underpinned by the Hallmark Pedagogy and strategic objectives and supports the team's view that the university's mission and strategic direction and associated policies are applied consistently.

42. To test how the university's strategic objectives are assessed in practice, the assessment team further reviewed the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2023-25 which informs the curriculum. For example, recent minutes from the Board of Directors were reviewed which showed that, in relation to the National Student Survey (NSS) 2023, the university noted it had received very positive student responses in comparison to other higher education institutions across England. The team found that this aligns with the strategic objective of high-quality delivery where staff and student working relationships are conducive to achieving positive outcomes. This evidence supports the view that the university's higher education mission and strategic direction are understood and applied consistently, and the university has effective academic governance.

43. The assessment team also considered the university's core strategic documents such as the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and the university's strategic plans for 2019-24, 2021-25 and 2023-28 to test that reporting is strategic rather than opportunistic and strategic decisions are comprehensive and consistent. These strategic documents were triangulated against the annual reports to the Board of Directors and a sample of minutes of the: Academic Committee; LTSEC; Quality Committee; Research Committee; and the Admissions Panel. The team found that strategic themes were considered at meetings. For example, minutes from the Quality Committee in November 2022 were reviewed which demonstrated that there is an annual summary report from the Quality Committee which is presented within the Academic Assurance report. This report is sent to the Academic Committee and then to the Board of Directors. Matters discussed at this meeting demonstrated continual support to improve the student experience, which is a strategic objective. For example, there was a discussion about restructuring the registry by merging student records with the exams department to make student progression decisions timelier and more efficient. Board of Directors minutes from September 2023 were also considered which showed that matters discussed included the formal approval of the resignation and nomination of directors as well as confirmation of committee appointments. This included a discussion of a briefing from the Advance HE external review which considered the effectiveness of governance approaches. In the team's view these minutes show that there is a longitudinal approach to reviewing performance of the university's governance approaches, constructive discussions occur that are transparent and inclusive and that the reporting process is robust, fair and compliant. Discussions also relate to the university's strategic objectives. The assessment team was satisfied that this evidence demonstrates that reporting is strategic rather than opportunistic so that strategic decisions are made which are comprehensive and consistent. This supports the view that there is effective academic governance.

44. To test whether there is evidence to show that the university's academic policies support its higher education mission, aims and objectives, the assessment team examined the university's key academic regulation and policies which can be found on the university's website. The team reviewed the university's academic regulations 2024-25 and found these demonstrated that the regulations support the higher education mission, aims and objectives. For example, the health and safety policy, which is available on the university's website, is reviewed annually and was most recently revised in January 2024. The policy outlines the university's monitoring arrangements in regard to health and safety which shows that it consults with employees and relevant risks are reported if good performance is not achieved. This is in line with the university's strategic initiatives to improve staff engagement and have a continuous improvement mindset. The assessment team was satisfied that this policy aligned

to the university's strategy. The team also reviewed the Board of Directors most recent annual reports on academic assurance as well as the Academic Committee minutes from November 2023. Discussions included matters on appointments to committees and updates on policy, for example, academic misconduct, TEF submissions, learning and teaching strategy, quality, ethics and risk register. This evidence supports the view that each committee has a distinct purpose and remit and as such, enables strong academic governance. The assessment team found that the university's regulations and policies are aligned with the university's higher education mission, aims and objectives.

45. The university's academic regulations and policies are automatically reviewed by the relevant committee at the end of each academic year with a remit of making improvements and appropriate changes where necessary. The assessment team further considered the university's key academic regulations and policies under the governance structure, in particular, the Research and Scholarship Strategy 2023-28, as well as the Academic Research reports for 2020-21 and 2021-22. The Research Ethics Review Panel policies are reviewed by the Research Committee and then they are referred to the Academic Committee for final approval. Similarly, the team found that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee also receives input from other internal stakeholders such as the EDI [equality, diversity and inclusion] Steering Group. By committees contributing to policies, this shows that there is a collaborative working environment which supports the team's view that there are effective governance arrangements.

46. The assessment team assessed whether there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in the organisation in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision. The provider submission notes that while the controlling interest in the university is held by the parent company, the university itself is self-contained in terms of governance and management. The team examined documentation reserved for the Board and noted that this document clearly articulates the dimensions of the Board of Directors' responsibilities as distinct from those which must be taken by the parent company. The Board of Directors are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the university continues to meet the OfS's conditions of registration. The team could see this latter responsibility had been triangulated by the Board of Directors' recent OfS compliance mapping document dated January 2024.

47. The team examined university documentation reserved for the Board, to test where responsibility for the governance structure lies. This clearly states that the Board of Directors is responsible for the management of the university and has the power to delegate any powers conferred on it. As such, it has established the powers and responsibilities of the university's governance structure through the terms of reference for committees, their chairs and memberships. The overview of committee structure document which was considered by the Board of Directors in 2020 upon conclusion of an extensive review of the governance structure was considered. The assessment team concluded that this document demonstrates a focus on clarifying and differentiating functions and responsibilities across governance structures. Within this structure, the Academic Committee has been established as the highest academic authority at the university. The function and responsibility of this committee is dealt with in detail below.

48. Furthermore, the Board of Directors maintains oversight of the effective functioning of its governance structure. The academic assurance and appendices documents summarise the

work of the university's governance structures. Both the 2020-21 and 2021-2022 documents were examined, paying particular attention to the reports from the Academic Committee and its subcommittees. The document presents a clear representation of the distinct functions within the committee structure and is also an appropriate means through which the Board of Directors can oversee the management of the university's academic mission, strategy and performance. This supports the team's view that there is evidence to show that there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in the organisation in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for the management of its higher education provision.

49.   The assessment team considered whether the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is clearly articulated and consistently applied. The Academic Committee has sole responsibility for awarding the university's degrees along with the regulation and full oversight of all academic programmes and the maintenance of academic standards. In order to achieve this, the Academic Committee works with its subcommittees. The team found that there is compliance in terms of governance approaches amongst its five subcommittees. For example, minutes of the Academic Committee were reviewed and in the chair's verbal update, there was mention of a new process of registration and enrolment of new students that was implemented in order to improve retention, which was part of the retention strategy. This was also documented in detail within recent minutes of the Board of Directors meeting which in the team's view shows that function and responsibility of senior academic authority is consistently applied.

50.   The Advance HE external review was also considered. This was an independent review commissioned by the Board of Directors to examine the university's governance arrangements amongst other regulations and procedures. The review concluded that 'governance operates effectively'. In further consideration of the Advance HE review's findings, the assessment team looked at senior management's input into the university's academic governance arrangements. The team considered the university's strategic plan 2019-2024 which contained core key performance indicators (KPIs). The more recent strategic plans 2021-25 and 2023-28 were also examined which showed that KPIs had been updated. Minutes of the Academic Committee from 29 November 2023 were examined and it was clear that the KPIs had been disseminated to the five subcommittees of the Academic Committee. For example, there was a discussion about using students as panel members on the Academic Committee led by the director of teaching and learning at the LTSEC. This shows that the publication and dissemination of strategic objectives is transparent.

51.   The assessment team assessed the function of the five subcommittees reporting to the Academic Committee. It also considered reporting from the Academic Committee to the Board of Directors. It was clear from the evidence that there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels of the university's academic governance structure. For example, to illustrate dissemination of appropriate actions in relation to the TEF outcome, the team considered the minutes from the Board of Directors in September 2023. Five specific areas of improvement were identified and discussed; to improve the experience for business and management students; to improve experience for black and minority ethnic students and those from areas of high deprivation; develop scholarship informed teaching; improve continuation rates; and demonstrate the effectiveness of recent changes and initiatives. It was clear that strategic initiatives had been put in place to address these areas and the Board agreed that reviewing and the demonstration of effectiveness would be included as part of the

Annual Monitoring Process and the Academic Assurance Report. From this review, the assessment team was satisfied that the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority at the university is clearly articulated and consistently applied because there is clear decision making at the appropriate level. The team therefore concluded that the university has effective governance, with a clearly defined senior academic authority structure and appropriate lines of accountability. There is a clear articulation of differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels of this structure in relation to managing its higher education provision. The university operates effective monitoring processes and that these are supportive to the university's overall academic governance structure.

52. To further examine the engagement of members of the key committees involved in academic governance, the assessment team reviewed the terms of reference of a number of committees including:

- Academic Committee

- Audit and Risk Committee

- LTSEC

- Quality Committee.

53. It also examined the terms of reference report to the Academic Committee and a sample of meeting minutes in order to determine: the purpose and structure of meetings; the roles and experience of committee members including the chairs; and the schedule of agenda items. The minutes show that there is active participation of members in these committees. For example, the assessment team reviewed a sample of three sets of minutes from LTSEC and was satisfied with the engagement and contribution of staff, students and stakeholders. This demonstrates that the university develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff and students and external stakeholders as well as having effective academic governance. It is clear that the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority are clearly articulated and consistently applied.

54. To test whether there is evidence of appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership, the assessment team reviewed the senior leadership structure. The vice-chancellor and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is ultimately responsible for the university's operational issues and strategy and chairs all of the key subcommittees of the Board of Directors. This post is supported by the VCET that includes the: provost and deputy vice-chancellor; chief financial officer, chief commercial officer, chief transformation officer and director of human resources. Each CV of these senior leaders was examined to corroborate their skill set, experience and qualifications. For example, one academic senior leader has worked in senior roles in the USA higher education environment and in two other UK universities prior to joining the university. A professional services senior leader also has professionally recognised qualifications and worked in a commercial firm prior to joining the university. These skills demonstrate that there is the appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership.

55. The team reviewed terms of reference for key academic governance committees, as outlined in the university's academic governance structure. For example, the terms of reference for the Academic Committee were examined and this showed that various senior leaders, such as the provost and deputy vice-chancellor, are members of the committee. The assessment

team considered that there is appropriate representation on the university's academic governance committees and there is breadth and depth of senior leadership skills. In addition, the Board of Directors' summary and evaluation from the Board of Directors' meeting in September 2022, the Advance HE governance review and minutes from the Board of Directors' meeting in September 2023 were considered. It noted that the chair of the Board of Directors conducted an evaluation for 2021-22 and held one-to-one discussions with other members to critically review performance of the Board. The team was satisfied that the one-to-one meetings happened and that the Board of Directors had developed during the year to become an effective working team with a diverse balance of skills and experience. The team found that within all levels of the university's governance structure, there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility.

56. The assessment team assessed whether the university develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff and students. In relation to collaboration with staff, minutes from the Academic Committee were reviewed which stated that a new policy, 'safeguarding and managing student risk', was discussed and approved. The Academic Committee noted that this policy would replace three individual policies (under 18s policy, cause for concern policy and safeguarding policy) so that it would be more accessible for staff and students. The minutes showed that the policy had been reviewed by the subcommittees to the Academic Committee before being brought to the meeting. This demonstrates that policies are reviewed by staff at various committee meetings which shows that policies and procedures are developed in collaboration with staff. In addition, there is evidence of collaboration with students who sit on various subcommittees and contribute to decision-making. For example, through reviewing the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee Annual Report 2021-2022 as part of the Annual Report on Academic Assurance 2021-22, it was clear to the team that students were active participants in relation to the consultation about active learning as part of the development of the Hallmark Pedagogy, as well as the learning, teaching and assessment strategy and assessment framework. A sample of minutes from the Academic Committee, such as the minutes from November 2023, were also examined which showed that the Academic Committee received input from subcommittees and students. There were consistent agenda items to review actions from previous meetings and clear actions for future improvements. This demonstrated to the assessment team that there was engagement at all levels of the university, including students, and actions are reviewed regularly and reported at the next meeting. This evidence supports the view that the university develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff, students and external stakeholders.

57. Furthermore, the university's policies and procedures relating to governance from the five subcommittees to the Academic Committee were examined in consideration of the university's management of its responsibilities in regard to degree awarding powers. For example, it reviewed policies in relation to reporting updates on the new curriculum model (9 September 2022); committee annual reports and NSS 2023 analysis reporting (18 November 2022); and academic enrolment updates (19 January 2023). The assessment team triangulated this evidence with sample of terms of references, composition of members, meeting minutes, agendas, policy documents and external information sources from the five subcommittees to the Academic Committee to ensure there is full compliance. For example, the Research Ethics Review Panel and the Research Degrees Committee operate together

by both reporting into the Research Committee who then report to and update the Academic Committee for approval. By the Academic Committee having overall authority, this demonstrates that changes in procedures and identification of best practice are shared amongst all the subcommittees, collectively. This evidence supports the view that the mechanisms in place are suitable and that there are effective academic governance structures that are managed successfully.

58. The assessment team is satisfied that a robust strategy, vision and mission exist at the university. Evidence such as: the most recent strategic plans; academic regulations and policies; terms of reference for all of the committees involved in academic governance, such as the Academic Committee; and a sample of minutes for these committees demonstrates that there is successful management of responsibilities and the arrangements are based on a strategic approach, informed by the effective assessment of risks including the carrying out of due diligence.

59. The assessment team concluded that the university meets criterion A1.1 as the evidence shows that the university has effective governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.

Criterion A1.2

A1.2: Academic governance, including all aspects of the control and oversight of its higher education provision, is conducted in partnership with its students.

Advice to the OfS

60. The assessment team's view is that the university meets criterion A1.2 because its academic governance is conducted in partnership with its students. Its students are individually and collectively able to engage effectively with the management of the university and its higher education provision.

