Quality assessment report

BA Business and Management courses at London South Bank University

November 2022 – March 2023

Contents

Summary

Each year, the Office for Students (OfS) selects a number of higher education providers for investigation based on regulatory intelligence including, but not limited to, student outcome and experience data and relevant notifications. As part of these investigations, the OfS may commission an assessment team, including external academic experts, to undertake an assessment of quality. The quality assessment focuses on areas of potential concern indicated by the data or other regulatory intelligence, or by information obtained by the assessment team as part of the assessment.

The assessment involves a visit to a provider, after which the assessment team produces a report. This report represents the conclusions of the team as a result of its consideration of information gathered during the course of the assessment to 28 March 2023. The report does not take into account matters which may have occurred subsequent to that period.

In line with the risk-based approach of the OfS, the assessment team does not undertake a comprehensive quality assessment in respect of every requirement in each condition of registration, and therefore this report should not be read as the team having undertaken such an assessment.

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

1. The OfS requires all registered higher education providers' courses to meet a minimum set of requirements or conditions that relate to quality and standards. The detailed requirements of these conditions can be found in the OfS's regulatory framework.[1] In May 2022, as a result of the OfS's general monitoring, the OfS decided to open an investigation into the quality of business and management courses provided by London South Bank University.

2. London South Bank University (LSBU) offers business and management courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate level at the LSBU Business School in south London.

3. The OfS appointed an assessment team on 19 October 2022 that consisted of three academic expert assessors and a member of OfS staff. The team was asked to give its advice and judgements about the quality of the university's business and management courses.

4. The team considered a range of information. This included:

    -   information already held by the OfS, such as data relating to student outcomes

    -   information submitted to the OfS by London South Bank University, including about student achievement

    -   specific courses on the university's virtual learning environment (VLE).

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[1] See OfS, 'Securing student success: Regulatory framework for higher education in England'.

5. The team visited London South Bank University on three occasions in November 2022, January 2023 and March 2023, during which time it met with staff and students, observed teaching and had a tour of the facilities.

6. During the assessment process, the team developed lines of enquiry. These focused on areas that potentially warranted further investigation and that were within the scope of ongoing conditions of registration:

   - B1: Academic experience

   - B2: Resources, support and student engagement

   - B4: Assessment and awards.

7. The lines of enquiry were developed and updated between the first two visits and both versions were shared with the university. This process followed the OfS's risk-based approach.

8. The assessment team's investigation drew on multiple sources of information that are relevant to conditions B1, B2 and B4. The risk-based approach led the assessment team to consider in detail the following areas:

   - **Employability support:** The assessment team reviewed course and module information, observed teaching sessions, and sought to understand how employability skills were taught, developed and assessed across the relevant courses.

   - **Curriculum design, development and delivery:** The assessment team reviewed the approach to the design and development of curriculum, and sought to understand strategy relating to assessment validity, embedding employability and the development of professional skills.

   - **Academic support:** The assessment team examined the provision of academic support, including personal tutoring provision and module learning and assessment support, and examined the student view of academic support.

   - **Academic staff:** The assessment team considered the provision of training and development support and the approach to staff resourcing.

   - **Assessment and feedback:** The assessment team considered how assessments are designed, how students are prepared and supported for assessments and how feedback is provided to students.

9. The assessment team did not identify any concerns from its review of this information relating to conditions B1: Academic experience, B2: Resources, support and student engagement, or B4: Assessment and awards.

Introduction and background

10. Each year, the OfS selects a number of higher education providers for investigation based on regulatory intelligence. This includes, but is not limited to, student outcome and experience data and relevant notifications. As part of these investigations, the OfS may commission an assessment team, including external academic experts, to undertake an assessment of quality. The quality assessment focuses on areas of potential concern indicated by the data or other regulatory intelligence, or by information obtained by the team as part of the assessment.

11. The assessment involves a visit to a provider, after which the assessment team produces a report. In line with the risk-based approach of the OfS, it does not undertake a comprehensive quality assessment in respect of every requirement in each condition of registration, and therefore this report should not be read as the assessment team having undertaken such an assessment.

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

13. The OfS appointed a team in October 2022 to assess the quality of the business and management courses provided by London South Bank University (i.e. those courses delivered by the London South Bank University, excluding courses delivered by partner organisations and transnational education). The assessment included matters that fall within the scope of the OfS's conditions of registration that concern quality and standards (specifically, ongoing conditions B1, B2 and B4).[2] The scope of the assessment, the information considered, and the findings of the assessment team are summarised in this report.

14. This report represents the conclusions of the team as a result of its consideration of information gathered during the course of the assessment to 28 March 2023. The report does not take into account matters that may have occurred subsequent to that period.

15. The OfS decided to open this investigation as part of its approach to general monitoring and in the context of its decision to focus on the quality of business and management courses. In opening the investigation, the OfS had regard to information it held relating to London South Bank University, including student outcomes data, numbers of students, and any notifications received.

Context

16. Business and Management courses at London South Bank University are delivered through the LSBU Business School. Courses are delivered across three subject areas:

   - finance, economics, accounting and analytics

   - innovation, leadership, strategy and management

   - marketing, tourism, events and hospitality sector management.

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[2] See OfS, 'Registration with the OfS: Conditions of registration'.

17. Business and management courses are delivered across two sites, Southwark campus and Croydon campus. Southwark campus is home to the business school building, which includes a Bloomberg teaching suite as well as hybrid teaching rooms.

18. Business and management courses are delivered on a full-time or part-time basis and include foundation year, placement and top-up routes. LSBU Business School offers undergraduate degrees in business and management (BA), with a range of related pathways degrees (e.g. in accounting, digital innovation and entrepreneurship, finance, marketing and project management). Undergraduate degrees (BA) are also offered in accounting and finance, economics, marketing and tourism and hospitality. Courses run for three years full-time (four years with placement or foundation year) and six years part-time, with both September and January intakes available. The postgraduate offering includes both taught and research degrees across the different subject areas.

19. The university conducted an internal review and revalidation of its business and management courses two years ago, with revalidated courses commencing delivery in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years. The revalidation process involved a curriculum advisory board, student and module feedback, industry feedback and research across the sector, with a focus on embedding employability and digital skills and developing a Level 4 common first year for all students. At the same time the university also introduced a common framework for undergraduate and postgraduate provision that features a 40-credit dissertation module at Level 6. This then needed to be reintroduced across the suite of business and management courses.