61. The team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that the university has met the evidence requirements for A1.2.

Reasoning

62. The assessment team assessed whether students are individually and collectively engaged in the governance and management of the organisation and its higher education provision, with students supported to be able to engage effectively. To determine whether students are engaged in the governance structure, terms of reference were reviewed for:

- Academic Committee

- LTSEC

- Collaborative Provision Committee

- Research Committee

- Health and Safety Committee

- Quality Committee

- Admissions Panel.

63. The terms of reference show that students either hold ex officio positions through their roles as the president or vice president of the student union (for example the Academic Committee or LTSEC) or have a membership of the committee through appointment by the students' union (for example, the Quality Committee or Research Committee). The assessment team examined a sample of minutes from the Academic Committee and LTSEC and could confirm that students also attended these committees. The academic assurance process is used by the university to review, in part, the functioning of its committees including student engagement. The 2021-22 and 2022-23 Academic Assurance reports were reviewed which showed effectiveness of student engagement as part of the effective functioning of its governance arrangements. Academic governance is therefore conducted in partnership with students.

64. The assessment team considered whether students are individually and collectively able to engage effectively with the management of the university and its higher education provision. It considered the functioning of the student representative system. This is described in the 'Student reps' web page. This page notes the role of the student representatives and clearly explains how, through course panels, students have the opportunity to raise issues with academic staff. The page also notes that student representatives receive training to effectively perform their roles. To assess the flow of student feedback to management functions and those in governance, the assessment team reviewed the course panel report which was presented to LTSEC in 2023. The report explains that the course panel is made up of student representatives who provide feedback on their courses. Feedback from the autumn 2023 round of panel meetings contained in the report was examined which demonstrated that feedback was specific, actionable and balanced. The assessment team also reviewed minutes from the March 2023 Academic Committee meeting where a course panel update was received. The actions to create a 'live log' to analyse and triangulate course panel feedback with student survey results was an appropriate inclusion into the university's governance practice.

65. To consider the extent to which student feedback is considered in quality assurance and course enhancement, the assessment team reviewed a sample of five annual monitoring reports each from 2021-22 and 2022-23. These reports are used to review course performance. These documents include a section for 'issues raised at student voice meetings'. While the reports show that sometimes attendance at student voice meetings can be poor, the points raised by students appear well articulated and appropriately responded to by course teams. For example, students on the 'MA Psychotherapy and Counselling' course requested 'more clarity about assignment briefs and academic expectations' and the action plan referred to improvements to assessment.

66. The assessment team reviewed the assessment of the effectiveness of student voice at the university. The student voice improvements document demonstrated that the university takes a critical approach to this issue. In the view of the team, this shows that the university takes care not to over survey, improve response rates to surveys, diversify feedback channels and ensure that there are management processes in place so that feedback reaches the right people in the university and is responded to. The students' own reflections on the quality of

their student voice are presented in the TEF 2023 student submission which notes that there are various opportunities to provide feedback, and that their feedback is valued and quickly responded to. The team triangulated these comments with the NSS 2023 responses relating to student voice and noted that that the university is performing above benchmark. The assessment team can conclude then that the university takes student voice seriously and critically reflects on the effectiveness of its process.

67. The assessment team is therefore satisfied that the university meets criterion A1.2 – its academic governance is conducted in partnership with its students. Students are individually and collectively able to engage effectively with the management of the university and its higher education provision.

Criterion A1.3

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

68. The assessment team's view is that the university meets criterion A1.3 because its academic governance and management ensure robust and effective oversight of its work with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities.

69. The team's view is that, where the university works with or proposes to work with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, it adopts a strategic approach to ensure governance and management arrangements are robust and effective after due consideration of risk in line with the criteria. The decisions it makes to work with other organisations are the result of a strategic approach rather than opportunism. The team's view is based on how the university currently approaches its management and governance, together with the review of evidence under sub-criteria A1.1, A1.2 and A1.3.

Reasoning

70. The assessment team considered whether the approach taken to working with other organisations is based on a strategic approach, informed by appropriate assessment of risk (including due diligence), defined in a written agreement and subject to the same robust oversight and governance as the rest of the university's provision. The collaborative provision register showed that the university offers several forms of partnership including articulation and progression arrangements, dual awards and validation of partners' courses.

71. In order to assess the strategic basis of collaborative provision, the team reviewed the university's strategic plan 2023-2028 noting the core strategic initiative of extending reach through study abroad opportunities and collaborative provision with high quality and brand aligned providers. The alignment of the strategic plan was tested with the collaborative provision and partnerships strategy and found that it emphasised working with partners with complementary values, which have good financial, legal and academic standing and are capable of delivering high quality student outcomes. The evidence from the collaborative

provision register shows that the range of partnerships are clearly articulated and the rationale for these partnerships is based on a strategic approach. These include partnerships to increase opportunities for international students to access study opportunities at the university, progression and articulation arrangements and the validation of awards taught by partner educational institutions. The team was satisfied that the university's engagement in partnerships is strategic rather than opportunistic and that its portfolio of offerings is well aligned with both its strategy for collaborative provision and educational orientation.

72. The university's governance arrangements for collaborative provision and partnerships were tested by examining the terms of reference for the Collaborative Provision Committee. The assessment team was satisfied that its membership and purpose was suitable to ensure the strategic, operational and academic aspects of collaborative provision and partnership. This supports the view that the collaborative provision policy is aligned with the strategic intent of the collaborative provision and partnerships strategy in its concerns with strategic alignment, assessment of risk, due diligence, equivalence of quality assurance processes and requirement for contractual arrangements. The team reviewed two collaborative proposal forms for partnerships with two institutions. It noted that attention was given to strategy alignment, due diligence, legal and financial status, assessment of academic standing and market research. The evidential base for these proposals was sound data and information. This supports the view that there were contractual agreements in place for both partners. To support the operation of partnerships, a partner-specific 'operations manual' is prepared for each provider to guide it through the requirements for the partnership. Three operations manuals were examined and, noting that they clearly and unequivocally articulated the requirements for each partnership, the assessment team was satisfied with their suitability.

73. The university's self-assessment document states that any courses delivered through a validation arrangement are subject to the same development and approval processes as on-campus courses. The assessment team examined a validation report for the fashion and design courses delivered by a partner institution and was satisfied that its account of marketing, recruitment and admissions, course management, staffing and resources, learning, teaching and assessment, student experience and representation and graduate attributes and employability was thorough and appropriately critical. Senior academic staff were represented on the panel and, similar to internal validation events, external panel members were present. In the view of the team, the mapping of the university's regulations against those of the university partner evidenced a critical and thorough approach.

74. The assessment team also reviewed the processes in place to assure and enhance the academic standards of provision delivered in collaboration with a partner. The link tutor plays a key role in quality assuring and enhancing provision through regular monitoring and review of processes and resources and is responsible for completion of the annual monitoring review. The link tutor handbook was considered to provide suitable guidance for the role in that it presented a detailed and grounded account of responsibilities and necessary tasks. Documents relating to quality assurance were also examined. Reviews of two external examiner reports showed them to be equivalent to on-campus reports and evidenced satisfaction with academic standards. The assessment team noted that the examiners also made on-campus visits and met with students. Three annual monitoring reports presented a detailed account of course performance including required actions when needed. For example, these were actions to address a high number of exam failures and student absence or improving support for the completion of student projects. Two annual institutional reviews

produced by the link tutors were examined and they were a suitably critical summary of key quality assurance activities as well as programme performance. The reports highlight appropriate actions to address issues of concern such as curriculum content or percentage of fails. This demonstrates the efficacy of the quality enhancement processes. This evidence supports the assessment team's view that where the university works or proposes to work with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, the arrangements are based on a strategic approach, informed by the effective assessment of risk including the carrying out of due diligence and are subject to the same robust oversight and governance as the rest of the organisation's provision.

75.   Overall, the assessment team concluded that, because of the university's effective and robust governance and management structures as noted under A1.1 and A1.2, the university meets criterion A1.3. In the assessment team's view, when the university works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, it demonstrates robust governance processes through the Collaborative Provision Committee, review processes for potential partnerships and contractual arrangements. Its management of such opportunities through the link tutor, and operations guidance and quality monitoring and enhancement processes appear robust and effective with due consideration of risk. The university demonstrates considerable coherence in its strategic approach to partnerships.

76.   The assessment team concluded that the university has effective academic governance and management structures that demonstrate clear and appropriate lines of accountability. The university effectively engages students as partners in the academic governance and management of academic standards and quality.

77.   The assessment team also concluded that the university's academic governance demonstrates appropriate oversight to ensure that if it decides to work with other organisations, these arrangements will be led by a strategic approach and the management of such opportunities is robust and effective. It noted that many of these processes have been exercised securely during the previous three years as evidenced by the period of time associated with strategic and supporting documents, committee minutes, policy and reports. Therefore, the team concluded that the university meets criterion A1.

Assessment of DAPs criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks

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

79. The team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the university has in place transparent academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications. It also shows that the university maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves (and of subsequent changes to it). This 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.

80. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Criterion B1.1

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

81. The assessment team's view is that the university meets criterion B1.1 because there is evidence to show that it has in place transparent and comprehensive frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications.

82. The team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that the university meets the evidence requirements for B1.1.

Reasoning

83. The assessment team considered whether there is evidence to show that academic frameworks and regulations governing the university's higher education provision are appropriate and are implemented fully and consistently. The team reviewed the university's annual report on academic assurance for 2020-21 and 2012-22 which is an evaluation of the various quality assurance and review processes and data collected during the academic year. The reports are produced by each subcommittee of the Academic Committee and the team noted that each committee provided a comprehensive evaluation of the processes and regulations under their areas of responsibility and the evaluations demonstrated that the frameworks are applied consistently across the university. The report also provides confirmation to the Academic Committee and to the Board of Directors of the effectiveness of the university's processes and regulations to deliver, maintain, and enhance academic quality. The team found that evaluation of performance in the university's academic assurance processes is underpinned through the report by a comprehensive data set that provides a detailed review of academic quality. The team considered that there was no

evidence of any systemic issues within the academic assurance reports it reviewed. The team also considered that the quality assurance reports and annual review meetings provided evidence of compliance with processes and opportunities for continual improvement.

84.   The assessment team also considered whether there was evidence to demonstrate that the university had created one or more academic frameworks and regulations which will be appropriate for the granting of its own higher education qualifications. The team reviewed the university's academic regulations and policies which are available on the university's website. It noted that the assessment and course regulations encompass all stages of the students' life cycle. The regulations state the progression criteria at each level, the number of credits that students must pass at each level in order to progress, the minimum pass mark that students must attain for each assessment and the opportunities available to students for resitting failed credits. The regulations also set out the process for awarding credit for study away from the university, for example study abroad. The team considered that the regulations were comprehensive and appropriate for the courses offered by the university. The team was also satisfied that appropriate processes are in place for the review of these regulations. For example, the team noted that all regulations include the date of the most recent review and the date for the next review by the Academic Committee. The team also tested whether regulations and policies are subject to more continual review and noted that this was evidenced through the team's review of the university's annual reports on academic assurance and the review of a sample of four programme annual monitoring reports from 2022-23.

85.   The assessment team concluded that the university meets criterion B1.1 as the evidence demonstrates that the university has transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations, which govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications.

Conclusions

86.   The assessment team concluded that the university has in place comprehensive and transparent academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications. This is because the university has academic frameworks and regulations governing its higher education provision that are comprehensive and appropriate to its current status and are implemented fully and consistently.

Criterion B1.2

> **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

87.   The assessment team's view is that the university meets criterion B1.2. This is because the team was satisfied that there is sufficient evidence to show that the university maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves (and of subsequent

changes). This constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

88. The team's view is that the university's process of preparing, reviewing, finalising and amending qualifications is systematic, secure, highly structured and clearly documented and is applied consistently and robustly across all programmes.

89. The team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that the university meets the evidence requirements for B1.2.

Reasoning

90. To determine whether the university maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves (and of subsequent changes) that constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and the provision of records of study to students and alumni, the assessment team considered:

- the university's framework for course design

- the university's process for course amendments

- the university's process of making programme specifications available to current students and alumni.

91. The team considered whether there is evidence to show that there are definitive and up-to-date records of each qualification to be awarded and each programme offered and that these are being maintained. The assessment team also considered whether these records are used as the basis for the delivery and assessment of each programme and that there is evidence that students and alumni are provided with records of study. The team reviewed a sample of three course specifications from the current year together with the minutes of five of the most recent course (re)validation events. Both samples covered each of the overarching subject areas. The team also reviewed a sample of seven programmes in the university's programme validation tracker.

92. The university's regulations and policies set out the university's approach to course development and oversight and the process for amendments to courses once validated. The assessment team noted that the process of preparing, reviewing, finalising and amending qualifications is systematic, secure, highly structured and clearly documented. All changes must be reviewed and approved by the course and module amendment panel, which is a subcommittee of the Quality Committee.

93. The assessment team noted that course specifications, which details what the university agrees to provide in the offering of the course and outlines the expectations on the student, are kept for all courses and are available to staff, students, alumni and external members via the university's web pages. A sample of three course specifications were reviewed by the team and found that all were up-to-date, comprehensive and written in a clear and easily understood way. The team was satisfied that these are a definitive record of qualifications offered and followed the university's standard template. The team noted that the course specifications include:

- a summary of the course

- learning outcomes

- approaches to teaching and assessment

- assessment and progression regulations, including the criteria for awards available to students who have not passed enough credits to obtain full degree

- details of learning, development and wellbeing support.

94. Courses are revalidated every five years, and the university maintains a validation tracker with revalidation dates for each course. To check for completeness, the assessment team reviewed a sample of seven programmes against the tracker and found that four of the seven programmes sampled were reconciled to the tracker. Three of the programmes selected were not included on the tracker and the team queried this omission with the university. The university explained that the courses were not included on the tracker because they were all new courses and the documentation from the validation events was still to be finalised. The university confirmed that once the documentation is finalised, the tracker will be updated. This assured the team that the university maintains an accurate record of its courses.

95. The assessment team therefore concluded that the university meets criterion B1.2 as the evidence demonstrated that the university maintains a definite record of each programme and qualification that it approves.

Conclusions

96. The assessment team concluded that definitive and up-to-date records of each qualification to be awarded and each programme being offered by the university are being maintained. It also concluded that these records are used as the basis for the delivery and assessment of each programme and there is evidence that students and alumni are provided with records of study.

97. The sample of course specifications reviewed confirmed that course documentation is up to date. The review of the university's webpages by the assessment team also gave assurances that course information is available and easily accessible to students and alumni. The review of the course validation events confirmed that courses are being regularly reviewed and records are updated following each review.

98. In addition, the team noted that many of the university's quality assurance processes have been exercised securely during the previous three years as evidenced by the university's academic regulation and policies, reports, course specifications, minutes and programme documents.

99. Therefore, the assessment team concluded that the university meets criterion B1.

Criterion B2: Academic standards

Advice to the OfS

100. The assessment team's view is that the university meets criterion B2: Academic standards and quality assurance, because it meets sub criteria B2.1 and B2.2.

101. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that the university has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications. It also demonstrates that it can design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). The standards that it sets and maintains above the threshold are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

102. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Criterion B2.1

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

103. The assessment team's view is that the university meets criterion B2.1 because it has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications.

104. The team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that the university has met the evidence requirements for B2.1.

Reasoning

105. To determine whether the university has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications, the assessment team examined the university's course design framework, academic regulations 2023-24, and the assessment framework. The team also reviewed a sample of seven course specifications from the current academic year and a sample of ten external examiner reports, from undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

106. The university's course design framework and the academic regulations set out the university's overall approach for the design, approval, monitoring and review of its higher education courses. The team found that the documents set out the processes for course (re)validation, annual course monitoring, and course and module amendments and refer to compliance with external quality benchmarks and the university's assessment framework. For example, the course design framework explicitly states that all assessments must align to the FHEQ, relevant subject benchmarks and Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements. The team was satisfied from this review that the academic regulations and course design framework clearly define the mechanisms for setting and maintaining threshold academic standards of the university's higher education standards. For example, the academic regulations set out the minimum requirements for membership of a re(validation) panel, the roles of the different members, and the timeframes for when validations should be undertaken.

107. The assessment team tested whether mechanisms for ensuring higher education qualifications offered at the relevant levels of the FHEQ are consistently applied. The team reviewed the university's course outcomes matrix, the previously mentioned sample of course specifications from the current academic year and a sample of ten external examiner reports, from undergraduate and postgraduate courses across the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years. The team found that the course outcomes matrix sets out the university's agreed set of course learning outcomes and details the skills and learning that students will have achieved on completion of their course. The team considered that the outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptors at levels 3 to 7 of the FHEQ. The outcomes are also mapped to the university's 'Hallmark pedagogy' graduate attributes.

108. The assessment team noted from the sample of course specifications that course and module learning outcomes are aligned to the university's learning outcomes set out in the matrix. Tables that map module learning outcomes to course learning outcomes clearly identify how module learning outcomes correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ. These mapping tables are included within each course specification document. The sample of external examiner reports considered by the assessment team covering the academic years 2021-22 and 2020-21 also demonstrated that courses are delivered and assessed in line with the relevant levels of the FHEQ. The team was therefore assured that course content and structures enable students to effectively demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours acquired at each level.

109. Overall, the assessment team formed the view that the university's higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ and the mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards are consistently applied.

110. The university's academic regulations and framework for quality assurance identify external reference points, independent points of expertise, and student voice, which should be considered in the setting and maintaining of academic standards. The assessment team noted that the university's regulations clearly set out the minimum requirements for the composition of review panels, (re)validation panels and membership of committees with quality oversight and enhancement responsibilities. The regulations also stipulate the requirements for external points of reference and student representation. For example, students and/or representatives from the student union are members of the Academic Committee and all of the Committee's subcommittees. The regulations stipulate that at least two members of a (re)validation panel must be external to the university. The assessment team was therefore satisfied that there is appropriate representation of external points of reference and external and independent points of expertise, including students.

111. To test whether external reference points and independent points of expertise had in practice been considered in the setting and maintaining of academic standards, the assessment team reviewed a sample of course specifications from the current academic year and a sample of ten external examiner reports across the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years. The assessment team was satisfied that external reference points and independent points of expertise had in practice been considered. For example, the course specifications reviewed included a course mapping table that aligned to the relevant levels of the FHEQ. In addition, the team noted that the external examiner reports demonstrated how recommendations from previous years external examiner reports had been acted upon.

112. The assessment team concluded that the university meets criterion B2.1 as the evidence shows that the university has clear mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications, and that these are consistently applied.

Conclusions

113. The assessment team concluded that the university has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications.

114. The university has in place a comprehensive framework for course design, approval, monitoring and review of its higher education courses and the assessment team was satisfied that this provides the appropriate mechanisms to ensure that its higher education standards are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ. This was evidenced by the university's assessment framework, which stipulates that all assessments must align to the FHEQ and relevant subject benchmarks and PSRBs.

115. In addition, membership requirements of course (re)validation panels and academic committees with programme quality oversight are clearly articulated within the university's regulations. The review of the course (re)validation events and the review of the Academic Committee minutes further confirmed that that the correct process is being followed.

116. The sample of course specifications and external examiner reports further confirmed that higher education qualifications correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ.

Criterion B2.2

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 Framework 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

117. The assessment team's view is that the university meets criterion B2.2. This is because the university has demonstrated that it is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ. It has also demonstrated that the standards that it sets and maintains above the threshold are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

118. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that the university has met the evidence requirements for B2.2.

Reasoning

119. To determine whether the university designs and delivers courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ and that the standards that it

sets and maintains above the threshold are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies, the assessment team reviewed:

- the university's academic regulations

- the university's course design framework

- the university's assessment framework

- a sample of seven course specifications from the current academic year

- a sample of five of the most recent course (re)validation reports from across the university's main provision

- the university's course revalidation tracker

- a sample of external examiner reports from undergraduate and postgraduate courses from 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years

- the annual reports on academic assurance for 2020-21 and 2021-22.

120. The university's academic regulations and course design framework set out the university's overall approach for the design, approval, monitoring and review of its higher education courses. Based on its experience and expertise, the assessment team was satisfied that this framework is comprehensive and comparable with other institutions across the sector. To test whether the academic standards are applied consistently at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with the university's own academic frameworks and regulations, the assessment team examined a sample of seven course specifications from the current year, a sample of five of the most recent course (re)validation reports from across the university's main provision, and the course revalidation tracker. The assessment team was satisfied that academic standards are applied consistently at a level that meets the UK threshold standard. For example, all of the course specifications reviewed were aligned to the threshold standards.

121. The assessment team noted that the academic regulations clearly articulate the policies relating to student progression and award for levels 3 to 7 of the FHEQ and set out the procedures for programme and module development. The team found that the programme and module development procedures require all learning outcomes to be mapped to university's learning outcomes which map to the different award levels of the FHEQ, as previously discussed under criterion B2.1. The team also noted that the requirement for assessments to be aligned with the FHEQ is stated as a principle within the university's assessment framework.

122. To assess whether credit and qualifications are only awarded where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment, and both the UK threshold standards and the academic standards of the relevant degree awarding body have been satisfied, the assessment team reviewed:

- a sample of five of the most recent course (re)validation reports from across the university's main provision

- a sample of external examiner reports from undergraduate and postgraduate courses from the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years

- the university's annual reports on academic assurance for 2020-21 and 2021-22

- two moderation reports from undergraduate courses

- two moderation reports from post-graduate courses

- a sample of assessed student assignments, respective assignment briefs and marking guidance.

123. The sample of assessed student assignments included one assessed assignment per programme for undergraduate and postgraduate levels, as well as two examples of assessed student work for each grade banding across a selection of programmes. In total, the team reviewed 50 assignments.

124. The (re)validation reports provided evidence that, as part of the review process, learning outcomes are revalidated against the different award levels of the FHEQ. The review of the external examiner's reports provided external assurance that assessments are set at the appropriate level and that marking schemes and criteria have been appropriately applied.

125. The review of assignment briefs demonstrated that the university has adopted an assessment strategy which is both employability focused and grounded in the theoretical basis of the respective discipline. The marking criteria are transparent, and the markers were able to show the student how their marks were awarded. In the majority of cases, the university follows its own assessment guidance, and the mark awarded was appropriate. However, in 10 of the 50 student marked assignments that were reviewed, all at postgraduate level, it was noted that the mark awarded was 5-15 per cent higher than the assessment team would have expected. For example, a Level 7 marked assessment for MA User Experience Design was awarded a grade of 90 per cent when the assessment team member would have awarded a mark of approximately 80 per cent. Similarly, a Level 7 marked assessment for MA Entrepreneurship received a grade of 66 per cent when the assessment team member would have awarded a grade 6 per cent lower.

126. The assessment team tested the processes which ensure that the grades awarded are appropriate. It reviewed the sample of four moderation reports and considered evidence of the second marking of assignments as well as processes in place to resolve discrepancies. For example, in relation to the postgraduate marking and moderation assignment sheet and postgraduate moderation for MKT7C4 Digital Marketing Data Analysis module, there was evidence that a named second marker had also assessed the work. Typically, there was agreement on the mark awarded and where there was a discrepancy, this was resolved with an agreed mark. The moderation documentation also presented summary statistics on the degree of concordance between first and second markers which would enable monitoring of second marking. The assessment team also reviewed all external examiner reports. These reports demonstrate that the examiners are able to determine how marks were awarded, that the standard of student work is comparable with those in other institutions and that standards set were suitable for the award. The external examiner reports did not indicate that there were any consistent issues with accurate award of grades. The assessment team therefore determined that they have confidence in the university's moderation and quality assurance

processes. The small number of higher-than-expected grades were not considered to reflect a systemic issue with the accuracy of marking at the university.

127. From this review, the assessment team formed the view that credit and qualifications are only awarded where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment, and both the UK threshold standards and the academic standards of relevant degree awarding body have been satisfied.

128. To test whether the university's approval, monitoring and review arrangements are robust, applied consistently and explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved, and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree awarding body are being maintained, the assessment team reviewed:

- a sample of seven course specifications from the current academic year

- a sample of five of the most recent course (re)validation reports from across the university's main provision

- a sample of four of the most recent annual programme review reports from across the university's main provision

- a sample of external examiner reports from undergraduate and postgraduate courses (five from 2021-22 and five from 2022-23)

- the university's (re)validation programme tracker

- the university's annual reports on academic assurance for 2020-21 and 2021-22.

129. The academic regulations and policies set out the framework for approval, monitoring and review arrangements and the assessment team was satisfied that the academic regulations provide a robust framework for ensuring academic standards are achieved and maintained. Annual programme reviews must be undertaken for all programmes and this process encompasses a review of the full student lifecycle from application to progression and final award. The process of annual review is guided by a standard set of questions, one of which asks the programme team to reflect on the academic standards of the course compared to national frameworks as well as to comparable provisions at other higher education institutions. The assessment team reviewed a sample of four annual programme review reports which provided evidence of a robust data driven process applied consistently across programmes. There is a set format for annual reports and for the annual programme review reports. The assessment team was satisfied that the format and procedure was being applied consistently.

130. The assessment team noted that external examiner reports include a requirement for examiners to confirm that academic standards align with the FHEQ. From the review of the sample of reports, it was clear that examiners were satisfied with standards being met and no systemic issues were indicated within the process.

131. The university's academic regulations and policy sets out that programmes should be revalidated every five years, and a central record is maintained of programme revalidation dates in a programme tracker. To test whether the central record of (re)validations is up to

date and complete, the assessment team selected a random sample of five programmes: BA (Hons) Business and Finance, BA (Hons) Fashion Design, BSc (Hons) Philosophy, Politics and Economics, MA Enterprise, MSc Finance and Investment). Validation reports for the five programmes selected were reviewed and these demonstrated that the validation process is adhered to.

132. The team also considered that all annual programme reports, as discussed under criterion B1, are scrutinised by the Academic Committee. The assessment team reviewed the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 annual reports on academic assurance and was satisfied that this process was being adhered to. The annual report on academic assurance is a summary of activity in the year and include a summary of the key findings or themes from annual programme reviews.