20. At present the university is delivering its revalidated courses to Level 4 and Level 5 students as well as the pre-revalidation courses that are being taught out to Level 6 students.

21. A range of student support is offered through the Student Life Centre, which is based at Southwark campus. Here students can access student life advisers, the Careers Hub and accommodation support. Each university campus also has its own library and helpdesk, where students can access information skills librarians, skills for learning tutors and the Digital Skills Centre. The LSBU Business School also offers academic personal tutoring to all students.

22. According to data provided by the university on 19 October 2022, London South Bank University currently directly delivers business and management courses to 3,218 full-time equivalent (FTE) students, of whom 868.7 are studying postgraduate taught programmes and 2,282 are studying for their first degree. The largest undergraduate programme is BA (Hons) Business Management, with a current student FTE of 957.5 split across both the revalidated courses and the pre-revalidation courses that are being taught out. The BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance programme (including those courses with placement and foundation year) has a student FTE of 502.4, with the remaining undergraduate students split across courses in marketing, economics and tourism and hospitality.

23. For context, OfS internal analysis[3] shows that for full-time undergraduate students studying business and management degrees at London South Bank University, 58.2 per cent lived locally to the university prior to starting their studies and 47.8 per cent are from index of multiple deprivation (IMD) quintiles one and two. Of students with known ethnicity, black students comprise the largest percentage of the student population (31.5 per cent), followed by Asian (30.5 per cent) and white (25.7 per cent) students.

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[3] Source: OfS internal analysis of the student data used to construct the published size and shape of provision dashboard from September 2022, subset to students taught at London South Bank University within the business and management CAH2 subject area. Data from the four-year aggregate (academic years 2017-18 to 2020-21) using the 'all students' population.

Assessment process

Information gathering

24. The assessment team gathered a range of evidence to determine whether there are possible concerns relating to requirements as set out in conditions of registration B1, B2 and/or B4. The team gathered information through an initial request for data from the university (19 October 2022) and three site visits to the Southwark campus, on 29 November 2022, 31 January 2023 and 10 March 2023.

25. During these site visits the assessment team undertook:

    - a range of staff interviews (with academic and central university professional service staff)

    - a range of student panel interviews (including students studying at Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7)

    - observation of teaching sessions

    - a physical facilities tour.

26. The team was also granted access to the university's VLE from 23 November 2022 to 17 February 2023. It made further requests for information and data based on discussions with staff and students during both the initial site visit and subsequent site visits, as well as arising from its analysis of information already provided. The university fulfilled all requests in a timely fashion and provided the additional information and data on 23 November 2022, 27 January 2023, 31 January 2023 and 28 March 2023.

27. The assessment team first reviewed general monitoring intelligence, including student outcomes data held by the OfS, and initial data provided by the university. From this it decided to focus on undergraduate provision. This decision was driven by both the larger undergraduate cohort size and the difference in student outcomes data. For example, the progression rate for full-time first degree students in business and management over three years was 49.4 per cent, compared with a progression rate of 71.1 per cent for full-time postgraduate taught masters students over the same period and same subject area.[4]

28. Similarly, following a risk-based approach, the assessment team then focused on BA (Hons) Business Management, including those courses with a placement, foundation year or related pathway. This decision was taken because these courses represent a significant majority of undergraduate students in the LSBU Business School.

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[4] Source: OfS published progression measures within the student outcomes dashboard from September 2022 using the 'Taught' view of a provider's student population, available at https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-outcomes-data-dashboard/get-the-data/. The subject area is defined by the Common Aggregation Hierarchy Level 2 (CAH2). The three years were based on qualifiers from 2017-18 to 2019-20 inclusive.

Assessment of matters relating to quality under ongoing conditions of registration B1, B2 and B4

Condition B1: Academic experience

29. The assessment team reviewed a range of evidence relevant to condition B1 (see Annex A for the full text of the condition) in seeking to understand whether students on the relevant courses considered (see paragraph 27 and 28) receive a 'high quality academic experience'. This included a review of whether the relevant courses (see paragraph 27 and 28) are 'up-to-date' (B1.3.a), provide 'educational challenge' (B1.3.b), are 'coherent' (B1.3.c), are 'effectively delivered' (B1.3.d) and require 'students to develop relevant skills' (B1.3.e).

30. The initial information provided by the university, and reviewed by the assessment team, included:

    - course and module specifications for the relevant courses across Levels 3 to 6

    - programme handbooks for the relevant courses across Levels 3 to 6

    - module attainment data for Level 4 modules on the relevant courses (for academic year 2021-22)

    - five student complaints and their outcomes (during the academic year 2021-22).

31. Alongside the initial information provided by the university, the assessment team reviewed both quantitative and qualitative National Student Survey (NSS) information for 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22. The team also reviewed student outcomes data, including measures of completion, continuation and progression.

32. This initial information is relevant to the courses under consideration being 'up-to-date', providing 'educational challenge', being 'coherent' and requiring 'students to develop relevant skills'.

33. During on-site visits, the assessment team met with:

    - students currently studying on business and management courses, across Levels 4 to 7

    - academic staff teaching on business and management courses, across Levels 4 to 6

    - university staff responsible for business and management course and curriculum design

    - university staff responsible for the implementation and review of the LSBU Business School graduate outcomes strategy.

34. The assessment team also observed teaching sessions for both a Level 4 and Level 5 BA (Hons) Business Management module. These meetings and teaching observations allowed for discussion of topics and observation of practice relevant to courses being 'up-to-date', providing 'educational challenge', being 'coherent', being 'effectively delivered' and requiring 'students to develop relevant skills'.

35. The assessment team requested additional information from the university as detailed in paragraphs 24 to 26 (all data noted in the bullet point list below was sourced directly from the university). This included:

- aggregate module attainment for all Level 4 to 6 modules on the relevant courses (for academic years 2020-21 and 2021-22)

- a copy of the module leader handbook

- a copy of the most recent LSBU Business School graduate outcomes action plan

- a copy of the most recent LSBU employability newsletter, as circulated to all students.

36. This information is relevant to all aspects of condition B1.3, that students receive a 'high quality academic experience'.

37. The assessment team reviewed module VLE sites, including samples of teaching resources, guidance to students, and the organisation of the sites themselves. The team was granted access to course and module sites for all business and management courses delivered from 1 September 2022, and selected individual elements of these for review using a risk-based approach. This information is particularly relevant to courses being 'up-do-date' (B1.3a), 'coherent' (B1.3.c) and 'effectively delivered' (B1.3.d).

38. The assessment team's investigation drew on multiple sources of information, identified in paragraphs 30 to 37, that are relevant to condition B1. Following a risk-based approach, the assessment team considered a number of areas as set out in paragraphs 39 to 67 below.

Employability support

39. The assessment team wanted to establish how employability skills were taught, developed and assessed across the relevant courses (see paragraphs 27 and 28) in order to ensure students succeed in and beyond higher education. The team chose to focus on both the revalidated courses at Level 4 and 5 and the pre-revalidation courses being taught out to current Level 6 students.

40. The assessment team decided to consider this area because of the most recent progression data for full-time first degree students in business and management at the university, as set out in paragraph 27.

41. In the assessment team's initial meeting with senior staff members of the university staff outlined that employability was embedded in the revalidated curriculum with live case studies and simulations. Specifically, university staff set out that at each level of the revalidated courses there was a core employability module. At Level 4 all students on business and management pathways studied the LSBU Discovery Project. At Level 5 there was a specific employability-focused module, which was customised to the relevant disciplinary focus and introduced appropriate software, CV writing and networking skills. Students on the teach-out courses at Level 6 were required to submit a CV as part of their assessment. It was noted that these changes also reflected feedback received from students calling for a better balance in the curriculum between practical preparation and theory.

42. The team was also provided with examples of how students are supported to develop relevant skills through the introduction of:

- modules led by industry experts, featuring industry software and input from an alumnus practitioner

- a business management module co-led by an academic and an employability specialist

- Level 6 dissertations (mandated by the university in all degree programmes) flexed towards practical outcomes such as market research or enterprise business cases

- professional learning communities (PLCs) timetabled for all year groups, tailored to each student level and responsive to expressed student needs

- support for students who were interested in the opportunity to take up a placement (taking advantage of the business school's geographical position and industry links), whose numbers had increased to approximately 70 in the current academic year.

43. The university thus appeared to have used revalidation from 2021 to adopt a conscious and coordinated approach to integrating employability into the curriculum, including promoting placements (which were highlighted by university staff as having a proven track record for enhancing graduate outcomes). However, during a meeting with senior university staff, staff members noted that many LSBU students were not able to undertake placements, so other forms of skills and experience were provided within the timetabled curriculum.

44. The assessment team also focused on establishing that the current cohort of Level 6 students studying pre-revalidation degrees had access to appropriate employability skills support. The team triangulated evidence from student meetings, further staff meetings and teaching observation (including a PLC) to achieve this.

45. In the assessment team's meetings with students, including those on Level 6 pre-revalidation courses, students expressed general satisfaction with the extent to which their studies prepared them for the world of work. They cited specific modules as an example of applied learning and endorsed the project- and case-based focus of teaching and assessment in business and management. Students were also aware of the extracurricular opportunities available to them – such as exposure to relevant software packages, and generic career planning support including CV writing and interview skills – even if they had not taken them up.

46. Students (including those from Level 6 on pre-revalidation courses) reported that they were integrating their formal learning with work experience – whether within an academic framework (such as a placement or similar), or on their own initiative – by applying their learning in part-time work. This provided some assurance to the assessment team that Level 6 students on the teach-out of the pre-revalidation programme were benefiting from the culture change that the revalidation had ushered in, with its increased emphasis on employability.

47. In subsequent meetings with module teaching staff the assessment team sought further clarification on the employability support provided to current Level 6 students on pre-revalidation courses. Staff explained that CV support and personal development planning, the inclusion of an employability element in all module descriptors, and authentic learning and assessment activities were all included in the current pre-validation Level 6 provision. In

addition, current Level 6 students had access to PLCs and visiting speakers alongside all other students. University staff explained that the difference the revalidation had made was to embed employability more explicitly and strategically across the degree.

48. The assessment team observed teaching on employability focused modules at Levels 4 and 5, as these were highlighted by the university as an exemplar of activity-based learning within the revalidated programme to develop relevant employability skills in students. University staff also noted that some of the student projects in the time the Level 4 module had been running had developed into actual enterprises, supported by the university's Innovation Centre and Enterprise Team.

49. The commitment and enthusiasm of the module teams delivering the employability-focused modules at Levels 4 and 5 were also in evidence in classroom sessions which the assessment team observed. In the team's academic judgement, these two-hour sessions were well planned, featuring appropriately pitched and well focused theoretical input from the lecturers, interspersed with facilitated activities and discussions that engaged the students effectively, as well as dedicated time for group work on their own projects. It was noted that in the case of the Level 5 module, the session was co-delivered by an external practitioner alongside university academic staff.

50. In a follow-up session with the assessment team, students demonstrated clear awareness of the transferable skills developed by the modules, and acknowledged the relevance of employability skills developed in other core modules and PLCs and via support from the university in obtaining degree-relevant part-time work and placements. The team also observed a PLC themed on interview preparation, with input from a guest speaker who was both a faculty member and a business owner. Students appeared engaged in this session, with plenty of interactivity and discussion. In the academic judgement of the assessment team the session offered an effective balance of practitioner insight, credible advice which would be of genuine value in preparing for a job interview, and interactive opportunities where students could share their own experiences and reflections with one other.

51. Over the course of the assessment team's visits the provider explained and described extensive employability support for Level 4 and 5 students on the revalidated courses, as well as current Level 6 students on the pre-revalidation courses. This was endorsed by student discussion and examples of what, in the team's judgement, were appropriate teaching sessions. But in the absence of more recent statistics on progression than those which prompted the investigation it was difficult to know how effective this was proving in practice.

52. In a meeting with university staff the assessment team was able to address this difficulty to some extent. Staff explained that part of the university's commitment to its students involved learning from its own experience through internal evaluation of initiatives. In the context of improving graduate outcomes through enhancing relevant skills, this had recently included students rating their own job-seeking competence before and after the Level 5 employability module, as well as self-perceived career readiness at Levels 5 and 6 as an element of the personal development planning tool available to all students.

53. This data was provided by the university for the assessment team to review. It suggested progress (at least in terms of self-reported efficacy) as a result of engagement with the Level 5 employability module, and an increase in confidence with regard to career readiness as

reported through the personal development planning tool. This is despite economic and social disadvantage experienced more acutely by the average London South Bank University business and management student (with approximately 50 per cent from IMD quintiles 1 and 2) than by students elsewhere in London and the higher education sector more widely.[5] In spite of the relatively small sample sizes involved in the internal evaluation, the results gave some measure of confidence that the provider had a conscious data-driven strategy to continue meeting the requirements of this condition.