133. The university's regulations and policies require external input for programme design, (re)validation, and ongoing review. The university's academic regulations stipulate that external panel members for course (re)validations are proposed by the programme team and must be approved by the quality team, which is separate from the programme team. In addition to offering its own degrees, the university offers a selection of courses validated by external accreditation agencies. For example, the university's School of English Language courses are validated by the British Council for the Teaching of English Language in the UK. For these external courses, the assessment team was satisfied that the university operates robust systems of preliminary review for the institution or a course prior to any final accreditation or validation event. The preliminary review outcomes are reported to the external validating authority before proceeding to final accreditation or validation, whichever is applicable. Courses that are externally validated must follow the processes laid out by the validating body.

134. To test whether the mechanisms for ensuring that the university makes appropriate use of external and independent expertise in establishing and then maintaining threshold and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications, the assessment team reviewed:

- a sample of five of the most recent course (re)validation reports from across the university's main provision

- a sample of external examiner reports from undergraduate and postgraduate courses across the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years.

135. The assessment team noted that the (re)validation reports demonstrated active engagement with external input and the external examiner reports demonstrate rigorous scrutiny of courses.

136. The assessment team concluded that the university meets criterion B2.2 as the evidence demonstrates that the university can design and deliver programmes and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ, in line with sector-recognised standards.

Conclusions

137. The assessment team concluded that the university has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its qualifications. It designs and delivers courses and qualifications that meet sector-recognised standards, and the FHEQ.

138. The assessment team was satisfied that the course approval arrangements the university had in place were robust and applied consistently. It further concluded that the university sets and maintains standards that meet the threshold academic standards, which are reliable over time as reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

139. The team noted that many of the university's processes for setting and maintaining academic standards have been exercised securely during the previous three years. This is evidenced by the university's published academic regulations, academic framework, course design framework, course specifications, assessment framework, external examiner reports and the university's course revalidation tracker.

140. Therefore, the assessment team concluded that the university meets criterion B2.

Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience

141. The assessment team's view is that the university meets criterion B3: Academic Standards and Quality Assurance, because it meets sub criteria B3.1.

142. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that the university can demonstrate it is 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, and that learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously assured.

143. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Criterion B3.1

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

144. The assessment team's view is that the university meets criterion B3.1, because it is 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 and that learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured.

145. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence that shows the university meets the evidence requirements for B3.1.

Reasoning

The design and approval of programmes

146. The assessment team was satisfied that the university has clear and robust processes for the design, development and approval of programmes. Curriculum design is informed by the university's Hallmark Pedagogy. This is a statement of principles which describe the university's approach to teaching and learning. The university's curriculum model brings coherence to programme design by articulating three common building blocks which must be embedded into new course design. These three blocks are subject core, special electives, and industry and entrepreneurship. The assessment team noted that the model is clearly articulated and well informed.

147. The assessment team examined the university's new course design process approved by the LTSEC in April 2023. The process articulates the steps to be taken for course design and who should be involved at each of the seven stages in the process. The process is clearly articulated and, in the assessment team's opinion, the process is appropriate. It is clear there is strength and depth of experience of the course design team, which the university mandates must be involved in the process. The process documentation states that the design team should include external and internal stakeholders throughout the process, and that these stakeholders must be supported by educational developers and learning experience designers. The process also stipulates that a dedicated 'critical friend' should be appointed to work with the course design team to give critical and constructive feedback.

148. The assessment team tested the consistency of the design and development of programmes and reviewed a sample of seven course specifications for the academic year 2023-24. The specifications all followed a consistent format; the three common building blocks were clearly embedded within the courses, and it was clear in the course documentation that the Hallmark Pedagogy had guided the course design. For example, within course specifications the university's graduate attributes are stated with a clear articulation of how these align to the programme of study.

149. To test the effectiveness and robustness of the course (re)validation, the assessment team examined the minutes of five of the most recent (re)validation events for courses across the main provision. All events were chaired by the provost, and the members of the committee included at least two external people, the course team, and the university's quality team. On reviewing the minutes of the (re)validation events, the assessment team was satisfied that the (re)validation process is comprehensive and robust. This is based on the review of minutes which provided evidence that, at (re)validation, there is scrutiny of the design of the courses and how students are supported through the lifecycle of the course. The issues raised in validation events are monitored and tracked to satisfactory completion by programme teams and are incorporated into programme action plans, which are monitored as part of the programme annual review process.

150. The course design process articulates the process in detail, including the membership of the course design team, the roles and responsibilities of each member and the outputs expected at each stage of the process. Embedded within the documents are references to further guidance. For example, at the point of curriculum design the design teams are referred to the university's curriculum model. This articulates the three common building blocks which must be embedded into new course development. The academic job descriptions clearly articulate the expectations of an academic staff member at each grade for module and course design. Through this review the assessment team was satisfied that appropriate guidance and support is available to relevant staff on the process and their responsibilities. The review undertaken was a desk-based review and therefore it was not possible for the assessment team to test explicitly whether staff felt informed of the process. However, a review of the (re)validation documents indicates that the process is robust and working smoothly. The assessment team did not note any review points that indicated systemic issues with the process.

151. The assessment team noted that the university has a clearly articulated academic governance structure for the approval of new programmes. The terms of reference for the Quality Committee demonstrated its role in maintaining oversight for accreditation and (re)validation processes, ensuring that the requirements of PSRBs are met, and approving and overseeing external examiner appointments. Examination of job descriptions evidenced the roles and responsibilities within the senior management structure for the design and approval of programmes. The provost's group, which maintains oversight of academic content, manages the Directors (content and people) who oversee new course developments, (re)validation and ensure that teaching is delivered as specified. Course and module leader job descriptors demonstrate clear accountabilities for annual monitoring report completion and responding to external examiners. The assessment team's scrutiny of the (re)validation event minutes provided evidence of issues raised in validation events being monitored and tracked to satisfactory completion by course teams (lead by course leaders), through the course annual monitoring process.

152. The university's self-assessment document cited a specific example of how the process for the new curriculum was implemented and the evidence provided by the university demonstrated that the processes are understood and followed at the university. The assessment team noted the agility of the governance processes during the implementation of the new curriculum, where LTSEC held additional meetings to ensure effective implementation of the curriculum.

153. The university's approach to course design is structured by a standard course design process and Directors (content) maintain oversight of new developments. Courses themselves have a standardised structure with a common curriculum architecture, common learning outcomes, and graduate attributes that determine the structure of each qualification. The common curriculum architecture articulates three common building blocks which must be embedded into new course design. These three blocks are subject core, special electives, and industry and entrepreneurship. The assessment team were satisfied that the model provides appropriate guidance to ensure coherence of courses.

154. The assessment team noted that one of guiding principles of the university's process for course design is that the process should be collaborative, iterative and agile, involving multiple stakeholders from the across the university. Learning support services are one of the

stakeholders listed and contributions from across different departments will highlight issues that need to be addressed by support services. (Re)validation events include a meeting with service delivery teams, such as the library, IT services, the careers team, student support and welfare. The assessment team examined a sample of five of the most recent validation events for courses across the main provision and was satisfied that the process for course design was being followed. A sample of seven course specifications for the academic year 2023-24 was also reviewed. Course specifications include a detailed description of the support provided by the learning support services team. The assessment team noted that there is a section within the course specification document which requires course teams to articulate course specific learning support in addition to outlining more general support that is available to all students. From this review, there was evidence of programme teams and learning support working collaboratively to design this support.

155. The assessment team concluded that the university has a robust framework for the design, development and approval of courses. The approach to course development is structured by a standard course design process (approved by the Academic Committee in July 2022) and ensures coherence of courses. The assessment team examined the minutes of the Academic Committee (the committee has overall responsibility for academic development and standards, and the student experience), job descriptors, course specifications and minutes of course (re)validation events. It found that the framework is embedded into the operations of the university and relevant staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and are given appropriate guidance and support.

156. The course design process (approved by the Academic Committee in July 2022) sets out the steps that design teams must follow when designing new courses, and the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the design and (re)approval process. Examination of the course design process evidenced that roles and responsibilities are clearly articulated, the appropriate use of external expertise, and the integration of learning support services in the design and (re)approval processes.

157. The assessment team concluded that the university's approach to the design and approval of courses contributes to a high-quality experience for students, irrespective of their background.

Learning and teaching

158. The learning, teaching and assessment strategy 2023-2025 (approved by the Academic Committee in November 2023) is the overarching strategy for the Hallmark Pedagogy, the university's curriculum model and graduate attributes. The assessment team noted that there was clear alignment between the learning, teaching and assessment strategy and the university's broader strategy and vision. For example, it is explicitly stated in the learning, teaching and assessment strategy that the strategy is informed by the broader university strategy. The learning and teaching priorities align with the aspirational graduate attributes that are articulated in the broader strategy. Both documents were written in a clear and accessible way and were available on the university's website. The assessment team found that navigation to the document is intuitive. The Hallmark Pedagogy, the university's curriculum model, and graduate attributes underpin all course design and provides evidence of implementation of the strategy.

159. To test that the university maintains physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promote dignity, courtesy and respect in their

use, the assessment team firstly reviewed the university's policies and regulations to ensure that the university has an appropriate governance framework in place. A review of the terms of reference of the LTSEC confirmed that this committee has a clear accountability for the safeguarding of students. There was a comprehensive set of up-to-date policies in this area: the Safeguarding and Managing Student Risk Policy outlines the procedure ensuring a safe physical environment and the Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy outlines the procedures in place to promote dignity, courtesy and respect. These are supported by code of conduct, smoking and vaping, IT acceptable use, and safeguarding documents. To test whether these policies are monitored, the assessment team examined the annual academic assurance reports for 2020-21 and 2021-22. This demonstrates that policies are monitored and reviewed by the Academic Committee and then reported to the Board of Directors, which is appropriate and in accordance with the university's monitoring arrangements. To test whether these policies are embedded within day-to-day operations, the assessment team considered the minutes from the February 2023 course panel meeting. The course panel meeting is a termly meeting where student representatives provide feedback on their course of study to the academic teams. Students share feedback on topics such as facilities, learning resources and non-academic student support, and provide live examples to support their views. This evidence shows that the health and wellbeing of students is considered in line with the relevant policies and the assessment team noted that there was nothing to indicate any systemic issues in these areas.

160. The university does not offer any exclusively online courses and therefore the team did not evaluate whether arrangements for students studying at a distance are robust. The team did note that the virtual learning environment provides appropriate support to students who may have to study 'off campus' from time to time.

161. The assessment team noted that the university's frameworks for course and module design enable students to monitor their progress and further their academic development because of the following elements. The university's assessment strategy includes clear advice to academic staff on the value of formative assessment tasks in supporting academic development. The strategy mandates that all assessment tasks have a formative element that feed directly into the final summative task. The university's module development process emphasises the role of assessment strategy in student development. To monitor progress on their course of study, the university has introduced an app which enables students to easily see their module marks and attendance. Students are provided with support from academic and professional staff for their academic development. For example, all students have an allocated academic supervisor for the duration of their studies and have access to academic skills staff. The assessment team noted that this is clearly signposted to students on the university's webpages. To triangulate the evidence that processes are consistently followed and embedded within practice, National Student Survey (NSS) data was considered. The 2023 NSS results reported that 85 per cent of students surveyed that they agree that 'feedback helps improve their work'. 91 per cent of students answered positively to the question 'how easy was it to contact teaching staff when you needed to?'.

162. The assessment team concluded that the university has a well-developed teaching and learning strategy, which is aligned to the university's broader vision and strategy. Examination of the university's Hallmark Pedagogy model, common curriculum model, and academic policies and regulation evidenced that the teaching and learning strategy is demonstrably the overarching strategy for the university.

163. Examination of the teaching and learning strategy and the associated policies, regulations and frameworks evidenced that the university provides a safe, accessible and reliable environment for every student, where they are able to monitor their individual progress and further their academic development.

164. The assessment team concluded that the university's approach to the learning and teaching of its courses delivers a high-quality experience for students and that learning opportunities are consistently and robustly quality assured.

Assessment

165. To test whether the university operates valid and reliable processes of assessment, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification sought, the assessment team reviewed the university's policies and regulations. For example, the assessment and course regulations include a clear framework for assessment and course progression. The admissions policy provides a clear process for the recognition of prior knowledge. These policies are published on the university's webpages and the assessment team was satisfied that these are written in a clear and easily understood way and navigation to the policies and regulations is intuitive. The assessment and courses regulations provide detailed guidelines for the marking and moderation of assessments and articulate the role of markers and moderators. The assessment team, based on its experience and expertise, was satisfied that this provides a comprehensive framework for assessment and progression.

166. To test whether the processes of assessment enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes, a sample of external examiner reports from undergraduate and postgraduate courses (five from 2021-22 and five from 2022-23) were examined. The reports confirmed that the processes articulated in the framework were being applied appropriately by the course and module teams. To triangulate these findings, the assessment team reviewed the 2023 NSS results and the Teaching and Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023. The 2023 NSS results reported that 91 per cent of students surveyed agree that assessments 'allow you to demonstrate what you have learned'. In the 2023 student TEF submission, students reported the clarity of assessment briefs and marking criteria as a strength.

167. The assessment team found that opportunities exist at multiple levels for staff and students to engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made. The assessment framework, which the university stipulates must be followed by staff without exception, provides a structure for staff and students to engage in dialogue. The assessment framework sets out the principles of good assessment practice. This emphasises the importance of working with students where possible when designing assessment and in developing students' understanding of the purpose and processes of assessments early in the learning process. Formative feedback opportunities are offered for all summative assessments and an interactive assessment cover sheet, where students reflect on the feedback, closes the feedback loop. The use of exemplars is also promoted by the university's assessment framework. Course panels provide formal opportunities for students to engage in dialogue each term. The university's standardised approach to providing feedback offers formative assessment which builds literacy and supports reflection.