54. Following its review of relevant information and discussions with university staff and students, the assessment team accordingly judges that the provider's decisions in respect of relevant skills for employability were credible and likely to be reflected in an uplift in relevant metrics over time.

Assessment and feedback

55. The assessment team wanted to establish how assessments for the relevant courses (see paragraphs 27 and 28) were designed to provide students with the opportunity to develop skills that would prepare them for employment beyond higher education. The team reviewed course and module documentation, assessment briefs and a sample of assessment submissions and associated feedback for the relevant courses.

56. The team decided to consider this area because of the most recent progression data for full-time first degree students in business and management at the university, as set out in paragraph 27.

57. The team identified the following feature of the university's assessment and feedback processes as being relevant to condition B1.

Assessment design

58. In meetings, university staff explained that, as a result of a Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment (TESTA) process approximately four years ago, there was a move away from examination-style assessment, and assessment points were reduced to two artefacts per module. Rather than reviewing assessment at a modular level, the TESTA process considers assessment at a course level and attempts to coordinate the overall quantity, variety and distribution of assessment. The impact of this was seen by students in 2019-20. The assessment design process was further refined following revalidation of courses in 2021-22, where an active decision was made to offer students authentic coursework-based assessment tasks. This was demonstrated in a number of new Level 4 and Level 5 modules where assessment design was based on live briefs or projects, or real-world scenarios, which allow for learning outcomes to be evaluated in 'an authentic way'.

59. Module leaders were encouraged by senior business school staff to be innovative with assessment, to stimulate student interest and engagement. Many assessments of modules were explicitly employability-focused, offering students the opportunity to replicate tasks they might find themselves undertaking in the workplace. The assessment team agreed that the provider's decision to adopt a real-world approach to assessment design was a positive change and of benefit to students, allowing them the opportunity to develop skills alongside

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[5] Sourced from data analysis provided by the university in the course of the assessment process.

applying learning and to be more adequately prepared for employment beyond higher education.

60. Assessments were discussed and agreed in regular course team meetings, to ensure there was complementarity across the level of study and that assessment briefs were honed at each iteration, reflecting teaching team and student feedback.

Curriculum design, development and delivery

61. The assessment team wanted to establish how the curriculum was designed and developed, with a particular focus on how employability and the development of professional skills were embedded across the curriculum. The team reviewed course content via teaching observation and course documentation on the university VLE (for the relevant courses as set out in paragraphs 27 and 28). This included a review of sample assessment submissions.

62. The assessment team decided to consider this area because of the most recent progression data for full-time first degree students in business and management at the university, as previously set out in paragraph 27.

63. In a meeting, university staff explained that, following their own reflection on feedback and progression data, the university had recently consolidated its range of undergraduate business and management programmes and their constituent modules, with these revalidated courses being delivered from September 2021.

64. School management advised that the new business and management portfolio was designed to address the challenges its students encounter in a competitive jobs market. The resulting courses included employability embedded throughout, in both credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing elements and activities. In addition to this, courses with a placement year were also available to students.

65. Senior university staff detailed a credible explanation of the redesign process, driven by data and internal and external stakeholder input. Separately, course and module staff confirmed this process, as well as an established process for regular review and updating of course content.

66. During observation of the employability focused-module at Level 5 of the revalidated course, members of the assessment team engaged with the university's external business connections, who confirmed how they were included in course design, as well as delivery of relevant live cases.

67. Following its review of relevant information and discussions with university staff and students as outlined above, the assessment team felt that course content was up to date, provided an educational challenge and was coherent. As such, the team did not identify any concerns in respect of curriculum design, development and delivery at the university that relate to condition B1.

B1 Conclusions

68. The assessment team's investigation drew on multiple sources of information, as set out in paragraphs 30 to 37, that are relevant to condition B1. Following a risk-based approach, it did not identify any concerns relating to condition B1 from reviewing this information.

Condition B2: Resources, support and student engagement

69. The assessment team reviewed a range of evidence relevant to condition B2 (see Annex A for the full text of the condition) in seeking to understand steps taken by the university to ensure that each cohort of students registered on the relevant courses (see paragraphs 27 and 28) is receiving 'resources and support' (B2.2.a), that these are sufficient for the purpose of ensuring a high quality academic experience for those students, and that those students succeed in and beyond higher education. In addition, the team sought to understand steps taken by the university to ensure 'effective engagement' (B2.2.b) with each cohort of students registered on the relevant courses, that these are sufficient for the purpose of ensuring a high quality academic experience for those students, and that those students succeed in and beyond higher education.

70. The initial information provided by the university, and reviewed by the assessment team, included:

    - programme handbooks for the relevant courses across Levels 4 to 6

    - information provided to students at the beginning of each academic year that sets out the university's approach to the provision of physical and digital learning resources

    - information provided to students at the beginning of each academic year that sets out the university's approach to the provision of support to students and how students may access that support

    - five student complaints and their outcomes (during the academic year 2021-22).

71. Alongside the initial information provided by the university, the assessment team reviewed both quantitative and qualitative NSS information for 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22, student outcomes data including measures of completion, continuation and progression and staff data including contract term, qualification held and mode of employment.

72. This initial information was relevant to whether the university had taken all reasonable steps to ensure that students on relevant courses (see paragraphs 27 and 28) were receiving 'resources and support', and to ensure 'effective engagement' with these students.

73. During on-site visits, the assessment team met with:

    - students currently studying on business and management courses, across Levels 4 to 7

    - academic staff teaching on business and management courses, across Levels 4 to 6

    - university staff responsible for the oversight, implementation and delivery of personal academic tutoring.

74. These meetings included discussion of topics relevant to the students receiving 'resources and support' and opportunities for 'effective engagement'.

75. The assessment team requested additional information from the university as detailed in paragraphs 24 to 26 (all data noted in the bullet point list below was sourced directly from the university). This included:

- a copy of the LSBU Business School academic personal tutoring handbook for staff

- information on staff qualifications, including Higher Education Academy fellowships.

76. This information was relevant to all aspects of condition B2.2.

77. The assessment team's investigation drew on multiple sources of information, identified in paragraphs 70 to 75, that are relevant to condition B2. Following a risk-based approach, the assessment team considered a number of areas as set out in paragraphs 78 to 101 below.

Academic support

78. Data from the 2021 NSS survey[6] placed the university in the bottom quartile for students who responded positively to questions relating to academic support. While quantitative scores in this area were higher in the 2022 NSS data[7] the assessment team felt it was important to establish how academic support and personal tutoring were provided to and accessed by students.

79. The team considered the arrangements for resources and support associated with the relevant courses (see paragraph 27 and 28). The key features of resources and support for students on these courses identified by the assessment team were:

- personal tutoring

- module learning and assessment support

- additional support services.

Personal tutoring

80. Personal tutoring practice in the business school changed in September 2022. University staff explained that the current system was piloted in another faculty in 2021-22 and was subsequently rolled out in the business school with some minor amendments during the academic year 2022-23. It was confirmed that the system will continue to be developed through staff and student feedback.

81. Students at all levels were allocated a personal tutor at the start of term, who made proactive contact with the student using a series of template letters. Students had the opportunity to meet with their tutor for 20 minutes twice a semester. First year students had an additional meeting opportunity during the first semester. Online or face to face meetings could be booked by

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[6] Source: Based on published NSS results from the 2021 survey at: National Student Survey 2021 results - Office for Students (2021 NSS results by teaching provider for all providers). Providers were placed in ascending order based on the percentage of students who responded positively to the questions that form the academic support scale. The published NSS results were subset to those published based on teaching provider, attributed to the business and management subject area and on a first degree level of study.

[7] Source: Based on published NSS results from the 2022 survey at: National Student Survey 2022 results - Office for Students (2022 NSS results by teaching provider for all providers). Providers were placed in ascending order based on the percentage of students who responded positively to the questions that form the academic support scale. The published NSS results were subset to those published based on teaching provider, attributed to the business and management subject area and on a first degree level of study.

students using Salesforce, the customer relationship management system in place at the university. Students had the ability to 'drop in' for a personal tutoring appointment. Drop-in appointments were provided by graduate interns, who were employed to support the main personal tutoring process.

82. Under the previous system, graduate interns were used as personal tutors. It was explained that as well as offering employment, the intern role offered graduates the opportunity to develop their own skills through supporting the teaching of employability skills to students, and nine out of 12 graduate interns went on to secure employment successfully outside the university. The assessment team felt that the move to ensure primary responsibility for personal tutoring rests with academic staff, and the implementation of training and resources to ensure tutoring provision is consistent, were positive steps in ensuring that students are adequately supported for their studies. In a meeting with the team, academic staff reported greater engagement with personal tutoring this year, which further suggested the change had been beneficial for students.

83. All academic staff had personal tutoring responsibilities for up to 30 students. The workload allowance provided for personal tutoring was one hour per student per semester. The assessment team felt this was consistent with personal workload allocations offered in other institutions. There was a comment from an academic member of staff that it was challenging to fit in tutoring responsibilities, but the same academic commented that they found personal tutoring rewarding. When asked more generally about workload allocations in a previous meeting, academic staff reflected that the workload model in use was fair and transparent. Personal tutors were given training plus a tutoring handbook which offered guidance for interactions with students and the discussion topics to be covered in meetings. All academic staff had personal tutoring responsibilities and those spoken to reported feeling confident and supported in their tutoring role.

84. Personal tutoring was used to facilitate personal development planning for students and to identify where further support might be needed. Personal tutoring meetings could be a catalyst to point students to other central support services, such as wellbeing.

85. Students' engagement with their studies was monitored through various metrics, such as their library usage and viewing of course content via Panopto, a video hosting platform used by the university. The business school had a proactive system for monitoring student engagement. The central student engagement team triaged those who were least engaged, and lists were sent to the school. Students on the list were contacted in the first instance by their personal tutor to arrange a meeting, which was then followed up by the course director if necessary. Students were able to book appointments with their personal tutors during the evenings and at the weekend if required. This was an active decision by the school to support the needs of their student body, who experience more economic and social disadvantage than other students at London universities and therefore may be unable to attend meetings between 0900 and 1700 from Mondays to Fridays.

86. In discussion with students, the view of personal tutoring was generally positive, with the majority stating they had either met with their personal tutor or knew how to contact them to meet with them, should they need to. This suggested the personal tutoring system was running satisfactorily and offering adequate support.

Module learning and assessment support

87. Every module had a timetabled one-hour online drop-in to provide additional support for students on any aspect of the module content or assessment. The students spoken to felt comfortable to attend these sessions and ask for support. Module lectures were recorded as standard, although only shared proactively with students registered for disability support. Module leaders reported supporting students' learning by making explicit links and drawing on learning from other modules within the curriculum.

88. During lesson observations, the assessment team reported academic staff having a good rapport with students and witnessed a supportive environment where students were encouraged to ask questions to aid their understanding. Clear links were made with module learning outcomes.

89. In meetings with the assessment team, students reported feeling adequately supported to prepare for module assessments. Standard practice was for assessment briefs to be posted on Moodle (the VLE used by the university) along with marking guides or rubrics. The team was able to see evidence of this on the university VLE, and during meetings students confirmed they were able to access this information without difficulty.

Additional support services

90. A range of additional student support was provided through the main university and included the library, careers service, English as a Foreign Language provision and student life (including mental health and wellbeing services and a disability service).

91. Following its review of relevant information and discussions with university staff and students as outlined above, the assessment team considered the academic support offered to students was appropriate for the student cohort.

Academic staff

92. The assessment team considered the split between fixed-term and open-ended or permanent business and management academic staff, noting that for the academic years 2019-20 and 2020-21 those on fixed-term contracts made up two-thirds of the staffing base. The team wanted to understand any plans in place for the recruitment and development of academic staff delivering the relevant courses (see paragraphs 27 and 28) and how this would ensure that students were adequately supported.

93. The university recognised a high reliance on associate lecturers in the previous academic year. However, senior staff at the university confirmed to the team that they were part way through their plan to reduce this reliance from a recent high of 100 associate lecturers, to a current level of 60, predicting only 30 by the end of 2022-23. This had involved an ongoing academic recruitment drive, with most applicants holding a relevant doctorate. The assessment team felt the move to increase the number of permanent staff was a positive step to ensure greater consistency in module delivery and academic support for students.

94. Through a staff meeting and further information requested from the university by the assessment team, it was confirmed that staff development was supported by the funding of doctoral studies, Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education, Advance HE membership and other professional body memberships.

95. A decentralisation of the management of associate lecturers was also underway, thus ensuring a closer departmental management. University staff confirmed that faculty and associates worked as part of module delivery teams, with close oversight by module leaders and course directors. Once these changes are effected, the assessment team are confident the staffing model will be adequate to ensure students are provided with sufficient support.