168. To triangulate whether the assessment framework and opportunities for dialogue are consistently followed in practice, the assessment team sought collaborative evidence from the university's NSS results, the 2023 student TEF submission and the minutes from the February 2023 course panel meetings (held termly). In the 2023 NSS, 83 per cent of students answered positively to question 10 'how clear were the marking criteria used to assess your work?' and 86 per cent of students answered positively to question 11 'how fair has the marking and assessment been on your course?' These results compare favourably to the sector average of 78 per cent and 81 per cent respectively. From reviewing the 2023 student TEF submission, students reported that assessment briefs and marking criteria have been clear and structured, assessment feedback is clearly structured, and lecturers give sufficient time for clarification of feedback on assessments, if needed. Students also reported that lecturers are proactive in asking whether students have questions.

169. As noted under criterion B2.2, the assessment team also examined a sample of assessed assignments, respective assignment briefs and marking guidance. The sample included one assessed assignment per programme for undergraduate and postgraduate levels as well as two examples of assessed student work for each grade banding across a selection of programmes (50 assignments in total). The assessment team noted that the feedback provided on assessed feedback was typically constructive and clearly explained why the mark awarded was appropriate. Guidance on how to improve the work was also provided and the tone was often warm and supportive. However, there were some inconsistencies in the depth of feedback, such as some markers annotated the assignment script while others only provided summary feedback, and at times more detail could have been provided. In some cases, feedback of a greater depth and detail was required. For example, in relation to a Level 7 finance and investment student marked assessment that earned a mark of 55, the marker could have provided more guidance on how the assignment could have been improved. Similarly, in relation to a Level 7 international business student marked assessment that earned a mark of 54, the student could have been directed to guidance to help them improve their referencing. The assessment team considered that on balance, the feedback provided within the sample was constructive and appropriate.

170. From this review, the assessment team was satisfied that there are sufficient opportunities for staff and students to engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made.

171. The assessment team noted that students are provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice for the following reasons. The undergraduate core common curriculum is underpinned by three themes: subject core; special electives; and entrepreneurship modules. The assessment team found that academic skills are a key element of the subject core theme and there is clear progression through the years of study. All undergraduate students study a learning perspectives module in their first year (Level 4) which introduces them to the university's pedagogic approach and focuses on key academic skills. This includes critical argument and reflection and encourages students to explore these in the context of their own programme of study. The university's assessment framework mandates that all summative assessments (undergraduate and postgraduate) have a formative element. This provides students with the opportunity to develop and practice skills and gain feedback on their work in preparation for their final assessments. Beyond 'core module' support, the university's academic skills team

provide one-to-one support to students and this is clearly advertised on the university webpages.

172. The assessment team further reviewed evidence relating to the processes in place for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice. It noted that the university's academic regulations include a policy on academic misconduct, which details the university's approach to suspected cases of unacceptable academic practice. The policy differentiates between what constitutes academic misconduct and poor academic practice. The assessment team examined the full policy and found it is comprehensive. It gives clear guidance to staff and students in terms of what is acceptable and unacceptable practice, and the processes to be followed when academic misconduct is suspected. Roles and responsibilities are articulated clearly in the policy. Academic skills training is embedded within the curriculum at all levels and additional support is offered by the library to build academic skills. The terms of reference for Academic Committee were reviewed and it was clear that the role of the Academic Committee includes oversight of student casework activity related to complaints, academic appeals, and extenuating circumstances claims, and to take action as necessary for continuous improvement.

173. The university's academic regulations (assessment and course regulations) clearly articulate the process for the marking and moderation of assessments and the responsibilities of those involved in the process. The assessment team examined the regulations and found that these are clearly written, comprehensive and consistent with practice across the sector. To test whether the processes are applied consistently in practice, the assessment team reviewed the 2023 NSS and a sample of external examiner reports from undergraduate and postgraduate courses (five from 2021-22 and five from 2022-23). In the 2023 NSS survey, 86 per cent of students answered positively to question 11 'how fair has the marking and assessment been on your course?'. This compares with the sector average of 81 per cent. The sample of external examiner reports confirmed that processes are being applied appropriately and consistently by those involved.

174. The assessment team concluded that the university has a robust framework of assessment that enables every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved learning outcomes for the relevant credit or qualification. The assessment team was satisfied that this process is rigorously enforced. Examination of the university assessment framework demonstrated that processes are in place to ensure that students are aware of how they will be assessed. This includes, where appropriate, opportunities for students to co-construct assessments with staff. The examination of NSS results, 2023 TEF submission, and a sample of external examiner reports shows that the framework is embedded within practice and is working effectively. The framework also includes robust processes for marking and moderation, through an examination of external examiner reports, 2023 NSS data and the 2023 student staff submission. The assessment team was satisfied that these processes are working effectively.

175. The assessment team concluded that the university's approach to assessment is effective, clearly articulated, consistently applied and contributes to a high quality academic experience for students, irrespective of their background.

External examining

176. The assessment team considered whether there is evidence to show that the university makes scrupulous use of external examiners, including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work. The team reviewed the process for the appointment of external examiners to ensure that examiners have the right skills and experience and that safeguards are in place to ensure their independence. The scope of their work was also examined. The university's regulations and policies were reviewed which showed that these include a clearly documented governance structure for the appointment of external examiners. The regulations also articulate the role of external examiners within the university. This role covers all aspects of the assessment process including the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work, which external examiners are asked to report against. There are clearly articulated rules about eligibility for appointment as external examiner to guard against conflicts of interest. These include rules relating to previous appointments, previous incumbents and close professional or personal relationships. All nomination forms must be approved by a director (content) before initial approval by the associate provost and final university approval by the head of registry. All external examiners, once approved, are provided with key information, including the outgoing external examiners reports and invited to attend an induction. To test whether these processes are being followed consistently in practice, the assessment team examined a sample of external examiner reports from undergraduate and postgraduate courses (five from 2021-22 and five from 2022-23). This review demonstrated a high level of engagement with the process. The content of reports was examined and this demonstrated that there are no systemic issues that appear to be undermining the student experience or the effectiveness of external examining. External examiners' reports follow a standard format and the assessment team noted the reports go beyond a 'yes/no' tick box exercise to confirm compliance with process. External examiners are asked to provide explanations to support their evaluation as to whether processes have been adhered to or relevant standards met. The review of the sample of reports provided evidence that external examiners' reports are of a sufficient depth to add value to the quality assurance processes.

177. The assessment team also considered whether there is evidence that demonstrates that the university gives full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examiners' reports and provides external examiners with a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations. The assessment team found that comments and recommendations from external examiners' reports are considered in programme annual monitoring reports. A summary of reports is also examined by the Quality Committee. As such, the assessment team was satisfied that the external examiners' reports contribute to governance and quality assurance reports. A sample of annual monitoring reports were reviewed and these included a section where the course teams reflect on the feedback within the reports and identify action points as appropriate. From the review, the assessment team was satisfied that serious consideration is given by the teaching teams to the comments in the external examiners' reports. For example, in the 2021-22 annual monitoring report for BA International Business all comments made by external examiners on the course were included in the report and the team made specific reference to how suggestions would be acted upon. In the report, one external examiner had identified that students would benefit from more support for critical writing and the course team identified the need to remind students of the support provided by the skills support team. The academic assurance reports for 2020-21 and 2021-22 were also examined. Both reports included a

summary of the key themes and summaries of the actions the university has taken and will take in response to these themes. The university regulations state that directors (content) and/or course leaders or their equivalents, in consultation with members of the teaching team, should produce written feedback to external examiners within one month of any issues being raised in their reports. To test whether this process was being followed, the assessment team reviewed a sample of reports from external examiners who were in the final year of their appointment. The team noted a section that asks for feedback from the examiners on their overall experiences of working with the university. This review provided evidence that external examiners felt that their opinions were valued, they were partners in the quality assurance processes of the university, and they felt that any recommendations were given serious consideration by course teams and acted upon as appropriate. The review found that there are no systemic issues with the process.

178. The assessment team was satisfied that the university makes scrupulous use of external examiners, including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work. The university's governance structure for the appointment of external examiners was reviewed and this showed that there is a robust process in place. The assessment team further examined a sample of external examiners' reports and the annual quality assurance reports presented to the Academic Committee. These demonstrate that comments feed into both governance and quality assurance procedures and that the university gives serious consideration to external examiners' recommendations.

179. The assessment team concluded that the university's approach to external examining contributes to a high-quality academic experience for students and that learning opportunities are consistently and robustly quality assured.

Academic appeals and student complaints

180. The assessment team considered whether there is evidence to show that the university has effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of the academic experience and whether these procedures are fair, accessible and timely and enable enhancement. The team reviewed the university's students' complaints policy, approved by the Academic Committee in May 2022. The policy outlines effective procedures for the handling of academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of the academic experience. The academic appeals and complaints process is a clearly documented process and is written in a clear and accessible way. The policy is publicly available on the university's webpages and the assessment team was satisfied that navigation to the policy is intuitive. The policy provides guidance for individual and group complaints and timescales for students to be able to make complaints. The team noted that the response times were comparable with sector averages. Overall, the assessment team found that the appeals and complaints policies and procedures are fair. The university's appeals and complaints process has three stages: stage one is a department-led 'informal stage'; stages two and three are 'formal stages' managed by the student academic quality team. All complaints (even informal complaints) are logged centrally with student support.

181. To test for evidence that the complaints procedures enable enhancement to the student experience, the assessment team examined the annual academic assurance reports for 2020-21 and 2021-22. In both reports, there was a section focused on complaints, monitoring the levels of complaints and underlying trends of the number of complaints. For example, in

the 2021-22 report, the level of complaints and appeals (including complaints to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator) for the current and previous three years were reported and analysed. There was a lack of evidence presented to show that reasons for complaints were monitored to inform enhancements to the student experience. The assessment team considered the impact of this and found that, given the depth of evidence in other areas, for example the course Annual Monitoring Reports that demonstrate a culture of continuous improvement, this does not negatively impact achievement of this criterion.

182. To determine whether appropriate action is taken following an appeal or complaint, the assessment team reviewed the number of complaints received at each of the three stages in the process (informal complaint, formal complaint and appeal). The appeals or complaints process is sequential, i.e. the first stage of any appeal is the informal stage. If the complaint is not satisfactory, the appeal or complaint will progress to the second phase and to the final stage. A fall in the number of appeals and complaints at each stage is an indication of appropriate action being taken. The complaints are monitored by the Quality Committee and are reported to the Academic Committee. The number of complaints falls significantly at each stage, for example in 2021-22, 20 per cent of complaints reached the appeal stage. The number of matters reported as being referred to the OIA in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 academic assurance reports has been stable and very low (about three per year) for the last five years. In 2021-22, of the matters referred, the university report that one was withdrawn, one was not upheld, and one is outstanding. The assessment team was satisfied from this review that appropriate action is taken following an appeal or complaint.

183. The assessment team was satisfied that regulations for complaints and appeals are clearly documented and accessible, and appropriate action is taken by the university following an appeal or complaint. The assessment team therefore concluded that the university's approach to academic appeals and student complaints contributes to a high-quality academic experience for students and that learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured.

Conclusions

184. The assessment team concluded that the university has demonstrated that it is 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 education background or nationality. The assessment team found that the university has demonstrated that learning opportunities are fair and appropriate, and consistently and rigorously quality assured.

185. The team found that the university has a robust framework for the design, development and approval of courses. The approach to course development is structured by a standard course design process (approved by the Academic Committee in July 2022) and ensures the coherence of courses. The assessment team examined the minutes of the Academic Committee, job descriptors, course specifications and minutes of course (re)validation events. This demonstrated that the framework is embedded into the operations of the university and that relevant staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and are given appropriate guidance and support.

186. The course design process (approved by the Academic Committee in July 2022) sets out the steps that design teams must follow when designing new courses, and the roles and

responsibilities of those involved in the design and (re)approval process. The assessment team examined the course design process which evidenced that roles and responsibilities are clearly articulated and there is appropriate use of external expertise. The assessment team also found integration of learning support services in the design and (re)approval processes.

187. The assessment team was satisfied that the university has a well-developed teaching and learning strategy which is aligned to the university's broader vision and strategy. Examination of the university's Hallmark Pedagogy model, common curriculum model, and academic policies and regulation evidenced that the teaching and learning strategy is the overarching strategy for the university.

188. The team examined the teaching and learning strategy and the associated policies, regulations and frameworks and found that the university aims to provide a safe, accessible and reliable environment for every student. It is an environment where students are able monitor their individual progress and further their academic development.

189. The assessment team found that the university has a robust framework of assessment, which enables every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved learning outcomes for the relevant credit or qualification. The assessment team was satisfied that this process is rigorously enforced. The university's assessment framework showed that processes are in place to ensure students are aware of how they will be assessed. This includes, where appropriate, opportunities for students to co-construct assessments with staff. Through an examination of a sample of external examiner reports, the assessment team was satisfied that this framework is embedded within practice and is working effectively, these findings were triangulated by the NSS results, 2023 TEF submissions. The framework also includes robust processes for marking and moderation, through an examination of external examiners' reports, 2023 NSS data and the 2023 student staff submission. The assessment team was satisfied that processes for assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated.