Assessment and feedback

96. The assessment team wanted to establish how students were prepared and supported for assessments, including the provision of feedback following assessment. The team reviewed course and module documentation, assessment briefs and a sample of assessment submissions and associated feedback for the relevant courses (see paragraphs 27 and 28).

97. The team decided to explore this area after a review of free text comments submitted via the NSS, as well as NSS scores relating to the timeliness and helpfulness of assessment feedback.

98. The assessment team identified the following features of the university's assessment and feedback processes as relevant to condition B2.

Preparing and supporting students for assessment

99. University staff explained to the assessment team that assessment briefs, guidance and marking rubrics were routinely provided to students via Moodle, and that students had the opportunity to ask assessment related questions either in taught classes or in the timetabled drop-ins. In meetings with the assessment team, students reported no issues with being able to access this information, and also expressed feeling adequately supported by teaching staff in completing assessments.

Providing students with feedback following assessment

100. Feedback was routinely provided to students with the release of marks. In meetings, students explained that feedback could be received in written format, voice note or video. While the amount of feedback provided varied across teaching teams, students generally felt feedback was helpful to their development. University staff explained that there were some opportunities for students to use feedback from one year to improve their efforts in the following year. For example, the teaching team for the Level 4 core employability module explained that a student's feedback on the project could be useful for developing their assignment for specific Level 5 modules. The assessment team felt this practice maximised development opportunities for students, and would encourage it to be more widely adopted.

101. Following its review of relevant information and discussions with university staff and students as outlined above, the assessment team did not identify any concerns to suggest that students studying on the relevant courses (see paragraphs 27 and 28) did not receive adequate resources and support.

B2 Conclusions

102. The assessment team's investigation drew on multiple sources of information, as set out in paragraphs 70 to 75, that are relevant to condition B2. Following a risk-based approach, it did not identify any concerns relating to condition B2 from reviewing this information.

Condition B4: Assessment and awards

103. The assessment team reviewed a range of evidence relevant to condition B4 (see the full text in Annex A) in seeking to understand whether students on the relevant courses considered (see paragraphs 27 and 28) are 'assessed effectively' (B4.2.a), whether each assessment is 'valid and reliable' (B4.2.b), whether academic regulations 'are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible' (B4.2.c) and whether 'relevant awards granted to students are credible' (B4.2.e).

104. The initial information provided by the university, and reviewed by the assessment team, included:

    - module specifications for the relevant courses across Levels 3 to 6, including assessment methods

    - module attainment data for Level 4 modules on the relevant courses (for academic year 2021-22)

    - any student complaints (during the academic year 2021-22).

105. Alongside the initial information provided by the university, the assessment team reviewed both quantitative and qualitative NSS information for 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22, and student outcomes data including measures of completion, continuation and progression.

106. This initial information was relevant to students on the courses under consideration being 'assessed effectively' (B4.2.a) and assessments being 'reliable' (B4.2.b).

107. During on-site visits, the assessment team met with:

    - students currently studying on business and management courses, across Levels 4 to 7

    - academic staff teaching on business and management courses, across Levels 4 to 6

    - university staff responsible for business and management course and curriculum design.

108. These meetings included discussion of topics relevant to condition B4.

109. The assessment team requested additional information from the university as detailed in paragraphs 24 to 26 (all data noted in the bullet point list below was sourced directly from the university). This included:

    - aggregate module attainment for Level 4 and 5 modules on the relevant courses (for academic years 2020-21 and 2021-22)

    - a copy of the module leader handbook

    - a sample of assessment briefs and marking rubrics for Level 4 and 5 modules

- a sample of marked student coursework at Levels 4 and 5, with feedback, from across the classification band.

110. This information was relevant to condition B4.2(a) and B4.2(b) that students are 'assessed effectively' and each assessment is 'valid and reliable'.

111. The assessment team's investigation drew on multiple sources of information, identified in paragraphs 104 to 109, that were relevant to condition B4. Following a risk-based approach, the assessment team considered the area set out below:

Assessment and feedback

112. The assessment team wanted to establish how students on relevant courses (see paragraphs 27 and 28) were assessed effectively and how assessments were designed to test relevant skills. The team reviewed course and module documentation, assessment briefs and a sample of assessment submissions and associated feedback for the relevant courses.

113. The assessment team decided to consider this area because of the most recent progression data for full-time first degree students in business and management at the university, as set out in paragraph 27.

114. The assessment team identified the following feature of the university's assessment and feedback processes as relevant to condition B4.

Assessment design

115. As previously set out under condition B1 (see paragraphs 58 to 60), in meetings university staff explained that, as a result of a Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment (TESTA) process approximately four years ago, there was a move away from examination-style assessment, and assessment points were reduced to two artefacts per module. Rather than reviewing assessment at a modular level, the TESTA process considers assessment at a course level and attempts to coordinate the overall quantity, variety and distribution of assessment. The impact of this was seen by students in 2019-20. The assessment design process was further refined following revalidation of courses in 2021-22, where an active decision was made to offer students authentic coursework-based assessment tasks. This was demonstrated in a number of new Level 4 and 5 modules where assessment design was based on live briefs or projects, or real-world scenarios, which allow for learning outcomes to be evaluated in 'an authentic way'.

116. Module leaders were encouraged by senior business school staff to be innovative with assessment, to stimulate student interest and engagement. Many assessments on modules were explicitly employability-focused, offering students the opportunity to replicate tasks they might find themselves undertaking in the workplace. The assessment team considered that the provider's decision to adopt a real-world approach to assessment design was a positive change, ensuring assessment was effective, valid and reliable. The team felt this was of benefit to students, allowing them the opportunity to develop relevant skills alongside applying learning, and thus supporting the development of employability.

117. Assessments were discussed and agreed in regular course team meetings, to ensure there was complementarity across the level of study and assessment briefs were honed at each

iteration, reflecting teaching team and student feedback. The assessment team considered that this was a positive step to ensuring effective assessment at a course level.

118. Following its review of relevant information and discussions with university staff and students as outlined above, the assessment team did not identify any concerns in respect of assessment and feedback on the relevant courses (paragraph 27 and 28) that relate to condition B4.

B4 Conclusions

119. The assessment team's investigation drew on multiple sources of information, as set out in paragraphs 104 to 109, that are relevant to condition B4. Following a risk-based approach the assessment team did not identify any concerns relating to condition B4 from reviewing this information.

Annex A: Ongoing conditions of registration

Condition B1: Academic experience

Scope

B1.1 This condition applies to the quality of higher education provided in any manner or form by, or on behalf of, a provider (including, but not limited to, circumstances where a provider is responsible only for granting awards for students registered with another provider).

Requirement

B1.2 Without prejudice to the principles and requirements provided for by any other condition of registration and the scope of B1.1, the provider must ensure that the students registered on each **higher education course** receive a high quality academic experience.

B1.3 For the purposes of this condition, a high quality academic experience includes but is not limited to ensuring all of the following:

> a. each **higher education course** is **up-to-date**;
>
> b. each **higher education course** provides **educational challenge**;
>
> c. each **higher education course** is **coherent**;
>
> d. each **higher education course** is **effectively delivered**; and
>
> e. each **higher education course**, as appropriate to the subject matter of the course, requires students to develop **relevant skills**.

B1.4 Insofar as **relevant skills** includes technical proficiency in the English language, the provider is not required to comply with B1.3.e to the extent that it is able to demonstrate to the OfS, on the balance of probabilities, that its English language proficiency requirements, or failure to have English language proficiency requirements, for one or more students, are strictly necessary as a matter of law because compliance with B1.3.e in respect of that student, or those students:

> i. would amount to a form of discrimination for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010;
>
> and
>
> ii. cannot be objectively justified for the purposes of relevant provisions of that Act; and
>
> iii. does not fall within an exception or exclusion provided for under or by virtue of that Act, including but not limited to provisions of the Act that relate to competence standards.

Definitions

B1.5 For the purposes of this condition B1:

> a. "**appropriately informed**" will be assessed by reference to:
>
> > i. the time period within which any of the developments described in the definition of **up-to-date** have been in existence;
> >
> > ii. the importance of any of the developments described in the definition of **up-to-date** to the subject matter of the **higher education course**; and

iii. the time period by which it is planned that such developments described in the definition of **up-to-date** will be brought into the **higher education course** content.

b. "**coherent**" means a **higher education course** which ensures:

i. there is an appropriate balance between breadth and depth of content;

ii. subjects and skills are taught in an appropriate order and, where necessary, build on each other throughout the course; and

iii. key concepts are introduced at the appropriate point in the course content.

c. "**educational challenge**" means a challenge that is no less than the minimum level of rigour and difficulty reasonably expected of the **higher education course**, in the context of the subject matter and level of the course.

d. "**effectively delivered**", in relation to a **higher education course**, means the manner in which it is taught, supervised and assessed (both in person and remotely) including, but not limited to, ensuring:

i. an appropriate balance between delivery methods, for example lectures, seminars, group work or practical study, as relevant to the content of the course; and

ii. an appropriate balance between directed and independent study or research, as relevant to the level of the course.

e. "**higher education course**" is to be interpreted:

i. in accordance with the Higher Education and Research Act 2017; and

ii. so as to include, for the avoidance of doubt:

A. a course of study;

B. a programme of research;

C. any further education course that forms an integrated part of a higher education course; and

D. any module that forms part of a higher education course, whether or not that module is delivered as an integrated part of the course.

f. "**relevant skills**" means:

i. knowledge and understanding relevant to the subject matter and level of the **higher education course**; and

ii. other skills relevant to the subject matter and level of the **higher education course** including, but not limited to, cognitive skills, practical skills, transferable skills and professional competences.

g. "**up-to-date**" means representative of current thinking and practices in the subject matter to which the **higher education course** relates, including being **appropriately informed** by recent:

i. subject matter developments;

ii. research, industrial and professional developments; and

iii. developments in teaching and learning, including learning resources

Condition B2: Resources, support and student engagement

Scope

B2.1 This condition applies to the quality of higher education provided in any manner or form by, or on behalf of, a provider (including, but not limited to, circumstances where a provider is responsible only for granting awards for students registered with another provider).

Requirement

B2.2 Without prejudice to the principles and requirements provided for by any other condition of registration and the scope of B2.1, the provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure:

>a. each **cohort of students** registered on each **higher education course** receives **resources** and **support** which are sufficient for the purpose of ensuring:

>>i. a high quality academic experience for those students; and

>>ii. those students succeed in and beyond higher education; and

>b. effective **engagement** with each **cohort of students** which is sufficient for the purpose of ensuring:

>>i. a high quality academic experience for those students; and

>>ii. those students succeed in and beyond higher education.

B2.3 For the purposes of this condition, "all reasonable steps" is to be interpreted in a manner which (without prejudice to other relevant considerations):

>a. focuses and places significant weight on:

>>i. the particular academic needs of each **cohort of students** based on prior academic attainment and capability; and

>>ii. the principle that the greater the academic needs of the **cohort of students**, the number and nature of the steps needed to be taken are likely to be more significant;

>b. places less weight, as compared to the factor described in B2.3a., on the provider's financial constraints; and

>c. disregards case law relating to the interpretation of contractual obligations.

Definitions

B2.4 For the purposes of this condition B2:

>a. "**academic misconduct**" means any action or attempted action that may result in a student obtaining an unfair academic advantage in relation to an **assessment**, including but not limited to plagiarism, unauthorised collaboration and the possession of unauthorised materials during an **assessment**.

>b. "**appropriately qualified**" means staff have and maintain:

>>i. expert knowledge of the subject they design and/or deliver;

ii. teaching qualifications or training, and teaching experience, appropriate for the content and level of the relevant **higher education course**; and

iii. the required knowledge and skills as to the effective delivery of their **higher education course**.

c. "**assessment**" means any component of a course used to assess student achievement towards a **relevant award**, including an examination and a test.

d. "**cohort of students**" means the group of students registered on to the **higher education course** in question and is to be interpreted by reference to the particular academic needs of those students based on prior academic attainment and capability.

e. "**engagement**" means routine provision of opportunities for students to contribute to the development of their academic experience and their **higher education course**, in a way that maintains the academic rigour of that course, including, but not limited to, through membership of the provider's committees, opportunities to provide survey responses, and participation in activities to develop the course and the way it is delivered.

f. "**higher education course**" is to be interpreted:

i. in accordance with the Higher Education and Research Act 2017; and

ii. so as to include, for the avoidance of doubt:

A. a course of study;

B. a programme of research;

C. any further education course that forms an integrated part of a higher education course; and

D. any module that forms part of a higher education course, whether or not that module is delivered as an integrated part of the course.

g. "**physical and digital learning resources**" includes, as appropriate to the content and delivery of the **higher education course**, but is not limited to:

i. physical locations, for example teaching rooms, libraries, studios and laboratories;

ii. physical and digital learning resources, for example books, computers and software;

iii. the resources needed for digital learning and teaching, for example, hardware and software, and technical infrastructure; and

iv. other specialist resources, for example specialist equipment, software and research tools.