190. It was satisfied that the university makes scrupulous use of external examiners, including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work. The assessment team examined the governance structure for the appointment of external examiners and this demonstrated that there is a robust process in place. Furthermore, a sample of external examiners' reports and the annual quality assurance reports presented to the Academic Committee were examined. These demonstrated that external examiners' comments support governance and quality assurance procedures and that the university gives serious consideration to recommendations from external examiners.

191. The assessment team concluded that regulations for complaints and appeals are clearly documented and accessible. The assessment team was satisfied that appropriate action is taken following an appeal or complaint.

192. The team further concluded that learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured. It concluded that the university designs the curriculum, assessment and feedback in a way that gives students the best chance of achieving the qualifications being sought.

193. The assessment team also noted that many of these processes have been exercised securely during the previous three years as evidenced by strategies, reports, academic

regulations and policies, minutes and the course design process. Therefore, the assessment team concluded that the university meets criterion B3.

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

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

195. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the evidence which shows in summary that the university has processes in place to ensure:

- That the university has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students

- All staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning and in the assessment of student work is appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the levels and subjects of the qualifications being awarded

- Staff maintain a professional understanding of current developments in research and scholarship in their subject and keep in touch with their professional practice

- The university has demonstrated that the assessment of students is carried out in a professional, robust and consistent way.

196. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Criterion C1.1

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

197. The assessment team was satisfied that the university meets criterion C1.1. This is because there was evidence that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning and in the assessment of student work is appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the levels and subjects of the qualifications being awarded. The university has processes in place to ensure that it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students.

198. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence. This shows that the university meets the evidence requirements for C1.1.

Reasoning

199. To determine whether the university's learning, teaching and assessment practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship, the assessment team reviewed documentation relating to how academic activity is managed. The document 'Final proposal for an integrated academic structure' describes a management structure that ensures the oversight, monitoring and quality assurance of academic activity. Within this structure, the directors (content) lead courses and report to the associate provosts. They have the responsibility for continually improving the performance and quality of courses and are empowered to make decisions to improve teaching. The directors (people) have a role in developing staff and their performance. The academic job descriptions document was examined and confirms the roles of these two groups of directors. The directors (people), working with the directors (content), have a role in workload planning. They ensure that every hour of teaching is matched by an hour of teaching-related activity, which includes refreshing material with current research and scholarship. Furthermore, the 'Research and scholarship strategy 2023-2028' states that 11 to 12 per cent of contracted working hours are reserved for research and scholarship. The assessment team concluded that this management structure is set up to support the evaluation and improvement of practice as well as the pursuit of educational scholarship.

200. The quality of teaching is supported by a professional development programme for staff which fosters reflection and the evaluation of professional practice. In addition to the induction programme, staff are required to study for a postgraduate certificate in higher education (if staff have fewer than two years' experience and do not hold an Advance HE fellowship). Through the Regent's Effective Academic Practice (REAP) process, staff are supported to attain Advance HE fellowship. The university also operates a 'performance review development plan' process and a compulsory 'teaching practice development' process. In the assessment team's experience, preparing a claim for Advance HE fellowship requires considerable professional reflection. The REAP handbook was examined, which guides staff through the process of preparing a case for Advance HE fellowship and the assessment team was satisfied that this process is supported.

201. Documentation for the 'performance review development plan' was reviewed which showed that the process incorporated evaluation of performance, reflection and goal setting to support personal development. The assessment team also observed that the results from module evaluation surveys are drawn on in this review to evaluate performance. Evaluation of professional practice and plans for professional development are therefore linked to student feedback. The 'teaching practice development' process' was also examined. The process draws on peer observation of teaching practice, as well as self-evaluation and personal reflection on practice. The assessment team concluded that the university has formalised processes in place to support reflection, the evaluation of professional practice and goal setting for professional development.

202. To determine whether learning, teaching and assessment practices are informed by subject-specific and educational scholarship, the assessment team examined the university's research and scholarship strategy. It noted that the breadth of definition of research and scholarship offered a wide scope for staff with a range of subject specialisms, interests and professional backgrounds to be involved in these activities. The strategy also clearly conveyed the expectation that personal development review planning will be used to evaluate

and support staff engagement in research and scholarship and that teams should prioritise resource to implement the strategy. The strategy explicitly states that scholarly activity at the university is linked to the curricula offered and should improve teaching and the quality of the learning experience. Similarly, the 'learning, teaching and assessment strategy' explicitly links effective teaching to enabling 'staff's scholarly development to maintain currency of thinking in their discipline and their industry'.

203. The assessment team found that the human resources processes to support these activities are well evidenced. Specifically, the academic contract template sets out the main terms and conditions of employment for staff at the university. This document includes a section on research and scholarly activity and sets out the expectation that academic staff will engage in this activity. Similarly, the 'Personal review development process' establishes accountability to contracted responsibilities, including engagement in research and scholarship. A sample of five academic staff profiles from each of the subject areas (four in 'digital marketing') on the 'Our people' section of the university's website was reviewed. The assessment team also examined the programme from the university's annual Learning, Teaching, Research and Scholarship Conference, which has been set up to enable colleagues to disseminate accounts of teaching practice scholarship activities. The assessment team was satisfied that staff are publishing scholarly work and empirical research related to their discipline area or teaching practice, or were engaged in practice or consultancy in the sector related to their subject expertise. Learning, teaching and assessment practices are informed by subject-specific and educational scholarship.

204. The assessment team examined the academic and professional expertise of the staff. A sample of five academic staff profiles (four in digital marketing) across all subject areas were reviewed and this showed that the academic and/or practice-based background experience of staff reflected appropriate academic and professional expertise. The assessment team also examined documents that demonstrated how the expertise of staff is developed through professional development activities and appropriate provision is in place. There is an online academic hub which is available for staff. It appears sufficient to support development opportunities and inform teaching through its repository of policies and guidance, resources, templates and toolkits. Teams that are developing courses are also supported by the educational development team. This team is made up of experienced academics who are seconded to support teams and individuals with pedagogical innovations and effective learning, teaching and assessment practices. Similarly, learning experience designers support staff with digitally enhanced teaching and ensure the quality of learning designs. The assessment team concluded that these teams would support expert practice.

205. The assessment team reviewed evidence relating to the active engagement of staff with the pedagogic development of disciplinary knowledge. The university's research and scholarship strategy establishes that the study of learning and teaching processes and practices (pedagogic development) is a part of normal scholarly activity. The strategy outlines the role of workload planning, personal development review, staff awards and promotion criteria in nurturing active engagement. Academic contracts explicitly state that engagement in scholarly activity is a normal part of staff duties and, as noted in the university's research and scholarship strategy, the workload allocation framework assigns 11 per cent of contracted working hours to research and scholarship. Furthermore, academic contracts include provision for attendance at seminars, courses and conferences. Contracts also show that engagement in scholarly activity is assessed as part of the 'personal review development plan

process'. Through this process, the director (people) guides and supports their line reports to use the allocated research and scholarship time. The assessment team was therefore satisfied that there are human resource processes in place to support active engagement with the pedagogic development of disciplinary knowledge. In terms of evidence of engagement in practice, a review of staff profiles demonstrates that academic staff at the university are engaged in scholarly activity and empirical research related to pedagogic development of discipline knowledge.

206. The assessment team was satisfied that staff have an understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline, and that such knowledge and understanding directly informs and enhances their teaching. The overarching strategic framework for research and advanced scholarship lies in the 'research and scholarship strategy' and stresses that the scholarly study of learning and teaching processes and practices is part of normal practice at the university. This strategy is reinforced in the 'learning, teaching and assessment strategy', which emphasises the importance of the scholarly development of staff. Through their responsibility for course delivery and development, directors (content) ensure that the teaching provided is research-led and course leaders are required to ensure all provision is current. Similarly, all academic job descriptions emphasise that academic staff should be research active and that objectives for these activities are set through the performance development review planning process. There are therefore strategic and human resources processes in place to ensure teaching is informed and enhanced by current research and advanced scholarship.

207. The assessment team found that staff are actively engaged with research and/or advanced scholarship to a level appropriate with the levels and subjects of the qualifications being offered. Academic staff profiles demonstrated that staff are actively engaged in research and scholarship. Furthermore, evidence from the programme for the university's annual Learning, Teaching, Research and Scholarship Conference demonstrates that staff are actively involved in advanced scholarship and that the university has established processes to share the outcomes of that work in order to shape practice across the institution.

208. The assessment team considered whether staff have opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice. The learning, teaching and assessment strategy was reviewed against the human resources learning and development guidelines. The assessment team found that these documents demonstrate the university's focus on creating opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice. Both the peer feedback process of the university's teaching practice development and the postgraduate certificate in higher education place emphasis on critically reflective practice. Similarly, attainment of an Advance HE fellowship through REAP programme demonstrates a high level of engagement in reflective practice. The university's support and encouragement to work towards this fellowship is evidenced in its annual Advance HE continuing professional development report. This shows that, in the 2022-23 academic year, 67 per cent of staff had attained fellowship status.

209. The assessment team also considered processes underpinning the evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment. Five annual monitoring reports were reviewed and, observing that the process is based on student performance data, student feedback and comment from external examiners, it demonstrated evaluation of teaching. The assessment team examined academic job descriptions and the course leader purpose, key accountabilities and process

role specification and it was clear that evaluating and enhancing teaching and assessment is a key responsibility of staff. Similarly, in the reflective personal development review planning process, staff review and evaluate their teaching plans, taking into account module evaluation results. The assessment team therefore concluded that staff have opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice.

210. The assessment team considered the processes in place to support development opportunities aimed at enabling staff to enhance their practice and scholarship. The 'development statement' establishes the university's responsibility for staff development. It also recognises the necessary link between development needs and institutional strategic aims, operational requirements, individual needs and career aspirations. This strategy is operationalised by the directors (people) working through the learning and development guidelines. The assessment team was satisfied that the university supports staff development through a comprehensive educational development programme. This programme of activities includes:

- online learning opportunities

- the 'Aurora women in leadership programme'

- a series of workshops

- classroom observation

- a requirement to attain a 'postgraduate certificate in higher education'

- the opportunity to pursue master's and doctoral study

- support to attain Advance HE fellowship through the REAP continuous professional development programme.

211. The assessment team is satisfied that the staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, have development opportunities aimed at enabling them to enhance their practice and scholarship.

212. The assessment team considered the opportunities for staff to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design and to engage with the activities of other higher education providers. Staff are engaged at various levels in the curriculum design processes. The university's 'curriculum model common core specification 2022' refers to a development process involving over 150 academic staff. Similarly, the university's outline of the process involved in designing a new course includes an account of several opportunities for academic staff to be involved. Specifically, the process states that each module is developed by a module design team of at least two academics working with an educational developer. The final course design is then reviewed at a validation event. The assessment team considered the participation in these validation events by examining five validation reports, intentionally selected from different programmes:

- MA Luxury Brand Management (2019)

- BA (Hons) Acting for Stage and Screen

- BA (Hons) Film and Screen Production

- BA (Hons) Screenwriting and Producing (2022)

- BSc (Hons) Psychology and MSc Psychology (2019)

- BA (Hons) Philosophy, Politics and Economics (2019)

- MSc Finance & Investment (2019).

213. The assessment team observed that validation events were attended by a programme team. This suggests that several academic staff members had the opportunity to gain experience in curriculum design. Furthermore, academic staff outside of the particular subject area attended as internal panel members.

214. Academic staff also sit on committees related to curriculum development. The assessment team examined the terms of reference for the LTSEC noting that seven academic staff members have appointed status on that committee. Similarly, eight academic staff members are appointed to Quality Committee. Job descriptions explicitly require lecturers and senior lecturers to engage with external networks and for associate professors to maintain an external profile. To test whether academic staff are involved with the activities of other higher education providers, a sample of five academic staff profiles from each of the subject areas (four in digital marketing) listed under 'our people' on the university's website was reviewed. The assessment team found some evidence that the university's academic staff are involved with other educational providers as assessors, external examiners and external validation panel members. The assessment team considered the level of involvement to be appropriate and concluded that staff have opportunities to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design and to engage with the activities of other higher education providers.

215. The assessment team also considered staff expertise in providing feedback on assessment and reviewed the university's assessment framework, which details the practices and expectations to guide assessment at the university. The document outlines the necessary features of assessment such as constructive alignment, authenticity, the significance of feedback to improve work, and setting tasks at an appropriate academic level. The assessment team considered the principles laid out in this document to be appropriate. Assessment design is also embedded in the university's course design process and is shaped by several forms of guidance such as the module development process and guidance material on developing assessment criteria. The feedback process is also informed by the 'feedback template' and 'assessment cover sheet template' and these processes aligned with the institutional Hallmark Pedagogy. It appeared that external benchmarks such as Quality Assurance Agency subject benchmarks and SEEC credit level descriptors had been taken into account. The assessment team considered that there are several opportunities for staff to engage in educational development opportunities to ensure good practice. The effectiveness of this process was triangulated with student satisfaction data from the 2023 NSS results, which shows that, for the assessment and feedback theme, student ratings were all above benchmark. Similarly, the 2023 student submission for the TEF reported that Regent's University London Limited offer 'exceptional opportunities for students to improve their assessment work based on feedback'. The assessment team is satisfied that there is staff expertise in providing feedback on assessment.