h. "**relevant award**" means:

i. a **research award**;

ii. a **taught award**; and/or

iii. any other type of award or qualification in respect of a **higher education course**, including an award of credit granted in respect of a module that may form part of a larger **higher education course**,

whether or not granted pursuant to an authorisation given by or under the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, another Act of Parliament or Royal Charter.

i. "**research award**" and "**taught award**" have the meanings given in section 42(3) of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017.

j. "**resources**" includes but is not limited to:

> i. the staff team that designs and delivers a **higher education course** being collectively **sufficient in number**, **appropriately qualified** and deployed effectively to deliver in practice; and

> ii. **physical and digital learning resources** that are adequate and deployed effectively to meet the needs of the **cohort of students**.

k. "**sufficient in number**" will be assessed by reference to the principle that the larger the cohort size of students, the greater the number of staff and amount of staff time should be available to students, and means, in the context of the staff team:

> i. there is sufficient financial resource to recruit and retain sufficient staff;

> ii. the provider allocates appropriate financial resource to ensuring staff are equipped to teach courses;

> iii. **higher education courses** have an adequate number of staff, and amount of staff time; and

> iv. the impact on students of changes in staffing is minimal.

l. "**support**" means the effective deployment of assistance, as appropriate to the content of the **higher education course** and the **cohort of students**, including but not limited to:

> i. academic support relating to the content of the **higher education course**;

> ii. support needed to underpin successful physical and digital learning and teaching;

> iii. support relating to understanding, avoiding and reporting **academic misconduct**;

> and

> iv. careers support,

> but for the avoidance of doubt, does not include other categories of non-academic support.

Condition B4: Assessment and awards

Scope

B4.1 This condition applies to the quality of higher education provided in any manner or form by, or on behalf of, a provider (including, but not limited to, circumstances where a provider is responsible only for granting awards for students registered with another provider).

Requirement

B4.2 Without prejudice to the principles and requirements provided for by any other condition of registration and the scope of B4.1, the provider must ensure that:

> a. students are **assessed effectively**;
>
> b. each **assessment** is **valid** and **reliable**;
>
> c. **academic regulations** are designed to ensure that **relevant awards** are **credible**;
>
> d. subject to paragraph B4.3, in respect of each **higher education course**, **academic regulations** are designed to ensure the effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a manner which appropriately reflects the level and content of the applicable **higher education course**; and e. **relevant awards** granted to students are **credible** at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously.

B4.3 The provider is not required to comply with B4.2d to the extent that:

> a. a **higher education course** is assessing a language that is not English; or
>
> b. the provider is able to demonstrate to the OfS, on the balance of probabilities, that its **academic regulations**, or failure to have any **academic regulations**, for assessing technical proficiency in the English language for one or more students are strictly necessary as a matter of law because compliance with B4.2d in respect of that student, or those students:
>
>> i. would amount to a form of discrimination for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010; and
>>
>> ii. cannot be objectively justified for the purposes of relevant provisions of that Act; and
>>
>> iii. does not fall within an exception or exclusion provided for under or by virtue of that Act, including but not limited to provisions of the Act that relate to competence standards.

Definitions

B4.4 For the purposes of this condition B4:

> a. "**academic misconduct**" means any action or attempted action that may result in a student obtaining an unfair academic advantage in relation to an **assessment**, including but not limited to plagiarism, unauthorised collaboration and the possession of unauthorised materials during an **assessment**.
>
> b. "**academic regulations**" means regulations adopted by the provider, which govern its **higher education courses**, including but not limited to:

        i. the assessment of students' work;

        ii. student discipline relating to academic matters;

        iii. the requirements for **relevant awards**; and

        iv. the method used to determine classifications, including but not limited to:

                A. the requirements for an award; and

                B. the algorithms used to calculate the classification of awards.

c. "**assessed effectively**" means assessed in a challenging and appropriately comprehensive way, by reference to the subject matter of the **higher education course**, and includes but is not limited to:

        i. providing stretch and rigour consistent with the level of the course;

        ii. testing **relevant skills**; and

        iii. **assessments** being designed in a way that minimises the opportunities for **academic misconduct** and facilitates the detection of such misconduct where it does occur.

d. "**assessment**" means any component of a course used to assess student achievement towards a **relevant award**, including an examination and a test.

e. "**credible**" means that, in the reasonable opinion of the OfS, **relevant awards** reflect students' knowledge and skills, and for this purpose the OfS may take into account factors which include, but are not limited to:

        i. the number of **relevant awards** granted, and the classifications attached to them, and the way in which this number and/or the classifications change over time and compare with other providers;

        ii. whether students are **assessed effectively** and whether **assessments** are **valid** and **reliable**;

        iii. any actions the provider has taken that would result in an increased number of **relevant awards**, and/or changes in the classifications attached to them, whether or not the achievement of students has increased, for example, changes to assessment practices or **academic regulations**; and

        iv. the provider's explanation and evidence in support of the reasons for any changes in the classifications over time or differences with other providers.

f. "**higher education course**" is to be interpreted:

        i. in accordance with the Higher Education and Research Act 2017; and

        ii. so as to include, for the avoidance of doubt:

                A. a course of study;

                B. a programme of research;

                C. any further education course that forms an integrated part of a higher education course; and

D. any module that forms part of a higher education course, whether or not that module is delivered as an integrated part of the course.

g. "**relevant award**" means:

i. a **research award**;

ii. a **taught award**; and/or

iii. any other type of award or qualification in respect of a **higher education course**, including an award of credit granted in respect of a module that may form part of a larger **higher education course**, whether or not granted pursuant to an authorisation given by or under the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, another Act of Parliament or Royal Charter.

h. "**relevant skills**" means:

i. knowledge and understanding relevant to the subject matter and level of the **higher education course**; and

ii. other skills relevant to the subject matter and level of the **higher education course** including, but not limited to, cognitive skills, practical skills, transferable skills and professional competences.

i. "**reliable**" means that an **assessment**, in practice, requires students to demonstrate knowledge and skills in a manner which is consistent as between the students registered on a **higher education course** and over time, as appropriate in the context of developments in the content and delivery of the **higher education course**.

j. "**research award**" and "**taught award**" have the meanings given in section 42(3) of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017.

k. "**valid**" means that an **assessment** in fact takes place in a way that results in students demonstrating knowledge and skills in the way intended by design of the assessment.