216. The assessment team considered the experience of staff with key management responsibilities in curriculum development and assessment design. To test this requirement, knowledge, skills and experience sections of the job descriptions for the associate provosts and directors were examined. It found that all were required to have experience in designing and delivering teaching, and/or experience of pedagogic practice. A review of all available CVs showed that the associate provosts and directors of content possessed this experience. Furthermore, some members of the Academic Committee (including the vice-chancellor, the provost, the associate provosts and the academic representatives) also possessed experience in curriculum development and assessment design. The assessment team is satisfied that the evidence demonstrates that all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, have experience of curriculum development and assessment design.

217. The assessment team considered whether staff with key programme management responsibilities engaged with the activities of providers of higher education in other organisations (for example, as external examiners, validation panel members or external reviewers). The job descriptions of the associate provosts, directors and senior lecturers were reviewed and this showed that the descriptions contained references to making a contribution to the academic field, maintaining appropriate networks and external engagement. The assessment team reviewed all profiles on the 'academic leaders' section of the university's website and the CVs provided. It found that some staff were engaged with the activities of other higher education providers. The assessment team is satisfied that the evidence demonstrates that all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, have engaged with the activities of other providers of higher education.

218. The assessment team considered whether the university has made a rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach all students, and maintains appropriate staff and student ratios. The job descriptions of the directors (people) include responsibility for workload allocations. This demonstrates that there are clear operational responsibilities for the assessment of necessary skills and expertise for teaching and for ensuring courses are sufficiently staffed. The provider submission notes that capacity planning (the determination of the amount of staff resource required for each course) is based on maximum class sizes. The assessment team examined the excel spreadsheet used for Academic Resource Projections noting that it demonstrates the amount of staff resource required to teach each course and reconciles this 'demand' with the staff FTE available to meet the requirements. The academic resource projection document also itemises the primary teaching expertise of staff available to supply the hours necessary to teach in each area. The provider submission notes that this process of academic resource projection is made well in advance of course start date so that there is time to appoint additional staff to meet any shortfall. The TEF 2023 student submission was reviewed for additional evidence of student-staff ratios. The submission emphasises the small class sizes at the university and noted that teachers have appropriate expertise and ability deliver teaching. Therefore, the skills and expertise required to teach all students is assessed and the resource available to maintain staff to student ratios is determined in a systematic way.

219. The assessment team considered whether the university has strong recruitment practices and examined the recruitment principles and process document. This document outlines the management processes required in staff recruitment as well as key principles, processes,

staff requirements, time requirements and responsibilities. The document ensures timeliness, fairness of selection in its requirements for key staff and external members on the panel and parity in appointment processes and salary scale. The assessment team also examined the university's academic job descriptions and employment contracts. Both sets of documents clearly communicated job requirements and transparently presented criteria for appointment. This standardisation ensures quality control and fairness between staff in what their job roles require. This evidence supports the assessment team's view that the university has appropriate staff recruitment practices.

Conclusions

220. The assessment team concluded that the university meets criterion C1.1 as the evidence shows that the university has appropriate numbers of staff to teach the students, the staff are appropriately qualified and developed to teach and support the students at the levels of the qualifications being awarded.

221. The assessment team concluded that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and assessing student work, is appropriately qualified and is supported and developed to the levels of the subjects being awarded. The assessment team considered that job descriptions, the professional development programmes, staff resources and staff profiles are appropriate for academic programmes of these levels. The university operates a management structure which ensures accountability for the quality of its courses and has in place processes that support student feedback, course appraisal and staff reflection. The assessment team was satisfied that evidence from student data (NSS 2023) corroborates this assessment.

222. The assessment team was satisfied that the university has a well-developed research and scholarship strategy. It also has the organisational and managerial infrastructure necessary to support active engagement with the pedagogic development of knowledge, advanced scholarship and research. The assessment team examined job descriptions, staff profiles and internal events, which demonstrate the active involvement of staff and a clear link between research and scholarship and teaching and learning.

223. The assessment team found that the university takes a strategic approach to ensuring that staff are supported to engage in reflection and the evaluation of learning, teaching and assessment practice. There are opportunities ranging from formal educational programmes to personal development reviews. There are several student feedback mechanisms in place to support evaluation of practice and there are management structures which provide appropriate oversight.

224. The assessment team also concluded that staff can gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design through several opportunities, including acting as course design leads, module authors, workshop participants or internal validation panels. Academic staff also serve on committees that are concerned with curriculum development and assessment design. Staff profiles demonstrate engagement with external networks and engagement in activities with other education providers. The job descriptions and CVs of staff with key management responsibilities demonstrate appropriate experience in curriculum and assessment design.

225. The assessment team was satisfied that the university's management structure, resource projection and workload planning process ensure that the university has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students. The assessment team found that the university's recruitment process is governed appropriately.

226. The assessment team also noted that many of these processes have been exercised securely during the previous three years as evidenced by the period of time associated with strategic and supporting documents, reports, data, staff profiles and CVs. It therefore concluded that criterion C1 has been met because the university meets criterion C1.1.

Assessment of DAPs criterion D: Environment for supporting students

Criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement

Advice to the OfS

227. The assessment team's view is that the university meets criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement, because it meets the requirements for this criterion.

228. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence that shows that the university has appropriate arrangements and resources to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. This conclusion is based on a review of the evidence that shows that the university has in place and monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional performance.

229. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information.

Criterion D1.1

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

230. The assessment team's view is that the university meets criterion D1.1 because there is evidence that shows that the university has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional performance.

231. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that the university meets the evidence requirements for D1.1.

Reasoning

232. The assessment team considered whether the university 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 university's self-assessment document described several support structures which exist to attend to students' needs in relation to academic, career and employability, welfare, technical, finance, accommodation and immigration issues. The document also states that students have access to Student Experience Officers who carry a caseload of students and are able to provide proactive and responsive support, triage any presenting issues and direct them to the appropriate service to address their needs. In order to test whether a strategic and operational approach is apparent, the assessment team examined the People Project Phase 2 proposal. The team noted that the proposal demonstrated the participative approach taken to the redesign and

centralisation of student support and other services. This included the conflating of services to create synergies, the formation of new roles and greater autonomy for student-facing staff. The team also examined documentation relating to the development of the university's Hallmark Pedagogy, which took a similarly participative approach. The Hallmark Pedagogy is a statement of principles describing the university's approach to learning and teaching, including the way in which students are supported to develop a set of identified graduate attributes. The assessment team concluded that both documents demonstrated a strategic and thorough approach to provision. Similarly, the university's retention strategy appraised its current position with respect to continuation rates and formulated a coherent strategy. The strategy consists of the ongoing monitoring of student engagement, identification and offers of support to 'at risk' students, as well as annual reviews of performance and action planning by each course, with a focus on improving continuation rates.

233. The assessment team considered the underpinning systems and processes for evaluating the services in place to enable student development. The terms of reference for LTSEC were reviewed. It was clear that the role of LTSEC includes maintaining strategic oversight of the quality of student services and support, as well as receiving, reviewing and taking appropriate action regarding reports on student services. For example, the 'Student voice improvements 2023-24' document was considered by LTSEC. This document evaluates and proposes improvements to the current methods available to collect students' perspectives. The assessment team also considered the quality of the arrangements and resources available for students' development by reviewing the TEF 2023 student submission. This document stated that guidance, support and attention to mental health was of a high quality. The university's provider submission for TEF 2023 notes that the indicator value for academic support has been above benchmark for the last four years. The assessment team was satisfied that the university takes a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement for its diverse body of students.

234. The assessment team considered whether students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way and whether the university takes account of different choices and needs of students. In terms of taking account of different choices and needs of students, the university's Hallmark Pedagogy document and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy both emphasise taking a personalised approach to learning. In regard to induction processes, the university's self-assessment document notes that new students are contacted proactively in order to give them an opportunity to express any needs or concerns. The assessment team noted several instances of induction opportunities for students including:

- an online welcome site

- a programme of welcome week activities

- a new starter checklist

- a student union welcome festival

- accessible information on registration

- ID cards

- accommodation.

235. The assessment team also examined the approach to supporting students who start their courses late, as documented in the university's retention strategy. The strategy notes that those who start their courses late are less likely to complete. The university uses data dashboards to identify such students and proactively provides them with enhanced support. From its review of the 2023 TEF provider submission, the assessment team noted that the majority of students report receiving sufficient advice and guidance to make study choices. The university's new starter survey also showed a 92 per cent satisfaction rate with induction. The assessment team was satisfied that students are advised about and inducted into their study programmes in an effective way and account is taken of different choices and needs.

236. The assessment team tested the processes in place that ensure that the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services are monitored and that any resource needs arising are considered. The effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services is monitored by the LTSEC. The assessment team examined the LTSEC section of the annual report on academic assurance 2020-2021 and 2021-22, noting references to advisory, support and counselling services. Examples of issues addressed in the 2021-22 report include, for example, the provision of better advice to help students make effective choices and improvement of support for students in the study abroad module.

237. The course panel update received by LTSEC demonstrates the range of methods used to collect student views of their experience. Similarly, the student representative system provides feedback via course panels on student experience and a report is made to LTSEC. The self-assessment document notes that one action arising from student feedback has been the introduction of the student experience officer, who supports students in relation to a range of matters. The assessment team reviewed the TEF 2023 student submission to determine student views of the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services. The submission states that support is excellent and that both academic staff and staff other than lecturers are available when needed (such as the academic skills team, support and welfare team, personal tutors, IT support team and careers team). Similarly, the 2023 NSS student survey results show that 79.1 per cent of students were satisfied with communication about mental wellbeing support services. The assessment team was satisfied that the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services is monitored and any resource needs arising are considered.

238. The assessment team tested whether the university's administrative support systems enable the university to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs. The assessment team was satisfied that the university uses data strategically. For example, to improve student retention the university identifies and extends support to students considered at risk of disengaging and monitors the impact of these initiatives. The university's PowerBI-based learner analytics dashboard collates data on student progression, performance and engagement. In addition to its use for monitoring course performance, it is reviewed by student experience officers who are responsible for extending support to any student who appears to be disengaging. From its expertise and experience of the significance of early and proactive student support in improving retention, the assessment team considered this approach to be satisfactory.

239. The assessment team also reviewed samples of eVision pages, which demonstrate that performance data is available to academic and non-academic staff. This data appears accessible and easily understandable. Similarly, student academic transcripts were examined and the team was satisfied that the transcripts present a full record of student achievement, including modules completed at each level, credits achieved, marks and whether the modules were passed. The assessment team was satisfied that administrative support systems enable the university to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs.

240. The assessment team reviewed the university's provision of opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression (for example, academic, employment and future career management skills). The university's 'Graduate attributes', 'Learning outcomes' and 'Assessment framework' ensure the consistency and coherence of each course on offer. The university has established a common curriculum architecture, which establishes that each course is made up of three curriculum components: subject core, special electives and entrepreneurship modules. The assessment team was satisfied that this curriculum offers a framework that helps ensure that students across courses have a comparable learning experience and teaching focuses on their academic, personal and professional progression. The curriculum model provides a foundation for an education that is both academically grounded and oriented towards employability. A sample of eight external examiners' reports from different courses was also reviewed and these reports provided evidence that the curriculum and assessment design support academic, personal and professional progression. For example, the external examiner for the MA in luxury brand management described assessment as 'very practical, i.e., transferable for future employment'. Similarly, while the MA in counselling and psychotherapy included a strand of clinical practice, the external examiner noted that students' work evidenced 'an impressive grasp of existential theory and its relevance to clinical practice'.

241. The assessment team noted that the university gives particular attention to professional progression. The university's careers platform 'Handshake' offers students careers coaching, careers events, and access to jobs, internships and placements. The university also connects students to industry through placements, live projects, speakers and events and has established an innovation lab to support the growth of start-up businesses. The provider TEF submission showed student satisfaction with student support (i.e. a rating representing support to address issues of academic, personal and professional progression issues) and this has exceeded the benchmark in three years out of four between 2019 and 2022. The assessment team was satisfied that the university provides opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression (for example, academic, employment and future career management skills).

242. The assessment team tested the extent to which the university provides opportunities for all students to develop skills to make effective use of available learning resources. The safe and effective use of specialist facilities and the use of digital and virtual environments was also examined. The university offers a comprehensive induction and support programme to enable students to make use of learning resources such as the library and the virtual learning environment. The university noted in its self-assessment document that it has invested considerably in digitally enhanced learning, both in terms of establishing new staff posts and

purchasing additional resources. Criterion B3 above also demonstrates that digital, virtual and physical environments are safe, accessible and reliable for every student. To triangulate these observations, the assessment team reviewed the TEF student submission 2023 and noted that students reported that learning resources are excellent and draw particular attention to blackboard, the library and guest speakers and field trips. Students also noted that the university responds to students' requests for additional resources. For example, the university met their requests for 24-hour and seven-days-a-week library access. Similarly, the NSS data from 2023 indicates that all measures for learning resources, including subject-specific resources, are above benchmark. However, the TEF provider submission states that the NSS score for learning resources has been below benchmark for four years but notes that these results reflect the challenges presented by the sudden transition to online learning during the pandemic. The assessment team was satisfied that the university provides 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.

243. The assessment team considered whether the university's approach is guided by a commitment to equity. To test this, the university's policy on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) was examined and this showed that it promotes equality of opportunity and fairness to all. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group monitors implementation of EDI strategies across the university. In relation to the student learning experience, the university's 'Access and participation statement' outlines the provision currently available to support equity. The assessment team considered that compliance with the university's policy on EDI and dignity at work is built into staff employment contracts, demonstrating a commitment to equity. The university's self-assessment document noted several initiatives to support equality, such as paternity and maternity leave, training, gender balanced selection panels and programmes supporting the progression of women. Furthermore, the university received a silver award for equality and inclusion from the employer network for equality and inclusion.

244. There was also evidence that the university is working to ensure inclusive curriculum design through the development of a staff toolkit and the provision of training. The assessment team was satisfied that learning design includes consideration of barriers to accessibility and the university's approach is guided by a commitment to equity.

Conclusions

245. The assessment team concluded that the university meets criterion D1.1 as the evidence demonstrates that the university has resources in place to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

246. It also concluded that the university has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional performance. The university takes a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determining how it enables student development and achievement for its diverse body of students. The assessment team that the university takes a thorough, consultative and critical approach to the evaluation of student support and services. Student advice and induction into study programmes were considered effective because different choices and needs were taken into account. The approach taken is strategic, personalised and includes a range of opportunities and services. In examining the processes in place to ensure that student and staff advisory, support and counselling services are appropriately resourced and monitored,

the assessment team noted the particular functions of the university's governance structure, available student voice mechanisms, actions that appear to arise from feedback and available data.

247. The assessment team reviewed documents relating to the university's administrative support systems (its data dashboards and eVision pages) which monitor student progression and performance in a secure, accurate and timely way in order to satisfy academic and non-academic management needs. The assessment team was satisfied that the systems in place were suitable and had a role in the monitoring and support of students.

248. The assessment team concluded that the university takes a strategic and carefully planned approach to the provision of opportunities for students to develop their academic, personal and professional progression. The university had a clear articulation of graduate attributes and learning outcomes through its common course structure as well as a varied provision for skill development. Similarly, it was evident in the induction programme that there are learning opportunities for students to develop skills. This is demonstrated by the availability of specialist facilities, digital and virtual environments and feedback from students.

249. The assessment team reviewed the university's equality, diversity and inclusion policy and 'Access and participation statement' and noted that the principles associated with these documents could be observed in employment practices including staff training and learning and curriculum design. Additionally, the assessment team was satisfied that this commitment is demonstrated through the university's monitoring processes.

250. Many of these processes have been exercised securely during the previous three years as evidenced by the period of time associated with strategic and supporting documents, committee minutes, policy and reports. The assessment team therefore concluded that criterion D1 has been met because D1.1 has been met. The assessment team was satisfied that the university has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

Assessment of DAPs criterion E: Evaluation of performance

Criterion E1: Evaluation of performance

251. The assessment team's view is that the university meets criterion E1: Evaluation of performance because it meets the requirements for this criterion.

252. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the evidence, which shows in summary that the university takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further strengths.

253. This view is based on specific consideration of the evidence for this criterion alongside other relevant information.

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

Advice to the OfS

254. The assessment team's view is that the university meets criterion E1 because there is evidence that shows that the university takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further strengths.

255. The assessment team's view is based on the review of evidence which shows that the university has met the evidence requirements for E1.

Reasoning

256. The assessment team considered whether critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the university's higher education provision and whether action is taken in response to matters raised through internal and external monitoring. To test this, minutes from the 2021-22 Board of Director's meetings was reviewed, noting critical self-assessment in relation to several strategic priorities and key performance indicators. For example, in the 9 September 2022 minutes, the Board of Directors considered below target continuation figures and asked that a summary of work in progress to address this issue be presented at the next meeting. Similarly, on 19 September 2023 a paper titled 'Increasing student retention at Regent's University London' was presented at the Board of Directors, which evaluated the current position regarding continuation and outlined actions to improve performance. The assessment team is satisfied that the board is monitoring operations and taking action to address issues.

257. Similarly, the terms of reference of the Academic Board evidence its role in the review of institutional policy, including an annual review of its own performance and that of its subcommittees. The Academic Board is accountable to the Board of Directors through its review its own effectiveness and that of its subcommittees. The assessment team reviewed documents submitted as part of the academic assurance process noting that this process evidences a review of the processes and structures for the assurance of quality and

maintenance of academic standards. For example, in the 2020-21 report consideration was given to necessary changes to regulations, improved support to help students choose electives given student feedback and addressing the results of the NSS student survey. The assessment team considered this sufficient evidence of critical self-assessment and of taking action following monitoring.

258. The assessment team also considered external reviews of the institution. It noted the external review of its governance arrangements carried out by The Open University and the follow-up actions taken by the university in response. The most substantial external review of management and governance arrangements was conducted by Advance HE in 2023 on request of the university itself. The assessment team was satisfied that this review was thorough and practically focused and concluded that the university takes effective action to assess its own performance.

259. There is also evidence that the university has reviewed its approach to teaching, learning and curriculum design through the establishment of its Hallmark Pedagogy project. The assessment team found that the 'Hallmark Pedagogy – Defining principles document' demonstrated that the process was conducted in a participatory manner through engagement with alumni, students and staff. The curriculum architecture paper presented to the Academic Committee and the graduate attribute statements both demonstrated evidence that the outcomes of the Hallmark Pedagogy work have been operationalised in practice. These processes together indicate to the assessment team that critical self-assessment is integral to the university's operation.

260. The university also monitors academic performance and summary reports are received by the Quality Committee. The 'Annual monitoring reports' for 2021-22 and 2022-23 demonstrate a commitment to continual improvement of course performance underpinned by critical self-review. Examination of the annual monitoring reports demonstrated to the assessment team that both staff and students have direct input into a process of evaluating student performance, satisfaction and feedback and formulating action plans to address any issues. For example, the annual monitoring report for the MSc Finance and Investment notes that student pass rates have been improved by offering students extra support outside of class and by drawing on the help of the university academic skills tutor. Similarly, this report provides 'you said-we did' information where feedback from the student voice meeting is listed with responses from the course team. For example, the report shows that the course team acted on requests for more guest lecturers and industry activities, as well as more classes on the practical aspects of finance. Feedback from external examiners' reports is also incorporated into the monitoring process.

261. Furthermore, the peer development process of 'Teaching practice development' supports staff to engage in a peer review process, which focuses on improving on their practice. The assessment team also considered the reflective performance review development process – this showed that staff review and evaluate their teaching plan, taking into account module evaluation results.

262. The assessment team is satisfied that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the university's higher education provision and that action is taken in response to matters raised through internal and external monitoring.

263. The assessment team considered whether clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision. The overall committee structure was reviewed in 2020 to develop a simpler governance structure with more direct lines of accountability. The assessment team was satisfied that the reconfigured structure demonstrates that the university has well-defined and clear lines of accountability and reporting, and that the university has aligned reporting with the OfS Regulatory Framework and other requirements, such as the quality code. This demonstrates appropriate monitoring of its performance against regulatory requirements and external reference points. Similarly, the assessment team reviewed the terms of reference for the Academic Committee and its subcommittees along with the associated minutes. The Academic Committee delegates the committee's functions to subcommittees. For example, the Academic Committee has delegated the responsibility for assuring the standards and quality of academic provision to the Quality Committee. Among other things the Quality Committee also oversees the robustness of the annual monitoring reporting process through which course teams review the quality of academic provision. It reports back to Academic Committee after every meeting and presents reviews of its own performance through the academic assurance process to Academic Committee and the Board of Directors. The assessment team was satisfied that this evidence demonstrates clear lines of responsibility, delegation and reporting that allow appropriate scrutiny and monitoring.

264. The assessment team considered the university's annual monitoring review process, which shows that the Quality Committee, LTSEC, and the Collaborative Provision Committee (acting on behalf of the Academic Committee) maintain oversight of academic provision. The assessment team was satisfied that the academic leadership structure represents clear mechanisms for assigning and discharging actions. Within this structure, the directors (content), reporting to the associate provosts and overseen by the provosts group, have a role in monitoring academic provision and acting to address any issues needing attention. The academic job descriptions of the associate provosts, director (content), director (people), senior lecturer and lecturer were reviewed. It was concluded that these documents set out a clear set of responsibilities for academic provision. The assessment team was satisfied that clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision.

265. The assessment team tested the extent to which ideas and expertise from inside and outside the university contribute to assessment of its performance. To test this, the documentation from the development of the people project and for the Hallmark Pedagogy was reviewed. The assessment team found that the development of both processes appeared consultative and highly participatory which enabled ideas to be drawn on from across the university.

266. The assessment team also considered whether the university actively draws on ideas and expertise external to the institution. The university's course design process requires any team developing a new course to draw on the input of industry partners. The academic regulations for course development and oversight require that any course validation includes external panel members. The assessment team assessed the participation of external panel members in validation events by examining five validation reports. These were:

- MA Luxury Brand Management (2019)

- BA (Hons) Acting for Stage and Screen

- BA (Hons) Film and Screen Production

- BA (Hons) Screenwriting and Producing (2022)

- BSc (Hons) Psychology

- MSc Psychology (2019)

- BA (Hons) Philosophy, Politics and Economics (2019)

- MSc Finance and Investment (2019).

267. The assessment team was satisfied that external input was in evidence at validation events. Five annual monitoring reports from 2021-22 were examined and this showed that the comments of external examiners were incorporated, demonstrating that the university acts on external feedback.

268. At several points in the university's trajectory, it has drawn on ideas and expertise from those outside the organisation. For example, the university's professional doctorate in counselling psychology is validated by The Open University and must be approved by the Health and Care Professions Council. Consequently, the university was subject an administrative audit and institutional reapproval conducted by The Open University in 2021. Also, as part of the programme approval of the Health and Care Professions Council, a visitor report was required. The assessment team was satisfied that this report also represents an external review process. The university's commissioning of the Advance HE governance review in 2023 also demonstrates that it proactively pursues external expertise in relation to its governance arrangements.

269. The assessment team concluded that the university meets criterion E1 as the evidence demonstrates that the university takes effective action to assess its own performance. The university identified weaknesses and strengths and responds to these to develop further.

Conclusions

270. The assessment team concluded that the university takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further strengths. A sample of committee terms of reference, minutes and associated documentation was examined. These demonstrate that critical self-assessment is integral to the university's higher education provision. The assessment team is satisfied that action is taken by the university in response to matters raised through internal and external monitoring. The university has also recently undergone an extensive review of its organisational structure, curriculum structure and approach to teaching and learning. The university also regularly reviews performance of its curriculum and its educators. There is evidence of processes in place for the university to take appropriate action in response to any matters raised through internal or external monitoring or review.

271. Clear mechanisms exist to assign and discharge action. For example, through the university's committee and leadership structure and its annual monitoring review process. The assessment team concluded that ideas and expertise from inside and outside of the university contribute to the assessment of its performance. The contribution of outside expertise is evident in the course development and approval processes, external examiner reports, and

responsibilities to professional statutory and regulatory bodies as well as validating partners. The university also proactively draws on external expertise in the review of its governance arrangements such as that carried out by Advance HE.

272. Many of these processes have been exercised securely during the previous three years as evidenced by the period of time associated with strategic and supporting documents, committee minutes, policy and reports. The assessment team therefore concluded that the university meets criterion E1.

Assessment of overarching criterion for the authorisation for DAPs

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

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

274. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the evidence which shows in summary that the university develops and encourages a self-critical and cohesive academic community. It has a clear commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems. It is also based on consideration of the evidence requirements for the DAPs criteria collated during the assessment period, alongside any other relevant information.

Reasoning

275. The assessment team found that the university has demonstrated that it is self-critical, as demonstrated by its commitment to ongoing self-evaluation, openness to external and student feedback and robust governance structures that enable timely and effective action across the academic community as needed.

276. To test whether the university is self-critical, including through the university's commitment to ongoing self-evaluation, the assessment team considered the university's academic strategies and polices. It is clear that the university has a clearly articulated and coherent academic governance structure, and the academic leadership structure represents a clear set of responsibilities for discharging action. The assessment team was satisfied that a clear set of responsibilities exist for academic provision. Students are engaged in academic governance, and this demonstrates critical reflection on the provision for student voice.

277. The assessment team was satisfied that the university is a self-critical, cohesive academic community because there is evidence to show that consultation with the academic community is a feature of the development of the university's strategic direction and this reflects the university's desire for academic community coherence.

278. It is clear that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the university's higher education provision and the team concluded that this demonstrates the university's capacity to be self-critical and its ability to engage the wider academic community, in particular during the change process.

279. The assessment team found that there is commitment to the thorough assurance of standards which protects the reliability of the university's assessment process. The use of external examiners also demonstrates that standards have been met.

280. In consideration of whether the university's quality systems are effective, the assessment team examined how courses are designed, implemented and reviewed, how external

expertise is utilised and how the university scrutinises quality systems. The assessment team concluded that quality systems are effective and robust and many of these processes have been exercised securely during the previous three years.

Conclusions

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

Annex A: List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DAPs	degree awarding powers
EDI	equality, diversity and inclusion
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
HERA	Higher Education and Research Act 2017
KPIs	key performance indicators
LTSEC	Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee
NSS	National Student Survey
OfS	Office for Students
PSRB	Professional Statutory Regulatory Body
QAC	[OfS's] Quality Assessment Committee
REAP	Regent's Effective Academic Practice
VCET	Vice Chancellor's Executive Team